

The Writing on the Wall

Daniel 5

Based on NLT (2004)

Daniel 5:1-12

Many years later King Belshazzar, *the king that had replaced Nebuchadnezzar*, gave a great feast ... *During the feast, Belshazzar and his guests drank from the gold cups that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem while they praised their idols.*

Suddenly, they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the... wall of the king's palace... The king's ... face turned pale with fright. His knees knocked together in fear and his legs gave way beneath him. He shouted for the *wise men* to be brought before him. ...But ...none of them could read the writing or tell him what it meant. ...

But when the queen mother heard what was happening, she hurried to the banquet hall. She said to Belshazzar, "Long live the king! Don't be so pale and frightened. There is a man in your kingdom...King Nebuchadnezzar made him chief over all the *wise men* of Babylon. This man Daniel... is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can....tell you what the writing means."

Daniel 5:13-20

So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king asked him, "Are you Daniel? I am told that ... you can read these words and tell me their meaning. *If so*, you will be clothed in purple robes of royal honor, and you will have a gold chain placed around your neck. You will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom."

Daniel answered the king, "Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means. Your Majesty, the Most High God ...made King Nebuchadnezzar...so great that people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. ... But when his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance, he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory.

"You are his successor, O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself. ... you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny! So God has sent this hand to write this message.

The four words written on the wall mean this: ...God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end.... You have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up....And your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed. And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom *just as the writing on the wall had said.*

Story Crafting

Words/phrases to consider:

Purple robes – the dye used for purple was very expensive, so only the wealthy people could afford it. It has come to symbolize royalty. If that is not the case for your listeners, you could substitute “expensive” for “purple.”

Teaching this Story

What did you like about this story?

Was there something in this story that you did not understand?

What did you learn about “man” (human characters in the story)?

What did you learn about God/Jesus in this story?

What do you need to apply to your life from this story?

To encourage the group to enter into a discussion about Daniel’s experiences in the foreign land, you might ask some of the following questions:

1. Who was king in this story?
2. What were they doing at their feast?
3. Where did the wine goblets come from?
4. Was Daniel still around?
5. Who remembered him?
6. Was God still with Daniel? How do you know this?
7. Had Daniel changed in his faithfulness to God during all these years of being in Babylon? How do you know that?
8. Do you think it’s important to know what has happened in your community before you come along? Why?
9. Do you think God might have prepared the way for you before you talk with someone?
10. Who is finally in charge of what happens where you live and work? What in this story makes you aware of that?