

# (Daniel) the Writing on the Wall

by David Guzik

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*The story of Daniel Chapter 5 teaches us about the consequences of sin and the importance of faith and wisdom in the face of judgment.*

**Duration:** 50:18

**Scripture:** Daniel 5:25

**Topics:** "Belshazzar"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Belshazzar and the writing on the wall from the book of Daniel in the Bible. Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, throws a lavish party and mocks God by using the holy vessels from the temple for his own pleasure. Suddenly, a hand appears and writes a message on the wall, causing Belshazzar to become terrified. The preacher emphasizes the importance of glorifying God in all aspects of our lives, including our social gatherings, and warns against the spirit of the age that prioritizes worldly pleasures over God's glory.

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## Transcript

Tonight, when we look at Daniel chapter five, we're going to come to, again, a very well known event in scripture and a very popular chapter in the book of Daniel. You'll see why it's so popular. Let's jump right into it.

Daniel chapter five. Now, again, we remind ourselves Daniel was a man who was born in Judah near the city of Jerusalem or in Jerusalem. We don't know exactly what city he came from, but he was one of the bright young men who was taken and kidnapped essentially by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and taken from the ruling classes of Judah and brought to Babylon to serve in the civil service of the Babylonian kingdom.

Daniel was educated. Daniel was prepared. He served with great distinction.

The mighty King Nebuchadnezzar, whose story we saw last week in Daniel chapter four, with this amazing incident of Nebuchadnezzar's madness in chapter five, we come to one of the successors of Nebuchadnezzar, a man named Belshazzar verse one, Belshazzar, the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. When 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, his lords, his wives and his concubines

might drink from them. 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.

They drank wine and praise the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. Now obviously, you know, from the first few words of verse one, that Nebuchadnezzar is no longer king of Babylon. When the events of Daniel chapter five take place.

So how did it get from Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar? Well, there are secular historians, which tell us the line of succession after Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar died after a fairly glorious 43 year reign. And then his son, a man named Evil Merodach, he's described in second Kings chapter 25 and Jeremiah chapter 52, that he ruled for only two years and he was assassinated by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, and Neriglissar took the throne violently from this man, Evil Merodach, and he ruled these two years, but he was overthrown very quickly. He ruled only four years until he died a natural death.

Well, the son of Neriglissar was a man with an impronounceable name, as far as I'm concerned. And he was an only child, this young man, and he was of diminished mental capacity. He was, as you might say, he was a taco short of a combo plate.

And he only ruled for nine months until he was beaten to death by a gang of conspirators. Now, the conspirators appointed one of their own, a man who had some royal blood in him named Nabonidus to be king. And he ruled until Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon.

Now, if you notice in that whole scenario I gave to you, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil Merodach, Neriglissar, the unpronounceable name, and then Nabonidus, you notice nowhere did I mention a guy named Belshazzar. Well, that's because Belshazzar is the son of Nabonidus. And I should let you know that for a long time, historians and archaeologists, they knew that it was said in secular history that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon, and they didn't find much mention of anybody named Belshazzar.

And so this great discrepancy had been brought up, and they said, well, where's Belshazzar? Where is he? You know, the Bible must be wrong. You see, it's all made up. It's not historical.

Until they discovered something called the Cylinder of Nabonidus. It specifically describes the son of Nabonidus named Belshazzar, and that he ruled as a co-regent with Nabonidus, exactly indicating what the Bible says and actually shedding light on the biblical text, as we're going to see in a few moments. Well, in any regard, this demonstrated the great accuracy of the Bible, and we find that this fellow named Belshazzar was actually the oldest son of this man named Nabonidus.

And when they discovered the Nabonidus Cylinder, which is now displayed in the British Museum, it cleared the whole matter up. Now, it's likely at the time of Daniel chapter 5, Nabonidus had gone out of the city of Babylon to fight the Medo-Persian Empire, which was bearing down and trying to conquer the Babylonian kingdom. Well, it's likely, too, that when we come to chapter 5, Nabonidus has already been captured.

And so the only king of Babylon, essentially, is this man Belshazzar. He's in the city of Babylon, and you don't know it from the first four verses, but we know from both secular history and from how this text works out in this chapter. At this time, the city of Babylon was surrounded by hostile armies.

They were looking for a way into this strongly fortified and defended city. And with thousands of hostile soldiers all around the city walls, looking for a way to come in and conquer this great city. What's the king doing? He's throwing a party.

He's throwing a feast for a thousand of his lords, the text says. He wanted to demonstrate, I am not afraid of this siege surrounding the city. He was very confident.

He was confident because the city of Babylon had incredibly impressive defenses, just architecturally. He was also confident because he had vast supplies. And so he held this party just to mock the siege armies on the outside.

Well, I'm not afraid of you. We're not cowering in fear. We're not huddling behind defenses.

We're not carefully rationing our resources. We're going to throw a great big party. Architecturally, the city of Babylon was an absolute marvel.

The outer walls of the city measured 17 miles in their length around the city. Those outer walls were 22 feet thick. Ninety feet tall, the outer walls had guard towers which were even taller than the 90 feet, another hundred feet high, the city gates, they weren't made of wood.

No, you might be able to burn down wood. The city gates were made of bronze and there was an intricate system of inner and outer walls and moats, which made the city of Babylon absolutely impenetrable or so they thought. And that's why Belshazzar is having this great big party when these hostile surrounding armies are all over the place in the midst of this party.

What does he do? He calls, he goes, hey, remember those cups and the vessels and the plates and all that? Remember that that my father, Nebuchadnezzar, seized from the temple in Jerusalem? Bring them in. Let's get drunk from those things. Can you imagine that? A cup that had one time been used in the holy service of God at the temple in Jerusalem, now it's being filled with cheap wine to slake the drunken thirst of a bunch of nobles and lords in the city of Babylon.

Now, some people are troubled by this because it tells us in the text, for example, in verse two, it says the command to bring the gold and silver vessels, which is father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple. We know that Belshazzar was not the direct son of Nebuchadnezzar. You should know, though, that it was very common in the ancient world to use father as just for any descendant.

You could call your grandfather or your great grandfather. And it seems very well that Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar on his mother's side. He had royal blood in him.

So anyway, here they are in the midst of this party and they're they're praising the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood of stone. Isn't that just like the spirit of our age? Good heavens, friends, you look around in the world today with all the calamity in the Middle East, with all the threats of terrorism, people wondering when somebody is going to bring a suitcase nuclear weapon into this country and detonate it. And you won't see a few thousand killed.

You'll be numbering in them in the tens of thousands and the hundreds of thousands of people killed. You see political turmoil all over the world. You see economic systems teetering on the brink of collapse and nobody cares.

Our big interest is, you know, that that new series that's on MTV that everybody thinks is so amazing or what's what's going to be on the television the next night or what's happening here, the latest record or or the newest thing. I don't think we're any different than Belshazzar culturally as a nation. We see these signs, we see the siege army, so to speak, all around.

Who could care less? We figure that the best thing to do is just forget about it all and just escape into the pursuit of pleasure. If you read the stories in the L.A. Times recently, not just when it happened, but they did follow up stories about a 16 year old girl murdered at a party in a wealthy section of Los Angeles, and she was murdered because, well, the sister of the girl who murdered her, the sister was running around through this party that was held at some posh home and at this very fancy home. There was no adult supervision.

And so the kids were just running amok. And this gal who was murdered had a conscience about things. And so when one of the girls started messing up some of the flower pots and such outside, she said, hey, stop that.

Have a little respect for somebody else's property. And so the two sort of got into a fight. And the girl who ended up being murdered sort of got the best of her in the fight.

And so she called up her sister. And her sister came and stabbed this 16 year old girl to death. There was a whole group of kids around at the time and their fight, fight, hit her, cheering them on in the fight.

And one girl never regained consciousness. Sixteen year old girl comes from a privileged school. And there she is, and nobody thought to call the police while during the fight or after the fight or excuse me, they did after the fight when it was evident that the girl was just about dead.

And all they could think about was the entertainment value of seeing two girls fight in front of them. We need to be very clear on this as Christians. God does not condemn having a good time.

I think that if we're Christians, we should be able to have a good time better than anybody. Having a good time or not having a good time, that's not the issue. The issue is, can God be glorified in your good time? Can you really have your good time unto the glory of the Lord? Can God be invited to your party? Can God be invited to your social time, to your entertainment? Well, it certainly couldn't be invited here.

And God intrudes on this party, as we're going to see in a few verses. They were just sitting around in this great drunken scene. And what were they doing? They were just getting drunk.

In Ephesians, chapter five, verse 18, the Apostle Paul calls drunkenness dissipation. Do you know what dissipation is? It's wastefulness. That's what drunkenness is.

It's a waste of resources that should be submitted to Jesus. The old Puritan commentator John Traft, he describes drinking to excess. He calls it drinking all the three outs.

You say, well, what's drinking all the three outs? Is it like in baseball? It goes, no, no, no. All the three outs. Ale out of the pot, money out of the purse and wit out of the head.

And that's what drinking does. Well, if it wasn't bad enough, their callous disregard for the danger of the times, their debauched drunkenness. If you notice, verse three, 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. You see, Belshazzar was foolish enough to not only lose all semblance of self-control at this party, but also to openly mock God. He committed a sin and we don't even say this word anymore.

He committed the sin of sacrilege. We take something that's sacred, you take something that's holy and honorable and good and you mock it, you trample it in the dust. He was seeking to do more than just that, though.

There he is partying with the cups and the vessels and such that they got from the conquered temple of Jerusalem, and it's their way of reminding everybody about their previous victory. It's as if they raise a toast and they say it will conquer this army that's outside of our walls, just like we conquered Jerusalem. And then a roar goes up from the crowd and they all toast each other.

And so here they were in a large banquet hall, by the way, in Babylon, they've discovered a very large court, 56 by 170 feet. It's been unearthed and it was decorated with fancy Greek columns. It's probably the place or very likely, I should say, where this very feast of Daniel chapter five took place.

Well, here they were just partying up in a great way. Look what happens in verse five. In the same hour, the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lamps stand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace.

And the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Oh, about that picture that your mind, you know, Hollywood has its field day with special effects today. And they got nothing on God.

God makes a hand appear just a dismembered hand, I guess, just cut off at the wrist or the forearm or something, you know, and there it is up there. And it's got some kind of pen or pencil or something in his hand. And it's writing on the wall and everybody's shocked.

They stop. They stare at it in an unexpected and even shocking way. God communicates not just to the king, but to everybody.

Now, of course, you know, this this is where we get our proverbial phrase, the writing on the wall to mean something ominous or or speaking of judgment. And so here it is in the midst of all this partying, the hand appears and it starts writing on the wall. There it is.

You can just picture it in your mind. Well, look at what Belshazzar does. Verse six.

Then the king's countenance changed and his thoughts troubled him so that the joints of his hips were loosed and his knees knocked against each other. Isn't that picturesque writing? You just got to like the way that's written. I mean, he says he's getting all wiggly on us here.

You know, his throat gets dry. His face just turns white. He feels weak all over.

He can hardly stand in his knees, start knocking together. It's as if he's applauding what was written on the wall. But no, that's not a plot.

That's my knees knocking together. Now, let me ask you a question here. We're going to find out you can see it right there in the next verse, verse seven.

Belshazzar doesn't know what this means. He says, who can read this for me and tell me what it means. Now, you tell me if he didn't know what that said or what it meant, he couldn't read it, nor could he understand it.

Why was he so afraid? Right, if writing suddenly appeared on the wall of it from the PowerPoint presentation, the video projector was suddenly cast upon the words that you didn't you couldn't even read them there in a language that you didn't even know, you couldn't even make out the letters, just words appear on the wall. What would you do? Oh, yeah, I wonder what that means. Oh, well.

Not Belshazzar, he's terrified, he's losing it, he doesn't even know what it means now. Do you know what this means? This means that his own conscience was convicting him. Can you see that? Every drink he takes.

Every woman he grabs. Every lewd joke he makes in this debauched party. It's an attempt to cover over the amazing guilt he has within him.

It's all just there on the surface, it's covered with the thinnest layer of strenuous effort, that entertainment and desire to bury it all. But man, as soon as the slightest thing comes up, he knows he's a guilty man. He's filled with this enormous sense of guilt.

And when he sees letters appear on the wall and he has no idea what he means, he's terrified by them because his own conscience is mortified by guilt. Now, take yourself 30 seconds before the hand appeared and you were to ask Belshazzar, Belshazzar, how are you doing? What would he say? Oh, man, this is the greatest party ever. Would he look you in the eye and say, I feel so guilty and so out of sorts that I don't even know what to do.

I have to cover it up with as much drinking and partying as I possibly can. He would never tell you that in a million years, would he? Because we just almost can never be that honest about ourselves. Think about that when you meet the happy people of this world who just, man, they just seem to be having a ball with all their sin and futile attempts to medicate and entertain and cover over the pain in their lives.

Well, here we go. Verse seven, the king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans and the soothsayers. And 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. Isn't that interesting? Never I told you about the Nabonidus cylinder and how it shed light on the biblical text for a long time. Scholars look at this and they say, look, if Belshazzar was the king, why did he only offer the person who could interpret this the third place in the kingdom? Why not offer them second place? Well, the answer is, is that Belshazzar held second place.

Nabonidus held first place. He was co-regent with his son, Belshazzar, who had second place. So Belshazzar is going to offer him the best he can, which is third place.

And again, brought to light by archaeology, you know, it's just amazing how the Bible proves archaeology is true. Versa eight. Now, all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king its interpretation.

Now, I think this is very interesting because when Daniel comes later to interpret these words, we're going to see that it doesn't seem so hard to figure out. You kind of scratch your head. Now, some people say

that it was written in Hebrew and none of these wise men could read Hebrew.

I don't believe that. I mean, these would have been educated men and you would have had certainly some among them would have been able to read Hebrew. Not all of them would have been ignorant of it.

I don't think so much that it was so hard to figure out or they couldn't read what it said. I think God put a veil over the eyes of these wise men and counselors because God wanted Daniel to step to the forefront. And so here we go.

Verse nine. Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled. His countenance was changed and his lords were astonished.

They're just all freaking out here. They don't know what to do. Verse 10.

The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. Now, this seems to be the queen mother. The daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, the mother of Belshazzar.

And so Belshazzar was of royal blood, but this seems to be the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. That's what many commentators say. We don't know with great certainty, but she seems to have a dignity and a bearing that other people don't in this chapter, mainly because she wasn't at the party.

Right. She had to come to the banquet hall once this great thing had happened. Anyway, verse 10, the queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall and the queen spoke, saying, Oh, King, live forever.

Do not let your thoughts trouble, you know, let your countenance change. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like wisdom of the gods, was found in him.

And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father, the king, you get the feeling he's trying to put him in his place. I get that feeling made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers in as much as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding and interpreting dreams, solving riddles and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named the belt to Shazar. Now, let Daniel be called and he will give the interpretation.

And so the queen mother comes in and she clues him in. She says, listen, none of your wise men, none of your astrologers, none of your Chaldeans can solve any of this. Put the soothsayers away, bring in the man who can meet the challenge.

And that's Daniel. Now, by this time, Daniel's an old man and Daniel comes in a much older man. And he wasn't at the party, of course, nor was he among the astrologers and soothsayers that the king called in.

Perhaps Daniel was in a state of semi retirement. Perhaps he just despised this Belshazzar so much that when the call to come and meet with him, he just forget it. Let those other guys handle this.

For whatever reason, now, at this critical time, Daniel comes in verse 13, then Daniel was brought in before the king. You know, I think that phrase right there, that sentence is worth noting right there. You know, when everything is great.

When the party is going on nonstop, do you think they thought of Daniel? Do you think King Belshazzar, you know, he just drained another cup and he says, I wonder what Daniel's doing right about now? No. While the wine's flowing and the girls are everywhere and the party's hot, all of that, they don't give a second thought to God except to mock him and they don't care about the servants of God at all. When everything seems great, God and his servants are mocked, neglected and hidden away.

But when the hand of heaven writes on the walls of somebody's life, when that sobering or panic striking message comes, then those children of the world, they cry out for someone who has the spirit of God. Have you seen that? See that with people you work with? Man, life is one big party. And they're not anti-God, but man, they just don't got any time for him while everything else is going on, right? Oh, yeah, and it's swell that you're a Christian and you believe what you do, but you know, there's just no time for that.

But then the writing on the wall appears in their life. Maybe one of their children comes up ill. Maybe their marriage gets trouble.

Maybe they've got a problem that they didn't know that they had before and it just hits them. And friends suddenly, suddenly they know what they want. They want someone who has the spirit of God in them.

Now, what's tragic is oftentimes, as soon as the problem is smoothed over, they don't care about God anymore. Man, have I seen that? And it's it's heart rending. You see situations with people, man, when they're in their great time of need.

Oh, they can't get enough of that person who has the spirit of God in them, that the person who has the spirit of God becomes their lifeline, their link to sanity. I need help. And then as soon as the crisis is sort of smoothed over, God bless you.

I'll see you later. God forbid. But it is true, friends.

You need to look for opportunities when the writing is on the wall and somebody, you know, is life. Even if they don't say it, they're crying out for it, aren't they? They're crying out for somebody who has the spirit of God in their life, who can meet their needs and answer their questions in this time of trouble. And that's exactly what Belshazzar wanted.

Look at it again there. Verse 13. Then Daniel was brought in before the king and the king spoke and said to Daniel, are you that Daniel who's one of the captives from Judah, who my father, the king brought from Judah? I've heard of you, that the spirit of God is in you and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.

And you know what's interesting about this? Is that all he can do is repeat what his mother said. He doesn't know Daniel. What does he have time for a guy like Daniel? Daniel's a grumpy old man as far as he's concerned.

Lighten up, Daniel. Now, now he just repeats what his mother said. Again, that Puritan commentator John Traft said, this silly and shallow prince have nothing to say but what was put in his mouth by his wiser mother.

Hey, you heard about him, but that's it. Anyway, verse 15. Now the wise man, the astrologers have been brought in before me that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation.

But they could not give the interpretation of the thing. And I've heard of you that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now, if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you'll be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and you'll be third ruler in the kingdom.

You said, well, he's trying to flex his importance here. You know, I can do a lot of favors for you, Daniel. You just meet my need right here.

And boy, I can really help you in a lot of ways. Look at Daniel's response, it's classic verse 17. Then Daniel answered and said before the king.

Let your gifts be for yourself and give your rewards to another. You got nothing to give me, mister. What do you got that I want? What, you're going to put a little money in my bank account? I don't live for that, king.

Oh, gold chain around my neck. I'm supposed to feel real happy about that, aren't I? Forget it. Power, prestige, status, awards, money.

Didn't mean anything to Daniel. Again, verse 17. Then Daniel answered and said.

Let your gifts be for yourself and let your rewards to another. Yet I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. Now you can just see Daniel in there and he's looking at the writing on the wall and he knows what it means.

And he says, oh, no, King, this one's for free. I'm happy to deliver this message. No charge on this one.

This one's on the house. Verse 18. Oh, King, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar, your father, a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor.

And because of the majesty that he gave him, all people's nations and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished he executed, whomever he wished he kept alive, whomever he wished he set up and whomever he wished he put down. I can just imagine I need to make movies of this stuff because I've got it all figured out in my head.

Now, you notice Daniel said a lot already, but he hasn't said anything about the writing on the wall. That's what Belshazzar wants to know. What does it mean? What does it say? So Belshazzar is impatient.

All right, old man, get to the point here. Get to the point that Daniel's like, boy, you need a history lesson. Remember Nebuchadnezzar? Now that was a king.

That was a man. What are you? You've had it all handed to you. You've had it all given to you.

You didn't have to earn any of it. Nebuchadnezzar, that was a man that was a king. And look at him, as it says here in verse 20.

But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne and they took his glory from him. Then he was driven from the sons of men. His heart was made like the beast and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys.

They fed him with grass like oxen and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till he knew that the most high God rules in the kingdom of men and appoints over whomever he chooses. Can't you see Daniel looking with steely eyes into the eyes of Belshazzar saying this? Saying as great as Nebuchadnezzar was, he knew what it was to humble himself before God. And you're nothing compared to Nebuchadnezzar.

What do you have to be proud about? And yet you're proud. And Nebuchadnezzar was humble. Isn't that amazing that so often the people have the least reason to be filled with pride, are filled with pride.

What have they done? What have they accomplished, especially on the scale of eternity? Nothing, nothing at all. The Academy Awards were a few weeks ago. Oh, everybody gets very excited about who wins the Academy Awards.

I mean, that that is about the pinnacle of fame in this world. Who wins the Academy Awards every year? Who cares? I mean, if it's so great, why do they have to do it again every year? It's just irrelevant. Now, especially in this.

Do you think that the angels stopped worshiping God for a couple hours while they had the Academy Awards so they could see who won best supporting actor? On the scale of eternity, it just doesn't matter so much. It's amazing how we can get our head puffed up with things that are just relatively unimportant. Well, Belshazzar was certainly there.

And now, verse 22, Daniel's really going to bore in. You think he was tough before. Look at it here.

But you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this and you've lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They brought the vessels of this house before you. You and your Lord, your wives and your concubines have drunk wine from them.

And you praise the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know. And the God who holds your breath in his hand and owns all your ways. You have not glorified.

Can you imagine Belshazzar? He wasn't a humble man, my friends. I don't think he was listening to Daniel saying, this guy's right. I mean, think about it.

Anybody with half a brain could figure this one out. My ancestor, Nebuchadnezzar, was a great king, far greater than I am. And he knew that he had to humble himself before the living God.

Look at me. Who am I to think that I'm so great or that I should stiffen my neck or that I should mock this God of Israel, whom Nebuchadnezzar worshipped and praised throughout the whole kingdom? That's what Belshazzar should have done. But from the whole tenor of his response, I know just again in the film that runs in my head, I know how I have it.

Belshazzar is tapping his toe, looking away. Get to the point, old man. What does it say? Oh, Daniel's saying all the right things.

But, you know, when the heart is hard, what can be done in your regard? Look at here, verse twenty four. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from him and this writing was written. And this is the inscription that was written.

Many, many Tekel of Harshan. This is the interpretation of each word. Many.

God has numbered your kingdom and finished it. Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Perez, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Those were the words. Many, many Tekel of Harshan. You know, to get back to the whole meaning of it and the importance of it, go back just a couple of verses.

Look at the end part of verse twenty three again, where Daniel says, And the God who holds your breath in his hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. Now, I can just get inside Belshazzar's mind for a minute because I don't think he's so different than most anybody in our own age. Most people go around thinking, what does God have against me? I mean, I'm not against God.

I like God. Yay, God. And God and I kind of have a nice agreement.

Pretty much he leaves me alone and pretty much I leave him alone. But I like God. Yay, God.

Well, Belshazzar probably figured. Listen, I never did anything against the God of Israel. At least nothing too bad.

Daniel looks and goes, no, no, no, you don't understand it. Look at it again at the end of verse twenty three. And the God who holds your breath in his hand and owns all your ways, him you have not glorified.

This is mind bending, folks. How many people in the workaday world out there think that they have any responsibility whatsoever to glorify God? Glorify God? Man, that's for some priest to do. Isn't that what we have pastors for? You know, maybe some really religious.

Billy Graham can glorify God. Me, I'm just trying to live my life, just trying to find a little bit of happiness in this world. But Daniel rebukes Belshazzar because the God that gave him breath, the God that determined all of his ways, he hasn't glorified that God.

You see, friends, this is what I want you to understand. Is that Daniel knows that every creature is obligated to give glory to their creator. It's only fitting.

It's only right. The breath of the creature should praise the creator. You know, but Belshazzar blasphemed God with his breath.

The ways of the creature should honor and glorify the creator. But Belshazzar used his ways to mock and offend God. Every creature owes something to its creator.

And I think this is almost completely, as I think about it in my head right now, I am at a loss to say how this could be changed in the minds and hearts of people, just everyday people that we rub shoulders with every day, how they could have any sense whatsoever that they have a responsibility to glorify God. Well, that's why I guess we need a great outpouring of the spirit of God to do this, right? To awaken people to this. I don't think I can have eloquent words that can convince people of this.

I don't think we can come up with a great six point program to make your neighbor sense his need to glorify God. Well, I think we pray. I think we seek God.

But isn't that important for us? My, my, you think about it. And how few Christians sense any responsibility to glorify God. Daniel wasn't talking to a believer.

He was talking to an utter pagan. And he says, you, Mr. Utter Pagan, have a responsibility to glorify God. Why? Because the creature owes it to the creator.

So then it comes the hand on the wall. And what is it? Right. We read it just a few moments ago.

Many, many tackle a portion. Each word seems to have stood for a short sentence. Many means to number or numeration.

Tackle means to weigh. And Perez, which is a form of the word of harsh and means division. Number way division.

And so, first of all, God had Belshazzar's number. I guess you could title this chapter that right. When God has your number.

That's what he had. Belshazzar, I got your number. What you think? You think you're sneaking this by on me? This business of getting drunk with the holy vessels from my temple? Well, you don't think there's a God in heaven who sees this? Oh, I know when you got drunk with the vessels from the temple of Dagon, nobody seemed to care.

Nothing happened. And when you got drunk with the vessels from this pagan God and that pagan God, nothing happened. But I'm not like those gods.

No, I got your number, Belshazzar. And not only that, I've weighed you. And, you know, you're pretty light.

I put you on the scale and I put my divine justice, my holy standard on the other side of that scale. And you know what? You don't weigh anything. You're like a feather.

And then finally, division. It's going to be divided. Your kingdom is going to be divided away from you.

You said you've been weighed in the balances and you've been found wanting. In verse 27. You see, friends, a mighty army with brilliant tactics would conquer Babylon that very night.

But friends, it wasn't the mighty army with brilliant contacts with brilliant tactics that did it. It fell from within. The armies of the Medes and Persians could only conquer because Belshazzar and his kingdom were found lacking in spiritual and moral value.

And so what happens? Look, what's going to happen is verse 28. Your kingdom's been divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Well, look how the chapter finishes here.

Then Belshazzar gave the command and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. Now, why did Belshazzar reward Daniel for such harsh words? I think there's a couple of reasons. I'll suggest them.

It's possible that Belshazzar knew that Daniel was right. And he says, well, I'm going to be brave and put the best face upon it as I can. Because do you understand what Daniel said? He said, Belshazzar, you're going down.

You're going down fast. You usually don't reward people for saying that to you. But here Belshazzar does.

And so maybe Belshazzar's saying, well, you know, I want to be an honorable man. Maybe I can say something right. I'll promote Daniel.

I think that the far more likely explanation is that Belshazzar was doing this mocking Daniel. Well, you're the big prophet, are you? Well, I guess if my kingdom is going to go away, I guess it doesn't mean anything for you to be promoted third in the kingdom. So congratulations.

Here's your promotion. It's like being promoted to captain of the Titanic as it's going down. You know, here you go.

You're second in command of the Titanic. There you go. Here's your commission.

And I bet Daniel just whatever came great. Good for you. Now, look at it here.

Verse 30. That very night, Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about 62 years old.

So do you have the movie running in your head? Belshazzar in a mocking way. Well, the kingdom's going away. Well, then won't you be privileged to be third in the kingdom? I guess you're going to go down with it.

Here's your gold chain. Here's your promotion. Three cheers for Daniel and his drunken friends.

Give a mocking praise. And Daniel walks out with that dignified queen mother. And then Belshazzar, after a few awkward moments, he says, well, let's have the party again.

Strike up the band. And all they go back to the celebrating. And they're celebrating until the late hours of the night and suddenly there's sound outside.

There's yelling and screaming and then an alarm whistle goes off and people, well, what's happening here? And then all of a sudden, there's an incredibly loud noise right at one of the doors. And then a bunch of soldiers from the Medo-Persian army rush in and they're really only concerned to kill one guy, Belshazzar. And an officer in that army walks over with bold steps, unsheathes his sword and kills Belshazzar with one stroke that night.

You say, well, wait a minute. I thought Babylon was this incredibly secure city. Then what happened? How did the armies get in? Well, the ancient Greek historian Herodotus tells us how.

He tells us that the Persian King Cyrus conquered Babylon because he used a brilliant plan. You see, the river Euphrates flowed into the city of Babylon. That was one of the things that made them so confident.

They said, listen, if they surround us in a siege, we've got plenty of water. The river Euphrates flows right into our city. Well, they said, well, how do you defend with the river coming in? Somebody can just swim right into the river, right? Well, they said, no, no, no, we know what to do.

We'll put iron bars down and put them down deep enough to where nobody, or if they could, it'd just be one or two people could swim underneath those bars. We'll put them down very, very deep so that people couldn't get under them and it just wouldn't work. It'll be very secure.

And it was very secure until Cyrus got the idea to divert the flow of the river Euphrates. And in a brilliant and impressive show of engineering, he diverted the flow of the Euphrates river, sending it into a nearby swamp, which lowered the flow of the river enough going into the city that his soldiers could get under the river gate. But that wasn't it.

I told you they had an intricate system of inner and outer gates and moats. They still had an important bronze gate of the inner wall to get into, right? Because it's a very secure city. They anticipated that maybe somebody could get in through the inner through the river gate.

They still have this impressive inner wall and the bronze gates of the inner walls to deal with. Cyrus's army went under the river gate up to the bronze gates of the inner walls, and those bronze gates had been inexplicably unlocked. And they walked right through them and they conquered the city of Babylon.

Did you know that God predicted that this would happen in Isaiah chapter forty four verses twenty eight through Isaiah chapter forty five or seven? He predicted it two hundred years before it happened. He predicted it by name. He said, Cyrus, you're my chosen instrument and the gates will be open for you.

God unlocked those gates and left the armies of Cyrus right on through. Well, Babylon fell that very night. I think there's some abiding lessons for us in this.

First of all, don't we see Belshazzar as such a tragic figure of what far too many of people in this world are like? An incredible mass of guilt and shame. Covered over with as much entertainment, with as much stimulation, anything to cover over the emptiness, to cover over the restlessness inside. You've got to keep it coming.

You've got to keep me stimulated. You've got to keep me entertained, because if I ever have a quiet moment to think, who knows what might come to the surface? Belshazzar is like that. We also see that Belshazzar shows us the great opportunity that Christians have as salt and light in this world.

Because, friends, when the writing is on the wall of the life of somebody you know, that's your opportunity to jump right in there. It also shows us finally that God's word is fulfilled just as he said. Isn't it beautiful? God knows what he's doing from beginning to end.

His word will be fulfilled and you can count on it. You can have so much rest, so much assurance in God's word. Now, when you translate this, for example, in other places, when you read the Bible and it makes a great promise to you, like when Jesus says in the world, you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world.

You say, Jesus, you promised me that I can have good cheer, even at a time of great tribulation. Wow. Now, you know what? You can take the confidence in God's word that you've gained here tonight in Daniel, because every one of you should walk out of here a little more confident in God's word than when you walked in.

You can apply it to those great and precious promises that God makes for your life and for your loved ones. The Lord, I'm going to be even more bold in prayer. I'm going to be even more confident before your throne because I know that I know that I know that I know that your word is true.

Let's pray and thank the Lord for it tonight. We know it's true, Lord. We don't just know it from history.

We don't just know it from archaeology. We don't just know it from human nature. The Lord, we also know it from our own life, from our own testimony.

You are God. And your word is true. And you deserve glory from us, Lord.

You know, Father, if. If every person on this earth. Should glorify you.

Because they are the creature and you are the creator, Lord, how much more of a responsibility do your redeemed have to glorify you? We have a double reason, Lord, you made us and you redeemed us, Lord, fill our hearts with a passion to praise you with a passion to bring you glory, not just with our words, not just with a song, but Lord, with our lives. To live lives that are shining, radiant examples of glorifying you. We love you, Lord.

We praise you and we ask that you make us the kind of people, make us like Daniel's Lord, the kind of people. That those in this world can turn to when they see the writing on the wall. Give us that kind of character, that kind of steadfastness.

Thank you, Lord.

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