

“The Handwriting on the Wall”
Daniel 5:1-31
Wednesday, February 4, 2026
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Old English proverb: “To be forewarned is to be forearmed.”

Luke 21:34-36: We are to be on guard, sober, and alert, for no one knows the day or the hour of Christ’s return.

Malachi 4:1: God’s final, ultimate judgment. Everyone will stand before Him.
Luke 3:7, Romans 2:5-6: Judgment for those who refuse to repent.

Outline of Daniel:

I. Ch. 1: 1-21 Daniel, the Prisoner

II. Ch. 2:1—7:28: God’s Prophetic Plan for the Gentiles

III. Ch. 8:1-12:13 God’s Prophetic Plan for Israel

Chapter 5: Belshazzar’s Feast and Babylon’s Fall

Main Thought of Chapter: “Revere God: Heed His warnings of future judgment for the ungodly; lest your downfall be swift and unexpected.”

Chapter Outline:

- 1. Vv. 1-4: Mockery of the King**
- 2. Vv. 5-9: Prophetic Warning**
- 3. Vv. 10-23: Godly Discernment**
- 4. Vv. 24-31: Judgment Fulfilled**

2 Peter 3:7, 1 John 2:16, Galatians 6:7-8.

1. Vv. 1-4: Mockery of the King

Vs. 1: Belshazzar’s feast for 1,000: Babylon is under siege by the Persian army. Belshazzar embodies the worldly philosophy, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow, we may die” (**Isaiah 22:13**).

The ultimate prepper: 20 years of supplies, the Euphrates River flowed through the city. He was so confident in his own provisions that the king gave a banquet for 1,000 nobles.

“He was drinking wine.” “Drinking” means “continuous drinking.” The king wanted them to feel secure in his planning and defenses. He partied with his nobles as a show of confidence.

Vs. 2: “Belshazzar tasted the wine”: feeling the wine’s full effects. **He gave orders to bring the temple vessels.** These were cups, bowls, and utensils created by divine instructions given to Moses.

These vessels were used in the Tabernacle and in the Temple. They were consecrated for the offerings to the God of Israel. This king is mocking the God of Heaven. **Mockers:** Last days Sign: **2 Peter 3:3-4, 10.**

Vv. 3-4: "...his wives and his concubines drank from them."

Belshazzar's act of defiance. This was a conscious, public insult, not an ignorant mistake.

They praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Listed in descending value: downward spiral into sin and degradation of idolatry.

Isaiah 42:8.

2. Vv. 5-9: Prophetic Warning

Vs. 5: "Suddenly": At the very height of Belshazzar's blasphemy. A man's hand emerged and began writing on the plaster of the wall. (Archaeologists have discovered this whitewashed wall.)

Vs. 6: King's face grew pale: "fight-or-flight response." **His hip joints went slack:** loss of core strength.

His knees knocked together: uncontrollable leg tremors. Loss of physical control; he collapsed in fear or soiled himself. Extreme terror.

Vs. 7: The king called aloud: (continuous action) Belshazzar kept on screaming for his wise men. Reward for reading the message: **Clothed with purple, necklace of gold:** signs of royalty. **Third ruler:** the best that the king could offer.

Vs. 8: All the king's wise men... could not read or interpret. The inscription was written in Aramaic. Like Hebrew, it is read from right to left, with no spaces between words, and written in consonant letters only.

N S R H P L K T N M N M

However, many rabbis think the inscription may have read top down, right to left, with no space and consonant letters only.

**P T M M
R K N N
S L ' '**

Vs. 9: Belshazzar was greatly alarmed. The so-called experts could not help him. World rulers are powerless when confronted by the power and wisdom of God (**Psalms 2:4-6**). All were in a panic.

3. Vv. 10-23: Godly Discernment

Vs. 10: The queen entered. King Nabonidus's wife and daughter of King Nebuchadnezzar. She took charge of the situation. **Do not let your thoughts alarm you.** Third reference to his horror-struck face.

VS. 11: A man... in whom is a spirit of the holy gods. Also translated as **"the Spirit of the Holy God."** God's wisdom was great in Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar made him chief over all his wise men.

Vs. 12: Explanation of enigmas: Daniel exhibited more than human wisdom. He had knowledge and wisdom that came from God's Holy Spirit.

He will declare the interpretation. The queen refers to **Daniel** by his Hebrew name. She has direct knowledge of him.

Vs. 13: Daniel was brought in before the king. He is about eighty-two years old. He was about sixteen when taken to Babylon in 605 B.C., and the year is now 539 B.C. He was no longer among the other wise men.

"Are you that Daniel...?" The king does not know him personally. He may have removed him from the court for being a Jew.

Vv. 14-15: Man's wisdom cannot solve the world's problems. Only God's Word holds the key to man's sin problem.

Scripture testifies to God's saving grace in Christ Jesus. The worldly-minded do not seek His salvation until the last resort.

Vv. 16-17: Keep your gifts for yourself. All the world's glory and treasures mean nothing in the light of judgment. **I will read the inscription and make the interpretation known.**

Vv. 18-21: Daniel rebukes the king. His grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, was humbled by God Most High. He was given the mind of a beast. After Nebuchadnezzar repented, God restored to him the kingdom.

Vv. 22-23: "...even though you knew all this." Belshazzar was a teenager and heard Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation to honor God. He chose to defy God.

"You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven." "You, you, you..." (14 times). Daniel rebukes the king. He had a choice to repent or receive judgment. Time has expired.

4. Vv. 24-31: Judgment Fulfilled

Vs. 24: Daniel explains, **"The hand was sent from God..."** The king and his court were illiterate when reading and understanding God's word.

Vs. 25: MENĒ (2X): "to number." **TEKĒL**: "to weigh." **UPHARSIN** (plural form of **PERĒS**) "to divide." Literally reads, "Numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided."

Vv. 26-28: 'MENĒ': Your kingdom is numbered and put to an end. Twice for emphasis as God's determined judgment.

'TEKĒL': You have been weighed and found deficient. The king did not measure up to God's standard of righteousness.

'PERĒS': Your kingdom divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Plural UPHARSIN (vs. 25) changed to the singular **PERĒS**. Pun pointing to Persian victory. At that moment, the prophecy was being fulfilled.

Vv. 29-30: Belshazzar gave orders. Daniel was hailed as the third ruler in the kingdom. The king recognized God's hand at work.

King Belshazzar slain. Cyrus devised a brilliant strategy for attacking Babylon. He diverted the Euphrates River. The Persian armies entered under Babylon's wall after the water level dropped.

Vs. 31: Darius the Mede received the kingdom: Cyrus the Great's general. The ancient city of Babylon fell to an inferior empire in a single day.

Summary:

We fear God and revere His name. In the light of God's word, we prepare for our coming judgment. (**Hebrews 9:27-29**). All who come in faith to the Cross of Christ are declared righteous before God's Judgment Seat. They will never be unprepared when Christ returns.

Application:

1. Judgment begins in the house of God (**1 Peter 4:17**). Are you ready?
2. Trust only in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection for salvation.
3. Regard God as Holy and treat His things with reverence. Be holy.
4. Read God's word. The Holy Spirit gives discernment for understanding the times.