

Writing on the Wall

Scripture Reference: [Daniel 5](#)



Suggested Emphasis: Show respect for God.

Memory Verse: Happy are those who respect the Lord and obey him. [Psalm 128:1, ICB](#)



Story Overview:

Almost twenty years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar (the acting ruler) held a drunken feast. To add excitement to the party, he called for the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem many years before. The revellers praised their false gods and used the holy temple objects to drink wine from. A human hand appeared from nowhere and wrote on the wall. None of the king's court could interpret the writing so Daniel was brought to the feast. Daniel interpreted the writing to mean that Belshazzar and the kingdom would fall. That very night Belshazzar was killed and Darius, king of the Medes, took over Babylon.

Background Study:

The people of God had been in Babylonian captivity for almost 70 years. More than twenty years had passed since King Nebuchadnezzar died. It seems that Daniel became less active in government business after Nebuchadnezzar's death.

The new leader of the Babylonian empire was Nabonidus, probably a son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar. Much of the time he was away from Babylon, and his son Belshazzar was in charge there. There were big military problems going on but Belshazzar seems to be devoting more time to parties than military strategy. This is too bad because while he is having this particular feast, the Medes and Persians are gathering outside the city.

Wine and drinking are mentioned a lot and it seems the king and his guests became drunk. Losing his good judgment, Belshazzar decided to show off the gold and silver cups and bowls that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem nearly seventy years before. Items from the temple had been dedicated to God. It was insulting to Him to have these used in a drunken feast.

The mysterious fingers wrote their message on the plastered wall where they could be seen clearly because the light was good. The lamp stand probably was a stand holding several oil lamps.

As he read the message, the king stopped laughing. Verse 6 is a great verse to read out to the class because it graphically depicts how frightened the king really was. He sent for the best astrologers and diviners so that they could interpret the writing. They could not interpret it. The queen then suggested that they send for Daniel.

Daniel had a history of interpreting dreams. Years before he had interpreted a number of dreams for King Nebuchadnezzar. These are found in Daniel 2 and 4.

When Daniel arrived he told Belshazzar that the king was arrogant and had insulted God. That is why God sent the dramatic message. Mene, "numbered or counted," meant that the days of Belshazzar's rule now had been all counted out. Tekel, "weighed," explained why this king's rule was ended. In God's scales, he was not man enough to be king. Peres means "division," and parsin is the plural of this word. The Medes and Persians in the east had formed an alliance to fight against Babylon, and already their armies were just outside the city.

The Medes and Persians managed to slip into the city secretly while all the Babylonians feasted. Before morning they killed Belshazzar and took over his kingdom (v 31).

Daniel had a reputation among the Babylonian courts. Knowing Daniel was a wise elder statesman, the new leaders gave him a prestigious place in their government (Daniel 6:1-2).



Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring some item to class that appears to be very "precious." Usually, glitzy or sparkly things seem very expensive to young children. You may even wish to bring an item that truly is special to you (use careful judgment). Tell the children that this item is a very special item for class today. You want them to treat it in a very special way. Show them how you are holding it carefully and let them touch and hold it and pass it around. "In today's story, we are going to learn about some cups that were very special cups. They were special because they had been used in the temple of the Lord. They were made from pure gold and silver. God wanted the cups to always be handled very carefully."

[top](#)

The Story:

Daniel had lived in Babylon for many years. He became an old man there. All of his life Daniel tried to do what God said. King Nebuchadnezzar really liked Daniel. Daniel was one of the best servants that Nebuchadnezzar had.

One time King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that upset him. He stayed up at night worrying about the dream. The king called all of the magicians in his court to come and tell him what the dream meant. "Tell us the dream," the magicians said, "and we will tell you what it means."

But the king would not tell anyone what he dreamed. He wanted to see if the magicians could tell HIM what the dream was. If the magicians could tell him then their power would be proved real. When the king saw that none of the magicians could tell him about his dream he ordered that all of the wise men in Babylon be put to death.

Daniel was one of the king's wise men! He told the king that he could tell him the dream. He would not tell the dream through magic, he would tell it through God's power.

Daniel told the king that the dream was about a statue. The statue's head was of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a huge stone rolled down and crushed the feet and the statue crumbled and fell. "Yes, that's it exactly!" said the king. Daniel told the king what the dream meant. The parts of the statue's body represent the kingdom of Babylon and the Kingdoms that will come after it. Someday there will be another kingdom (the Kingdom of God) that will be stronger than all of the other kingdoms. The kingdoms of this earth will come to an end but the Kingdom of God will last forever. The king knew that what Daniel said was true.

Another time King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about a tree that was as tall as the sky. It was so big it could be seen from every place on the earth. All kinds of animals lived under it. In the dream he was told to cut it down. Daniel told the meaning of that dream. The tree represented King Nebuchadnezzar. King Nebuchadnezzar would be cut down like the tree and be made humble. He would eat grass in the fields like animals "until seven times passed over him" (probably meaning "for seven years"), until he admitted that the Lord was the only God. The dream came true and after seven years King Nebuchadnezzar admitted that the Lord was the only God.

Many years passed. King Nebuchadnezzar died and now there was a new king. Belshazzar was the one who was acting as King of Babylon.

King Belshazzar gave a big banquet for a thousand of his nobles. Everyone at the banquet drank a lot of alcohol and got drunk. King Belshazzar wanted to impress all of his guests. He knew that there were some gold and silver cups that were in storage. They were the cups that had been stolen from the now destroyed temple of God in Jerusalem. Belshazzar did not care that these were special cups that were only to be used in God's temple. He ordered the servants to bring the cups so his guests could use them to drink more alcohol.

When everyone began drinking out of God's special cups a giant hand appeared out of nowhere. It wrote words on the wall of the room. The words were "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin." None of the king's wise men knew what the words meant.

The king was very frightened. He really wanted to know what the words meant. Finally the queen said that they should ask Daniel what it meant. Daniel was an old man now but he used to interpret dreams for King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel was brought before the king. Daniel probably saw God's special cups being used to drink from. These people did not even love God. They certainly did not respect God.

The king offered him a lot of money but Daniel said he did not want any money. He told the king what the writing meant. "Mene means that your days are numbered. You will not be king long. Tekel means that you have been weighed on God's scales and you are not good enough. Peres means that your kingdom is divided and another

country will take away your kingdom.”

The king knew that what Daniel said was true. That very night an army came and took over the kingdom of Babylon. Now the Medes and Persians were rulers of the land.

[top](#)

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. Name two dreams that Daniel interpreted for King Nebuchadnezzar. The dream about the crumbling statue and the dream about the huge tree.
2. What special things did King Belshazzar use in his banquet? Gold and silver cups stolen from the temple of God
3. What wrote the words on the wall? A giant hand
4. What happened later on the night of King Belshazzar's banquet? The Medes and Persians took over the kingdom of Babylon

Song Suggestions:

- [Rejoice in the Lord Always Song](#)
- [My God is So Big Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Use lemon juice to “write” a message on a paper. After it is dry it should be invisible. Hold a candle in your hand and hold it over the message. As the dried lemon juice heats it will turn brown and the message will appear. Be sure and practice this.
- Help the children look up “respect” in a dictionary and Thesaurus.
- Find good maps (in the back of many Bibles) to see how the Medeo-Persian Empire took over Babylon.
- Discuss how treating the temple items with respect showed respect to God. Why was God upset that the Babylonians were using them in the feast? How do we show respect to God today?
- Use bible encyclopaedias to find illustrations of temple utensils.
- Use a hand puppet to tell or review the story from a different point of view. Try telling it from the point of view of Daniel, Belshazzar or even – with a great imagination – one of the cups.
- Click [here](#) for more ideas for [Teaching About Respect](#)

- Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Writing on the Wall" printables to print on A4 size paper](#)
[Click here for "Writing on the Wall" printables \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

[top](#)

Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Art Activity: Use invisible ink to make "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin" appear on a paper. \(Instructions for invisible ink Wiki How\)](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/book-of-daniel/>
[top](#)



©Mission Bible Class 2011-2022 Copies may be made for personal and ministry purposes only.
Not to be sold or profited from in any way. www.missionbibleclass.org