

DANIEL 5

Pagan Revelry, Handwriting on the Wall & Belshazzar's Death

We were introduced to Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson (who co-reigned with his father, Nabonidus), in Daniel chapter 7. In this chapter we learn of the demise of Belshazzar's reign and his death. The events of Daniel chapter 8 took place in the 3rd year of Belshazzar (551 BC) and since Belshazzar reigned from 553 to 539 BC it is now about 12 years later. This chapter also contains the famous story of the handwriting on the wall.

vv. 1-4 ➤ BELSHAZZAR ORGANIZES A PAGAN PARTY & MOCKS GOD

[1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. 2 While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.]

In this chapter we learn of the demise of Belshazzar's reign and his death. The events of Daniel chapter 8 took place in the 3rd year of Belshazzar (551 BC) and since Belshazzar reigned from 553 to 539 BC it is now about 12 years after the events recorded in chapter 8.

King Belshazzar organizes a great feast or a party of all parties. There were probably over 2000 people there: his concubines, 1000 of his lords and their wives. This feast will degenerate into drunkenness and a pagan worship service.

In his exuberance to celebrate, Belshazzar orders that the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar plundered from the Jewish Temple be brought to the feast so he and his guests can drink from them. This is a mockery of the original purpose of these vessels or namely, they were holy unto the LORD and used in services to worship Him.

The vessels from the temple are enumerated in *Ezra 1:9-11* and included¹ the items listed in **Table 5-1**. This amounts to a total of 2499 but the total number of gold and silver articles is stated to be 5400. Evidently either (a) Ezra chose only to list the *most important of these items* and round their number or (b) the Hebrew text has suffered a corruption from the original² {i.e., number of gold platters and silver basins}. In this case, the latter is probably correct but should not be construed to invalidate original scripture as evidenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls and consistent archeological confirmation of the historical record of the Bible.

¹ King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods; and Cyrus king of Persia brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. {*Ezra 1:7,8*}.

² In Ezra the number of gold platters is put equal to the number of gold basins and a 10 was left off of 100.

We gain additional insight from the Old Testament apocryphal book of Esdras³. Note the enumeration of these items from *1 Esdras 2:13,14* in **Table 5-1**. In that passage, the exact number of items total 5469 which is equivalent to rounded number or 5400 mentioned in Ezra. So it appears that the Hebrew text in Ezra put 3000 for 10000 gold platters and dropped 2000 from the silver basins. But this in no way affects anything of the significance such as the doctrines and spiritual truths of the Bible. It may be in fact argued that the such an obvious uncorrected error lends credence actually to the honesty of the copyists.

Table 5- 1. Enumerated Temple Articles in Ezra & 1 Esdras.

| Item | Quantity | |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| | <i>Ezra 1:9-11</i> | <i>1 Esdras 2:13,14</i> |
| Gold platters | 30 | 1000 |
| Silver platters | 1000 | 1000 |
| Knives | 29 | 29 |
| Gold basins | 30 | 30 |
| Silver basins | 410 | 2410 |
| Miscellaneous articles | 1000 | 1000 |
| Total | 2499 | 5469 |

[*“which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken...”*] Some see a gross discrepancy here since we now know from historical evidence that Belshazzar’s father was Nabonidus {whom he co-reigned with}. However, as we saw in the Introduction to Daniel, oftentimes the scriptures refer to an ancestor as *“father”* in the sense of lineage or *“blood relative”*. That is simply the case here. The most famous example of this is the reference of the Jews during Jesus’ ministry to *“our father Abraham, who is dead?”* in **John 8:53, 56**. {See also **Genesis 32:9; Joshua 24:3; Luke 1:73, 16:24,30; Acts 7:2** and **Romans 4:12**}.

[*They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.*] Not only were Belshazzar and his guests defiling the holy vessels by drinking wine out of them and getting drunk, they began to worship the pagan gods made of corruptible things like gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.

The LORD mocks the false gods that can neither see, hear or speak and chides all those who would worship such worthless things. See for example **Psalms 115:3-8; 135:15-18; Isaiah 37:18,19; 40:18-25; 44:8-20; 46:5-7; Jeremiah 10:2-5** and **Habakkuk 2:18-20**.

Today, modern *“pagans”* have another form of idolatry that seeks to worship the creation more than the Creator and rob God of the glory and honor due Him. This *“modern”* form of idolatry is referred to as *“Evolution”* or *“Darwinism”* and its religion is *“Humanism”*. Here is some testimony to that fact.

³ The Old Testament Apocrypha {from *apokruphos* = *“hidden, concealed”*} is a collection of 14 additional books in the Old Testament. They were included in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Esdras is the Greek for **Ezra**. The book narrates in Greek the declension and fall of Judah from Josiah’s reign, the destruction of Jerusalem, the Babylonian Exile, the return of the exiles, and the share taken by Ezra in the restored community. The book consists of an independent and somewhat free version of portions of **2 Chronicles** and **Ezra-Nehemiah** broken by an extended context that has no parallel in the Hebrew Bible (1 Esdras 3:1-5:6).

In the magazine called The Humanist, the following statement appears in an article entitled, A Religion for a New Age: The Secular Classroom (1985)

“The battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in a public school classroom by teachers who correctly see their role as the proselytizers of a new faith. The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new . the rotting corpse of Christianity and the faith of humanism.”

Dr. George Wald, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Harvard University and Nobel Prize winner in biology in 1971 writes in Scientific American;

“There are only two possibilities as to how life arose. One is spontaneous generation arising to evolution. The other is a supernatural creative act of God. There is no third possibility. Spontaneous generation that life arose from non-living matter was scientifically disproved 120 years ago by Louis Pasteur and others. That leaves us with only one possible conclusion that life arose as a supernatural creative act of God. I will not accept that philosophically because I do not want to believe in God. Therefore, I chose to believe in that I know is scientifically impossible, spontaneous generation arising to evolution.”

Richard Lewontin, a geneticist and professor at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University has written,

“We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism (*humanism*)” .. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations (*atheistic explanations*), no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine foot in the door.”

Sir Arthur Keith confesses,

“The only alternative to some form of evolution is special creation . which is unthinkable”.

Dr. M. S. Watson a scientist said,

“Evolution is a theory universally accepted not because it can be proved by logical, coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible.”

Here is the kind of thinking this belief leads to:

“The most devastating thing though that biology did to Christianity was the discovery of *biological evolution*. Now that we know that Adam and Eve never were real people, the central myth of Christianity is destroyed. If there never was an Adam and Eve there never was an original sin. If there never was an original sin, there is no need of salvation. If there is no need of salvation there is no need of a savior. And I submit that puts Jesus, historical or otherwise, into the ranks of the unemployed. I think that evolution is absolutely the death knell of Christianity.” Frank Zindler, public debate with William Craig, Zondervan video, 1996.

It is significant to note what Paul says about this futile position in **Romans 1:18-23**.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Perhaps no one has promoted and popularized the cause of Humanism and Evolution with a religious fever more than the late astronomer Dr. Carl Sagan. On his award winning series *Cosmos* on PBS he looked more like a televangelist than a scientist. Here is what the late Carl Sagan has had to say of about what he worshipped.

“The universe that is infinitely old requires no Creator⁴ . We are, in the most profound sense, children of the Cosmos . Some part of our being knows this (i.e., the cosmos) is from where we came. We long to return.....Our ancestors worshiped the Sun, and they were far from foolish does it not make sense to revere the Sun and the stars⁵?+”

Unfortunately for Carl Sagan, like too many others, he considered himself (and all of us) as part of the cosmos, but he did not acknowledge the Author of the cosmos or recognize its Designer! In direct contrast to this the testimony of God's Word declares that it is the Logos that is the originator of the cosmos.

In the beginning was the Word {LOGOS}, and the Word {LOGOS} was with God, and the Word {LOGOS} was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made . He was in the world {COSMOS}, and the world {COSMOS} was made through Him, and the world {COSMOS} did not know Him . But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name . ..And the Word {LOGOS} became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. . **John 1:1-3, 10, 12, 14.**

Here is what the LORD says in **Psalms 2:1-10**

Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, “Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.+ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: “Let I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.+ . . Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

⁴ Broca's Brain, Carl Sagan, Random House, N.Y., 1979, p. 287.

⁵ Cosmos, Carl Sagan, Random House, N.Y., 1980, p. 242, 243.

The Bible reaffirms that God, and specifically Jesus Christ, is the Creator. Refer to **Colossians 1:16,17** and **Hebrews 11:3**. The LORD only is to be worshipped because He also is both Creator {**Revelation 4:11**} and Savior {**Revelation 5:9,10**}.

Finally, note that the Bible teaches us that our salvation was not purchased by the corruptible things, including silver and gold, of this world:

*“.....knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.
ó 1 Peter 1:18,19*

vv. 5-7 ➤ THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL & BELSHAZZAR’S RESPONSE

[5 In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6 Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other. 7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."]

A supernatural event now occurs. The fingers of a man’s hand appear and write an inscription on the plaster wall opposite to the lampstand. The king sees only a part of the hand that wrote ó a disembodied hand.

If Belshazzar was drunk he probably sobered up pretty fast for his thoughts were troubled and his facial expression changed dramatically. This was something so utterly amazing and unsettling that Belshazzar literally begins òquaking in his bootsö to the point that his knees begin knocking together.

In a scene very reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar’s response to his troubling dream, Belshazzar cries out for the astrologers⁶, Chaldeans⁷ and soothsayers⁸. The king’s ñbraintrustñ was brought in to resolve the mystery behind the handwriting. But they were no more prepared or capable in interpreting the meaning of the handwriting than their predecessors were in telling Nebuchadnezzar what his dream was or what it meant {see **Daniel 2:1-11**}.

⁶ An **enchanter** [KJV = **astrologer**] is one who prophesied the future using charts of the stars and planetary positions, a ñdivider of the heavensñ Includes those who employ a formula of words spoken in the right order [incantations] for conjuring miraculous feats.

⁷ A **Chaldean** was a special class of astrologer/magician. Primarily, Aramaic priests of northern Babylon who sought their greatest glory in the study of astrology and also possessed the knowledge of divination from omens, of expounding of dreams and wonders and of skillfully casting horoscopes.

⁸ A **soothsayer** [translated **sorcerer** in **Daniel 2:27**] is one who uses occult or demonic powers to interpret events or foretell the future. Perhaps also a reference to the practice of dissecting {cutting} the entrails of animals since the same word is translated ñto cut+as in **Daniel 2:34** and **45**. Also, one who ñwhispers a spellñto communicate with the dead or expel demons and utilized the power of evil spirits and used drugs to achieve desired results. Identified with witchcraft in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

vv. 8,9 ➤ THE INFERIORITY OF BELSHAZZAR'S COUNSELORS

[8 Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.]

None of the king's wise men, his braintrust, could decipher or interpret the writing. This is a repeat of the pathetic performance of Nebuchadnezzar's pagan experts who could not help him either. They were probably a new group of wise men but with the same limited powers.

When God is involved in bringing a message only God can make Himself known and impart true knowledge and understanding. It is one of the reasons that Jesus spoke in parables only those having a humble heart and faith in Him would be able to understand them.

King Belshazzar remained troubled and his expression was one of shock and awe. All of the king's officials in the royal court remained astonished.

vv. 10-12 ➤ THE QUEEN'S COUNSEL: REMEMBER & SUMMON DANIEL

[10 The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father, your father the king, made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. 12 Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation."]

The queen hears about all the commotion going on at the party and comes to investigate. I believe the queen here is Belshazzar's mother {Nabonidus's wife} rather than his wife. She appears to be older and wiser in her speech and very respectful of Nebuchadnezzar. If the queen here was indeed Nitocris, it means that Daniel and she could have been about the same age and grew up together in King Nebuchadnezzar's royal court.

It is encouraging to know that God early-on positions people in the path of His followers who later in life come along to validate, affirm and testify both of the greatness of the LORD and of our faithful ministry and walk with Him.

[óí King Nebuchadnezzar your father, your father the king..."] The critics and skeptics alike often charge that here is a glaring example of the inaccuracy of the Bible and why it can't be trusted. What is the charge? That Nebuchadnezzar is being called Belshazzar's father when in actuality he was his grandfather based on historical evidence. This is a completely ludicrous and unscholarly charge. Let us analyze this.

FIRST, the word used here for father [2 'ab (ab)] is the Aramaic equivalent to the Hebrew [1 'ab (awb)]. This word by itself refers to either literal father/grandfather or a blood relative.

SECOND, there is no possessive pronoun {his, my, your, our, etc} associated with this word ó it is added by the translators. Therefore, unless one is certain that the contextual relationship is anything but father-son it is so translated⁹. However, the case remains that this word can be legitimately translated either father or grandfather in the literal sense or simply as a blood relative in a general sense.

THIRD, there would be no scriptural or grammatical error in translating the word ðabø in Daniel 5 as ðgrandfatherø

So why is the word translated ðgrandfatherø in *1 Samuel 9:7* but ðfatherø in *Daniel*? Because the original King James translators had no archeological knowledge at the time that Nebuchadnezzarø son-in-law, Nabonidus, was king of Babylon. They had only the Biblical record that a person by the name of Belshazzar was king of Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar so they logically translated the word as ðfatherø. However, later the existence of king Nabonidus was discovered on a clay tablet unearthed in Babylon. He was married to one of Nebuchadnezzarø daughters {Nitocris}. Now the skeptics claimed that Daniel had the name of Nebuchadnezzarø successor wrong! Eventually however, another clay tablet was discovered containing both the names of Nabonidus and Belshazzar indicating they were co-rulers. {Refer to notes on Daniel chapter 1}.

The skeptics are silenced by both a proper understanding of Jewish grammar and the testimony of archeological evidence¹⁰.

vv. 13-16 > DANIEL IS CONSULTED: BELSHAZZAR'S PLEA & OFFER TO DANIEL

[13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15 Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. 16 And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."]

Daniel is now summoned to the palace. Standing before Belshazzar he is asked to verify who he is. The world also wants us to verify who we are ó they suspect the truth but we must affirm it to them that we are witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Belshazzar recognizes that the *Spirit of God* {lit. ðSpirit of the Elowah'} is in Daniel¹¹ ó so why hasn't he consulted Daniel more often? He says here that he has heard of Danielø abilities to give interpretations and explain difficult puzzles. Is it perhaps because of pride?

⁹ In this regard, it is interesting to note that in *1 Samuel 9:7* the same word is translated ðgrandfatherø {in the NAS, NKJV and NIV translations} in the context of referring to Mephiboshethø relationship with King Saul. Mephibosheth was Jonathanø son and therefore correctly associated as Saulø grandson in this passage.

¹⁰ Later in this chapter, **verse 29**, we are told that Belshazzar made Daniel the third ruler. This makes complete sense since his father, Nabonidus was first ruler and he (Belshazzar) was second ruler.

[ōi *that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas.*] That is literally ðknottyø or difficult issues, riddles, puzzles and problems. Belshazzar recognized only God speaking through Daniel could explain the meaning of the handwriting. In contrast, all the worldly experts of Babylon were powerless to answer this mystery

Christians have the Good News and the answer to lifeø's three most pressing issues and their associated questions that none of the worldø's best scientists, educators, doctors, psychologists, politicians, military or religious leaders have.

- 1.) REASON FOR LIFE: *How did we get here?*
- 2.) REALITY OF LIFE: *What went wrong?*
- 3.) RESTORATION OF LIFE: *How can it be fixed?*

Only Godø's Word can answer all three of these basic questions SATISFACTORILY:

- 1.) God created all things for His pleasure and man for fellowship. {***Genesis 1:1-31, 2:7,21-25; Colossians 1:15-17; Revelation 4:11***}
- 2.) Man rebelled and sin ruined the relationship, breaking manø's fellowship with God and affected all creation negatively. {***Genesis 3:7-19; Romans 1:18-32; 8:20-22***}.
- 3.) Godø's unmerited favor provided a Savior, Jesus Christ, to reconcile man to Himself eternally. Forgiveness of sin & eternal salvation is a *gift* given to all that accept the sacrificial death of Christ by faith. Through the salvation that God provides man is restored to God and has a blessed hope of an eternal future. {***John 3:16; Romans 3:21-26, 5:8-11, 6:23, 8:28-39; Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 2:11-14; Revelation 5:9,10***}.

Belshazzar offers Daniel riches, power and prestige if he can decipher and interpret the message written on the wall. He would be made third ruler in Babylon.

At one time it was a mystery why king Belshazzar offered Daniel the third spot in the government and not the second spot. As we have already discussed in the notes on ***Daniel 1:1,2*** archeological and historical evidence indicates that Belshazzar was co-ruler with his father Nabonidus who was the first ruler. So it makes complete sense that the highest level Daniel could have been promoted to was the third level. It is the highest level that Belshazzar could have legitimately offered Daniel.

¹¹ Some translations have ðspirit the godsqhere and that is also a correct usage of this word. But the word is the singular derivative of Elohiym, a word also used for gods or the One true God. In the context of the Belshazzarø's statement, the best translation is Spirit of the Holy {one and only} God. Refer also to notes on ***Daniel 4:4-9***.

vv. 17-21 ➤ DANIEL'S RESPONSE TO BELSHAZZAR: A HISTORY LESSON

[17 Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. 19 And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. 21 Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses."]

FIRST, Daniel firmly states that he is not looking for money, fame or prestige ó someone else can have all that. He will read the writing without any expectation of reward. **This should also be the Christianø's attitude in service to God.** See example of Abraham in **Genesis 14:22-24.**

SECOND, Daniel recounts and reminds Belshazzar that the greatness of his grandfatherø's kingdom was due to the blessings of the MOST HIGH GOD ó *El Elyon*. God had given him majesty, glory and honor and because of this people from all nations and languages trembled and feared before him. Nebuchadnezzar was in a sense acting in the place of God [õ*Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down*í ö].

But Nebuchadnezzar did not give the credit to God or worship Him and so when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened with pride God took the time to humble him. He was given another õmindö and lived in the wild like a beast of the field until he came to his senses. Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way that God was to be feared, praised and worshipped if these blessing were to be sustained.

Daniel reminds Belshazzar of two primary things that he should have remembered from his grandfatherø's experience {Refer to **Daniel 4:34-37**}:

- *Most High God rules in the kingdom of men*
- *God appoints whomever He chooses to rule in this world*

Forgetting about the authority, power and majesty of God will have dire consequences. This is true even for a child of God. Belshazzar was held accountable for what he knew and did or did not do with that knowledge. He should have humbled himself and glorified God but he did not. Instead we shall see that he insults and mocks God by using the sacred and holy vessels that were taken as spoils from the Temple in a drunken pagan celebration.

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THOSE WHO FORGET HISTORY WILL BE DESTINED TO REPEAT IT!

vv. 22-24 ➤ DANIEL'S RESPONSE TO BELSHAZZAR: A CHASTISEMENT

[22 "But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. 23 And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God, who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. 24 Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written."']

Even though Belshazzar knew what happened to Nebuchadnezzar he did learn from it nor did he humble his heart. He actually goes out of his way to mock and insult the God of Heaven by using the holy vessels taken from the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate and praise pagan gods.

Belshazzar had crossed the boundary on God's patience and mercy, now he and the others will be judged. God uses the handwriting on the wall to communicate the message.

In another time and another place God used a pagan ruler to place another message for the world to see. It was the inscription placed by Pilate above the cross upon which Jesus was crucified. It read

THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH – THE KING OF THE JEWS

How many people are yet to understand the meaning of this message?

vv. 25-28 ➤ DANIEL DECIPHERS & INTERPRETS THE HANDWRITING

[25 "And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of each word. 'MENE': God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; 27 'TEKEL': You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; 28 'PERES': Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."']

Daniel now simply and concisely explains the meaning of the handwriting. The words in succession mean the following:

MENE = God has numbered your kingdom
MENE = Your kingdom is finished
TEKEL = You have been weighed in God's balances and come up short
PERES = Your kingdom has been divided and is given to the Medes & Persians

Note that Babylon's fall was foretold as part of the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the giant statue made of gold, silver, bronze, iron and iron mixed with clay. God was now establishing the silver or Medo-Persian kingdom. Here are some other scriptures related to this.

Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, against those who dwell in Leb Kamai, a destroying wind. And I will send winnowers to Babylon, who shall winnow her and empty her land. For in the day of doom they shall be against her all around. Against her let the archer bend his bow, and lift himself up against her in his armor. Do not spare her young men; utterly destroy all her army. ó **Jeremiah 51:1-3**

Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; for her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies. The LORD has revealed our righteousness. Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God. Make the arrows bright! Gather the shields! The LORD has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against Babylon to destroy it, because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance for His temple. Set up the standard on the walls of Babylon; make the guard strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes. For the LORD has both devised and done what He spoke against the inhabitants of Babylon. . **Jeremiah 51:8-12.**

Thus says the LORD of hosts: "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; the people will labor in vain, and the nations, because of the fire; and they shall be weary." -- **Jeremiah 51:58.**

"For indeed, I will make you small among nations, despised among men. Your fierceness has deceived you, the pride of your heart, O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill! Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there," says the LORD. . **Jeremiah 49:15,16.**

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," says the LORD. . **Obadiah 1:3,4.**

vv. 29,30 ➤ DANIEL IS PROMOTED & BELSHAZZAR IS SLAIN

[29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.]

Almost oblivious to what Daniel just had interpreted and against Daniel's request Belshazzar clothes him with royal garments, puts a gold chain around his neck and promotes him to third ruler of the Babylonian kingdom. The irony of course is that Belshazzar was not to live through the night as the second ruler of the kingdom. Nor would his father, Nabonidus, survive the advance of the Medo-Persian army outside the walls of Babylon.

At one time it was a mystery why Belshazzar made Daniel the third ruler and not the second ruler. As we have already seen from archeological and historical evidence, Belshazzar was co-ruler with his father Nabonidus who was the first ruler. So it makes complete sense that the highest level Daniel could have been promoted to was the third level. It is the highest level that Belshazzar could have legitimately offered Daniel.

[That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.] The historian Xenophon¹² says he was slain by two of his lords, *Gadatas* and *Gobryas*, who defected to Cyrus the Persian king, to avenge themselves of certain wrongs which Belshazzar had done them. Cyrus entered Babylon under the wall through which the Euphrates River flowed. He emptied the riverbed by cutting a channel for the waters and thereby re-directing them into the surrounding marshy countryside.

¹² **Xenophon** (430? . 355? BC), Greek historian, soldier, and essayist, whose works contribute greatly to knowledge of Greece and Persia in the 4th century BC.

vv. 31 ➤ DARIUS THE MEDE CONQUERS BABYLON

[31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.]

This also means that the BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY of the Jews is coming to a close as prophesied in the book of Jeremiah.

*For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive. ó **Jeremiah 29:10-14.***

[Darius the Mede received the kingdom.] The year was 539 BC. Darius is supposed to be the same as Cyaxares, son of Astyages and maternal uncle of Cyrus the Great, king of Persia¹³.

Cyrus the Persian is said to have given the throne of Babylon to Darius the Mede after he himself had had the honor of taking the city. The Medes and Persians were allies in the war: the former under Darius, the latter under Cyrus the Great. Both kings are supposed to have been present at the taking of Babylon.

Daniel speaks nothing of the war that raged between the Babylonians and the Medes outside the city of Babylon but Isaiah speaks particularly of it {**Isaiah 13-14,45-47**}, as does Jeremiah {**Jeremiah 50-51**}. This war is also described by secular historians.

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¹³ Mandane, daughter of Astyages, was mother of Cyrus, and sister to Cyaxares {Darius}.