

THE HANDWRITING'S ON THE WALL!

Daniel 5

Dan. presents 6 stories about how to "live happily everafter."--even in adversity!

People who love & obey God win in the end.

God was in control in past;

He's still in control—even in pagan lands!

Dan 5 Belshazzar's feast & downfall —defiant rejection of God

First 4 ch. of Dan. deal with Nebu.

Nebu. died in 562 B.C.,
after 43 yrs on throne

Followed by succession of weak descendants who kill each other.

23 yrs—2 generations—4 kings later...

Bel.'s 2 uncles, 1 cousin, father

After 6 yrs of violent transition, 4th king, **Nabonidus** 556-539
(son-in-law of Nebu.)

Nabonidus left son to occupy throne in Babylon, while he traveled.

(=> **BELSHAZZAR** 553-539) 5:16—He makes Daniel 3rd ruler! Why not 2nd?

Night of Nabonidus' / Belshazzar's downfall described in Dan 5.

New Year's party—to demonstrate loyalty to traditions & restore loyalty

Insider's view of activities in palace, while armies moved outside.

Demonstrates *what happens to a pagan king who flaunts rebellion against God with a clenched fist!*

He should've known better!

Everyone knew what happened to Nebu. (Dan. 4)

KING'S REVELRY 1-4 “King Belshazzar made a great feast for 1000 of his lords & drank wine in front of the 1000. ²Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded the vessels of gold & of silver Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king & his lords, his wives, & his concubines might drink from them. ³Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, & the king & his lords, wives, & concubines drank from them. ⁴They drank wine & praised the gods of gold & silver, bronze, iron, wood, & stone.”

Threat is indirect; *they* don't suffer. **God faces ridicule.**

Belshazzar has *no fear* of God

— nor anyone else!

Celebrates banquet with enemy on his door step, ***daring them to do something about it.***

No one could take the mighty city!

Therefore, ***he fears no one!***

Contempt for God, partying with vessels from temple--***daring Him to do something about it.***

What would God do about this challenge?

Could the king insult God and come out unharmed?

Who comes to mind when YOU think of people arrogantly flaunting rebellion against God—**daring Him to do something?**

Our whole society is daring God to do something about our rebellion!

Some point at political & judicial leaders!

What about in our lives—closer to home?

Know anyone daring God to “do something about it”?
Neighbor? Family member?

IS IT EVER POSSIBLE TO INSULT GOD—REBEL AGAINST HIM—AND WALK AWAY UNHARMED?

[What happened to the arrogant king?]

REVELATION TO THE KING 5:5-12

The king's party is cut short 5:5-6 *Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared & wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. The king saw the hand as it wrote. ⁶The king's color changed, & his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, & his knees knocked together.”*

None of his wisemen can interpret it

5:7-9 *“The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, Chaldeans, & astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, “Whoever reads this writing, & shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple & have a chain of gold around his neck & shall be 3rd ruler in the kingdom.” ⁸All the king's wise men came in, but they couldn't read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. ⁹Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, & his color changed, & his lords were perplexed.”*

=> King is troubled

He doesn't know what to do.

Queen's counsel & testimony 10-12

"The queen, because of the words of the king & his lords, came into the banqueting hall, & the queen declared, "O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change.

¹¹There's a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light & understanding & wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, & King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, & astrologers, ¹²because an excellent spirit, knowledge, & understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, & solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called; he will show the interpretation."

"The queen"—NOT his wife

She wouldn't dare—cp. Esther

= Queen-Mother—she's king-maker—very powerful.

Mother? Grandmother?

She gives eye-witness testimony regarding Daniel's ability

"Spirit of the gods" is in him.

He's able to interpret dreams & mysteries

Daniel's an old man! He's been in Babylon near 70 yrs. He's 85-90!

Probably no longer active in political affairs; king never heard of him.

Belshazzar calls Daniel

KING'S REQUEST He explains problem. **5:13-16** *"Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered & said to Daniel, 'You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. ¹⁴I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, & that light & understanding & excellent wisdom are found in you. ¹⁵The wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing & make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. ¹⁶But I've heard that you can give interpretations & solve problems. Now if you can read the writing & make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple & have a chain of gold around your neck & shall be 3rd ruler in the kingdom.'"*

Based on queen's word,

Bel. compares advisors with Dan.

His advisors don't have answers.

They've been telling him what he wants to hear.

They have nothing to say.

"They could not!" (v. 15)

I've heard about you: *"You're able to give interpretations & solve difficult problems."*

Daniel's in contact with another world.

He knows GOD!

Those who walk with God, don't just repeat the party line!

They speak truth, whether people want to hear it or not!

CAUSE OF THE REVELATION

[5:17-24]

Daniel rejects his offer 17 *"Daniel*

answered & said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself; give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king & make known the interpretation.

Daniel is driven by faithfulness; NOT by pursuit of gain.

He's not doing this to get ahead.

He could *die* for it!

Kingdom's about to fall in Cyrus' hands.

It 's worse for him to be an official!

Speaks as God's messenger,
proclaiming judgment against king.

Dan. presents lesson Bel. should've learned from Nebu.

18-21 *“O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship & greatness, glory & majesty. ¹⁹Because of the greatness he gave him, all peoples, nations, & languages trembled & feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, & whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, & whom he would, he humbled. ²⁰But when his heart was lifted up & his spirit was hardened so he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, & his glory was taken from him. ²¹He was driven from among the children of mankind, & his mind was made like a beast, & his dwelling was with wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, & his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind & sets over it whom he will.*

=> to humble himself before God

Belshazzar has fallen in same trap 22

[He's done worse!]

"You his son, Bels. haven't humbled your heart, though you knew all this"

He has deliberately challenged Yahweh 23-24 *"But you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. The vessels of his house have been brought in before you, & you & your lords, your wives, & your concubines have drunk wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver & gold, of bronze, iron, wood, & stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, & whose are all your ways, you have not honored. ²⁴"From his presence the hand was sent, & this writing was inscribed."*

Instead of humbling himself before God, Belshazzar became arrogant, worshipping impotent gods, using vessels from temple, & refusing to honor Him.

[God intervened and sent this message:]

INTERPRETATION OF THE REVELATION 5:25-28 25 *"This is the writing that was inscribed: Mene, Mene, Tekel, & Parsin."*

3 key words:

Dan goes to roots of words
to unravel the mystery:

26 *"This is the interpretation of the matter: Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end;*

"Mene" = "to number"

Your days are numbered!
God has put an end to them!

27 *“Tekel, you’ve been weighed in the balances & found wanting;”*

“Tekel” = “to weigh”
(= to evaluate)

In appraisal of metals,
 value is often determined by weight.

You’ve been weighed and found deficient –“you come up short!”

28 *“Peres, your kingdom is divided & given to the Medes & Persians.”*

“Upharsin”-& “Peres”-“to divide”
(also underlies Persia)

Your kingdom’s divided & given to Medes & Persians.

PARTY’S OVER! *Belshazzar has taken God lightly for last time!*

Kingdom would fall that night.

DANIEL'S "REWARD" 5:29

Sort of like death warrant!

“Then Belshazzar gave the command, & Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, & a proclamation made about him, that he should be 3rd ruler in the kingdom.”

Belshazzar rewards Daniel for doing what no one else is able to do,

but it’s too late to do any good.

Even in national calamity,

God is honored and exalted.

But–cp. **6:3** – Darius also rewards Daniel.

“This Daniel became distinguished above all other high officials & satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. The king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.”

REVELATION FULFILLED 30-31

“That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about 62 yrs old.

Cyrus knew he’d never take Babylon under normal conditions

How did he do it?

They diverted the river

2 leaders of Babylonian army abandoned city & told him about the annual party

They dug canals to divert river

Normally two men deep--That night it was possible to wade through

When they went in, leaders were so drunk they couldn’t move.

Cyrus walked in & took over!

Belshazzar and leaders were killed; masses rejoiced.

WHAT’S MESSAGE?

God’s in control, even when it doesn’t look like it!

He’ll ultimately triumph & the faithful triumph with Him!.

King (Or president) who dares fight Him, sooner or later loses—he’ll pay for his rebellion.

Envision modern Saddam Hussein
 —trying to imitate his great ancestor, Nebuchadnezzar
 —mocking God and rejecting any who represent Him
 Nebuchadnezzar was most powerful man on earth
 Belshazzar was walking in his shadow
Even in our technological society,
God's still in control.

*Anyone able to identify with **Spurgeon's** cry over England?*
"Although God has given so much light, & kindly favored US with
the dew of His Spirit, yet our land is a hoary sinner!"

Opposition to God and to God's people seems to be increasing.
 In name of an attack against "bigoted, fundamentalist religions."
 It's an attack on people who stand for what we believe and
 share our faith with others.

What can WE expect in the future?

**God destroys people who rebel against Him and desecrate what
 He considers sacred.**

Demonstrates what happens when people flaunt
 rebellion in G face

His attitude: disrespect, arrogance & rebellion:

"What does the God of Israel think He'll do about it? He can't
 touch me!"

How does this story from long ago relate to our life?

We're secure in spite of threat of pagan mockers.

It's risky business to play games with God

Principles to meditate on:

** It still doesn't pay to rebel against God, nor to*
despise what He has set apart for Himself!

* *You still can't play games with God & walk away unharmed!*

* *God still controls history, even in pagan lands!*

Principles have *primary* application to political leaders; don't stop there.

Pride is a danger for all of us. We can all fall into Belshazzar's trap: turning our back on God, or flaunting rebellious fist in God's face.

Beware! God isn't mocked.

He's not ignored or belittled.

Have we, as His people, humbled ourselves before Him?

Have we recognized that He is Lord?

Have we called out to Him to transform our lives?

Has God placed US on the scale and weighed us?

How do we "measure up?"

Are WE found wanting?

Thank God, *our salvation* isn't based on how much we weigh on God's scale; we'd ALL be found wanting & condemned.

As His children, we're placed on that scale as to our life.

"How do we weigh in?

How do we measure up?"

Our salvation isn't based on measuring up, but our life & its significance *is* based on how we measure up.

We, as His people, in a pagan society, . . .

How do we measure up?

Are WE trying to get away with playing games with God?

Trying to live without Him?

Trying to have it OUR way—instead of submitting to Him? **It doesn't pay!**

God is not mocked. He will not be ignored or belittled--not even by us!

You can't play games with God and walk away unharmed!

His people must acknowledge Him first, & trust Him.

We're called to be different from world living for pleasure.

Can our neighbors tell we belong to Him?