



Many years after King Nebuchadnezzar died, Belshazzar (*bel-SHAZ-er*) was king of Babylon. (Historians believe that he co-reigned with his father. He was put in charge of Babylon while his father was gone.) History tells us that the Babylonians fought and lost a battle with Cyrus, king of Persia, and his army. Then, Cyrus and his army surrounded the city of Babylon.

Although Babylon was under siege, Belshazzar and his people felt safe inside the city. This huge city had two, thick walls around it for protection. It had strong gates of brass (thought to have been as many as 100 gates). There was enough food stored up to last the people for many years. Also, the Euphrates River ran right through the middle of the city, providing water and defense for the city.

Belshazzar felt so secure in this great city that he became careless. He decided to have a feast and invite "a thousand of his lords." The king's princes, wives, and concubines were also at this feast.

King Belshazzar drank much wine and became drunk. Then he did a very daring thing. He commanded that the sacred gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the temple in Jerusalem be brought to the feast. The sacred vessels were brought in, and Belshazzar and his guests drank wine from the precious vessels! They praised their gods—gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone. By doing this, Belshazzar mocked the God of Heaven, and God was not pleased!



Church of God Sunday School

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

Daniel 5:1-31

In the same hour (while all this was going on), Belshazzar saw something that frightened him greatly! On one of the palace walls, the fingers of a man's hand were writing! King Belshazzar's partying mood was gone. He was so afraid that his knees were knocking together! Although he did not understand what was written, he must have known it was not good.

King Belshazzar called for his astrologers, his soothsayers, and his wise men. He said to them, "Who-soever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." (Belshazzar's father was the first ruler, and he was the second.)

All the wise men could not read the writing, nor could they tell the king what it meant. Then King Belshazzar became extremely troubled! His lords also were upset. When the old Queen Mother heard all the commotion going on in the banquet house, she went and spoke to Belshazzar. She knew something that the king needed to hear.

The Queen Mother told Belshazzar, "There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods." She reminded the king how in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, this man had shown such great wisdom that he was made "master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers." This man was Daniel.

Though Daniel was an old man by then, he was just as wise and just as faithful to his God as he had always been. The Queen Mother told Belshazzar to call for Daniel, for he would know the interpretation of the writing.

Daniel was brought before Belshazzar, who asked him if he was Daniel, the one Nebuchadnezzar had brought from Judah. He told Daniel that he had heard of him. Belshazzar said, "Now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Daniel told King Belshazzar to keep his gifts or give them to someone else. He did not want Belshazzar's favors, but he said he would read the writing on the wall and tell Belshazzar its interpretation.

Daniel reminded King Belshazzar about King Nebuchadnezzar. He told of how God had set Nebuchadnezzar as king and how he was so very proud. Then God had to take his mind from him and give him the mind of an animal for seven years. Afterward, Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself and honored God.

Daniel continued: "And thou . . . O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this." Daniel told the king that because he had defied God, using His sacred vessels to drink wine and praise his false gods, and because he did not glorify the true God who gave him his breath each day, God had sent the writing on the wall.

Then Daniel told Belshazzar what was written: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." Daniel said that the interpretation was this:

"MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

"TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

"PERES [or UPHARSIN]; Thy kingdom is divided,

and given to the Medes and Persians."

King Belshazzar might not have liked the interpretation of the message, but he still commanded his servants to bring the scarlet robe for Daniel and to put a chain of gold around his neck. As promised, Daniel was made the third ruler in the kingdom.

That very night Daniel's words came true. Cyrus and his army dug channels to cause the Euphrates River to flow into a swampy area, instead of through the city of Babylon. The soldiers were then able to enter the city of Babylon by walking on the nearly dry riverbed. For some reason, the gates of the inner walls were unlocked. Nothing could stop the army of the Medes and the Persians!

More than 200 years before this, God told the Prophet Isaiah that this would happen. He wrote of it in Isaiah 44:28 – 45:7. God brought judgment to Babylon and its wicked king. Belshazzar was killed, and Darius the Mede took control of the kingdom that Belshazzar had once ruled over.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."  
—Daniel 5:27*

## Draw a Line From the Word to Its Meaning

MENE

You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting

Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians

TEKEL

UPHARSIN

God has numbered your kingdom and finished it



# The Writing on the Wall

**KEY**

|   |   |   |   |     |   |
|---|---|---|---|-----|---|
| ☀ | ☹ | ☺ | ✍ | ←←← | € |
| Y | U | V | W | B   | F |
| ◻ | ▣ | △ | λ | ζ   | ⊕ |
| H | K | C | P | M   | J |

Fill in the missing letters using the key above to learn the meaning of the writing

**MENE, MENE:** God \_\_\_at\_\_\_ n\_\_\_ \_\_\_ered th\_\_\_ \_\_\_ingdo\_\_\_,  
 ◻ ◻ ☹ ζ ←←← ☀ ▣ ζ  
 and \_\_\_inis\_\_\_ed it.  
 € ◻

**TEKEL:** T\_\_\_o\_\_\_ art \_\_\_eig\_\_\_ed in t\_\_\_e \_\_\_alan\_\_\_es, and art  
 ◻ ☹ ✍ ◻ ◻ ←←← △  
 \_\_\_o\_\_\_nd \_\_\_anting.  
 € ☹ ✍

**UPHARSIN:** T\_\_\_y \_\_\_ingdo\_\_\_ is di\_\_\_ided, and gi\_\_\_en to t\_\_\_e  
 ◻ ▣ ζ ☹ ☹ ◻  
 \_\_\_edes and \_\_\_ersians.  
 ζ λ