

The Writing on the Wall...

Daniel Chapter 5

Introduction

Many people who know nothing about Babylonians, Belshazzar's feast or Daniel's prophecies use the phrase "I saw the writing on the wall." The phrase comes from this chapter and signifies impending judgment.

Belshazzar (who was probably King Nebuchadnezzar's grandson), his wives and a thousand guests were feasting while the army of the Medes and Persians waited at the city gates, ready to invade. The city of Babylon boasted that it was impregnable and there was enough food stored for 20 years. But God said that Babylon's time had come.

In this chapter we shall look at the people involved in the drama and how they related to God's plan of judgment...

Belshazzar – judgment defied (Daniel 5 v 1 to 4)

- In these verses we see *indulgence* (the great banquet), *indifference* (to the army waiting to invade), and *irreverence* – notice how Belshazzar treated the God of Israel with such arrogant disrespect. In what ways do people use sacred things in an unholy way today?

God – judgment declared (Daniel 5 v 5 to 9)

- In what kinds of situations do you hear people today say, "I saw the writing on the wall"?
- God stopped the party in its tracks with this miracle. What kinds of things does God do to stop us in our tracks?
- How did the king react?
- What course of action did he take, and why?

The queen – judgment disregarded (Daniel 5 v 10 to 12)

- How did the queen respond to the crisis?
- Do you think her suggestion (v 12) was a good one?
- What does it take for a person to achieve the kind of reputation Daniel had?

[MORE OVER]

Daniel – judgment described (Daniel 5 v 13 to 29)

- Daniel paid little attention to the king’s flattering speech, and he had no use for the king’s generous offer. Although he was respectful of the king (v 18), he wasn’t afraid to tell him the truth. Daniel reminded the king of a lesson learned by his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, but ignored by Belshazzar – what was that lesson (v 21, 23)?
- Nebuchadnezzar was given the opportunity to change his ways (v 20, 21) – but for Belshazzar there was to be no escape (v 26 – 28). Why do you think God’s judgment on Belshazzar was final?

Darius – judgment delivered (Daniel 5 v 30 to 31)

Belshazzar ignored the one true God and forgot the lessons of history. In one fateful night he lost both his life and his kingdom...

Prayer –

Lord God, as we look at the sad and sobering story of Belshazzar, help us always to honour you, remembering that you hold in your hand our lives and all our ways.

Amen.