



Lesson 156

The Handwriting on the Wall

Story Elements

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Text: Daniel 5:1-30• Setting: October, 539 BC, in Babylon• Main Characters: God, Daniel, and Belshazzar• Plot: Belshazzar's party is interrupted by a mysterious hand that inscribes a cryptic | <p>message on a wall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key word(s): “ _____ ” (vv 5, 23, 24)• Climax: Daniel 5:22 <i>And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;</i> |
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Belshazzar's Folly

- (v 1) Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's _____, ruled as co-regent in Babylon.
 - His father, Nabonidus, left the city many years earlier because of political strife.
 - Belshazzar was an impious, cruel, and _____ king.
- Belshazzar and his Babylonian courtiers feasted in what they thought was an _____ city. Meanwhile, the Persian army prepared to invade the city.
 - (vv 2-4) As the Belshazzar's party progressed, he called for the sacred vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had plundered from the temple of God in _____. The king and his companions drank from the holy vessels and praised their pagan gods.
 - Why do you think Belshazzar would want to use the temple vessels in such a way? _____
- (vv 5-9) Whilst Belshazzar blasphemously reveled, a hand appeared and began to write on a wall illuminated by a candlestick - possibly the _____ taken from Jerusalem.
 - Belshazzar's jovial mood was turned into _____ as he pondered the meaning of the mysterious hand and its cryptic message. As usual, the astrologers and magicians were unable to understand anything the LORD did.
 - (vv 10-16) The queen (possibly Belshazzar's mother or grandmother) remembered Daniel's ability to interpret dreams and understand mysteries. Upon her suggestion, Daniel was summoned and offered a generous reward for interpreting the mysterious graffiti.

Babylon Falls

- (vv 17-23) Daniel preached a short sermon that Belshazzar needed to hear. He reminded the blasphemous ruler of Nebuchadnezzar's hard-learned lesson of _____ before the God of Heaven – a lesson Belshazzar had never himself learned. The hand that wrote on the wall was the hand of God that held the king's very life.
- (vv 24-28) Daniel read the writing: “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.”
 - Its meaning: MENE – _____ (said twice for emphasis); TEKEL – _____; PERES (singular form of PHARSIN) – _____.

(b) The interpretation: "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it...Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found _____...Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

6. (vv 29-30) Daniel was proclaimed a hero, but the prophet did no celebrating. That very night, the Persians entered the city and Babylon fell in moments.¹

Applications

7. Nebuchadnezzar was right when he observed that God counts men as nothing (Dan. 4:35). The wall that God defaced was possibly a wall that artfully depicted the triumphs and _____ of the kings of Babylon. "It is significant, that on the same wall on which the king was accustomed to read the flattering legends of his own magnificence, he beholds the mysterious inscription which foretells his fall."²

Proverbs 16:18 _____ goeth before destruction, And an haughty spirit before a fall.

8. Daniel rebuked Belshazzar for failing to heed the judgments that Nebuchadnezzar experienced (Dan. 5:22). How tragic it is when those who are familiar with God's judgment would ignore God's warnings. Matthew Henry remarks, "Those that will not be warned by judgments of God may expect to be _____ by them."³

9. The sudden fall of Babylon shocked the ancient world and serves as a reminder that one day _____ will suddenly and completely overthrow all human government.

Revelation 18:10 ...Saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come.

Notes: _____

Answer Key: Key word(s): "hand" • 1. grandson; b) unpopular • 2. impenetrable; a) Jerusalem; b) To remind himself and others of the supposed power of their deities over gods • 3. a) terror • 4. humility • 5. a) counted, weighed, divided; b) wanting • 7. glories • 8. wounded • 9. Christ

How to use this worksheet for personal Bible study: (1) Read the Bible passage given in the **Story Elements** section. (2) Read through the worksheet and try to fill in the blanks without looking at the **Answer Key**. (3) Check your answers with the key and make the necessary corrections. Keep in mind that some answers are a matter of opinion, and often more than one answer is correct. (4) Write down your own thoughts, applications, and questions for further study in the **Notes** section.

¹ Some historians believe that Persian forces had diverted the flow of the Tigris so that soldiers could pass under the river's entrance underneath the wall – a strategy the Babylonians never anticipated. "HERODOTUS and XENOPHON confirm Daniel as to the suddenness of the event. Cyrus diverted the Euphrates into a new channel and, guided by two deserters, marched by the dry bed into the city, while the Babylonians were carousing at an annual feast to the gods." (JFB)

² Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997. Print.

³ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994. Print.