

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE AND FOUND WANTING

Text: (Daniel 5:1-6, 10-12, 17, 22-30, NIV)

¹ King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. ² While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. ³ So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

⁵ Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. ⁶ His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.

¹⁰ The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. "May the king live forever!" she said. "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. ¹² He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.

¹⁷ Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.

²² "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. ²³ Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. ²⁴ Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.

²⁵ "This is the inscription that was written: mene, mene, tekel, parsin

²⁶ "This is what these words mean: *Mene*: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. ²⁷ *Tekel*: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. ²⁸ *Peres*: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

²⁹ Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

INTRODUCTION

A. Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent

1. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare" (II Peter 3:10, NIV).

2. "Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way" (Daniel 5:5-6, NIV).

B. Belshazzar's Impious Feast

1. "King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them" (Daniel 5:1, NIV).
2. "While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them" (Daniel 5:2-3, NIV).

I. FORGOT THE PAST

A. The Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar

1. "Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way'" (Daniel 3:28-29, NIV).
2. "I said, 'Beltshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me'" (Daniel 4:9, NIV).
3. "Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird" (Daniel 4:33, NIV).

B. Grace of God

1. "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear" (Isaiah 59:1, NIV).
2. "At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done" (Daniel 4:34-35, NIV)?

C. Restorer of Wasted Years

1. "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you" (Joel 2:25, NIV).

2. "At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble" (Daniel 4:36-37, NIV).

II. HOPE IN THIS LIFE

1. "When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing" (Proverbs 11:7, NIV).

A. Beautiful Sandcastles

1. "King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them" (Daniel 5:1, NIV).
2. "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (I Corinthians 15:19, NIV).
3. "I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11, NIV).
4. "Their tombs will remain their houses forever, their dwellings for endless generations, though they had named lands after themselves.
People, despite their wealth, do not endure; they are like the beasts that perish. This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve their sayings. They are like sheep and are destined to die; death will be their shepherd (but the upright will prevail over them in the morning). Their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions" (Psalm 49:11-14, NIV).

B. Dared to Desecrate

1. "As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone" (Daniel 5:4, NIV).
2. "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18, NIV).
3. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked" (Galatians 6:7, NIV).

III. HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

1. "Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way" (Daniel 5:5-6, NIV).
2. "This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN
'This is what these words mean: *Mene* : God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. *Tekel* : You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. *Peres* : Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians'" (Daniel 5:25-28, NIV).

A. Reminded of the Past

1. "But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes" (Daniel 5:20-21, NIV).

B. Too Late

1. "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12, NIV).
2. "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books" (Revelation 20:12, NIV).
3. "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left" (Matthew 24:37-41, NIV).

CONCLUSION:

1. "*Peres* : Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 5:28, NIV).
2. "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two" (Daniel 5:30-31, NIV).
3. "Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2, NIV).
4. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.
"Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matthew 22:11-13, NIV)
5. "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'
"But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'
"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour"
(Matthew 25:11-13, NIV).