

The Writing On The Wall

Daniel 5:1-31

MEMORY VERSE

DANIEL 5:21

“The Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever he chooses.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

30 index cards, a chalk/dry-erase board, chalk/dry-erase markers and tape.

Lemon juice, a Q-tip, a sheet of paper and a desk lamp.

A “King’s Decree” template for each child, scissors, markers or crayons and tape.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Belshazzar’s Memory Game

It seems as though the new king had a short memory. Belshazzar, the new king of Babylon, had forgotten all of the important lessons learned by his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. He had also forgotten about a very godly and wise man named Daniel. Now, his foolish sin would get him into trouble.

Here’s a memory game. You will need 30 index cards, a chalk/dry-erase board, chalk/dry-erase markers and tape. Before class, you will need to find 15 words. Make a grid of 30 squares on your board (6 squares x 5 squares). In each square write a word. Each word will be written in twice. Place an index card over each word and tape it to the chalkboard. On the outside of the cards write 1 – 30.

When class begins, ask the children to gather around the board. Allow each child to take turns and pick out two numbers. The goal is to pick the two numbers that will reveal the same words. The children will need to remember where the words are. Take turns playing until all of the words are revealed. The player with the most cards is the winner.

LESSON TIME!

It is good to learn lessons from the mistakes of others. That's the easy way! It is much harder when we learn from our own mistakes, experiencing the sad consequences of our sins. We are wise, if after seeing the sin and failure of others and the suffering that resulted, we determine to avoid walking in the same foolish way and falling into the same foolish sins. **Let us learn easily the lessons God wants to teach us.**

Sadly, the new king of Babylon, Balshazzar, did not learn from the mistakes of his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, or receive his solemn warnings. Remember, Nebuchadnezzar once became overwhelmed with pride; but, after a after a season of God's discipline, Nebuchadnezzar confessed his sinful pride and gave glory to God whose dealings are right and just. He warned, "...those who walk in pride, He is able to put down" (Daniel 4: 37).

Approximately twenty three years passed since the time Nebuchadnezzar wrote of his experiences (Daniel, chapter 4). Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, had died and left several in his family to maneuver their way into being king. Balshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, settled in as a king, reigning with his father Nabonidus as co-regent.

DANIEL 5:1-4

Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand.

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.

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.

They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

King Belshazzar's prideful heart is revealed as he uses the holy vessels from the temple of God—set apart for God and His people for worship—at a sinful party of drunkenness and idol worship. This rebellious display before everyone showed his defiance against God and His people.

DANIEL 5:5-9

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.

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.

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."

Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation.

Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a hand shows up where everyone could see it; fear gripped the heart of the king. Instead of responding with curiosity, the king was overwhelmed with fear to the point of collapse. Undoubtedly, Belshazzar's conscious troubled him; he knew what he was doing when he used the holy vessels to defy God before everyone.

Although the writing on the wall was only three words written in Aramaic, a language understood by Babylonians, the people could not determine its prophetic significance. Immediately, Belshazzar summoned enchanters, astrologers, and diviners who he thought to be wise and promised to richly reward whoever would interpret the meaning of the strange phenomenon. The king's fear would only grow worse, yet he refused to humble his heart and seek God's forgiveness.

DANIEL 5:10-12

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.

"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.

"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."

Word spread quickly through the kingdom about the words of the hand on the wall. Shortly after this, the queen, who was probably the king's grandmother, counseled Belshazzar to summon Daniel to interpret the writing on the wall. She, evidently, knew of Daniel who had the Spirit of God in his life, and thus had light, understanding, and wisdom and the ability to interpret dreams.

For 23 years, those in Babylonian leadership never sought out Daniel. Daniel was now over 80 years old. Though he was an important person with Nebuchadnezzar, those who afterwards sought to be king in Babylon ignored him. Now, at this time once more, Daniel is to be God's messenger at a turning point in Babylon's history. Daniel is ready and available to be used by God.

May we, like Daniel, always be ready, taking every opportunity given to us to tell others about Jesus and His love. We should be faithful to preach the Word of God whenever we get the chance, when it is convenient and when it is not (2 Timothy 4:2).

DANIEL 5:13-24

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?"

"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.

"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.

"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."

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.

"O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor.

"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.

"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.

"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.

"But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.

"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.

"Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.

The king took the queen's advice and had Daniel brought before him. Daniel was offered the same reward as the king's wise men and enchanters if he would read the writing on the wall and interpret it. However, Daniel was not concerned about the king's reward; he was determined to give an unbiased interpretation to the king.

Daniel reminded Belshazzar that his grandfather had acted in a similar way, allowing a prideful heart towards God. He reminded Belshazzar that God dealt harshly with Nebuchadnezzar--he was disposed from his kingly throne and driven from men. However, through God's discipline, Nebuchadnezzar, learned important lessons that changed his attitude and direction—he came to recognize the greatness of God's sovereignty and authority.

How sad! Belshazzar *knew* the experiences of his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, yet did not learn from them. He foolishly allowed pride to fill his own heart and found himself in complete defiance of God—the One who held his very breath in His hand.

How foolish it is when we fail to learn the important lessons God would teach us through the old testament stories and through those who have made mistakes before us and desire to warn us. God would have us learn important lessons the easy way, through the experiences of others; rather than the hard way, experiencing the painful consequences of our sin and disobedience. **Let us learn easily the lessons God wants to teach us.**

The Writing on the Wall

Words will “appear” on paper through this exercise by using lemon juice and a lamp. You will need lemon juice, a Q-tip, a sheet of paper and a desk lamp. Before class take a Q-tip, dip it into lemon juice and write the words, “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin” on a sheet of paper. Allow it to dry. When ready for the demonstration have the children gather around and place the paper over the

lamp, close to the bulb. The heat should make the letters seemingly appear from nowhere. We would suggest that you test this at home first to get used to how it works, etc.

DANIEL 5:25-31

"And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

"This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it;

"TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting;

"PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

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.

That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain.

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

The handwriting on the wall was meant for Belshazzar, but judgment would also fall upon the Babylonians because of their corruption. There is a day of judgment coming for those who refuse to turn from their wicked ways.

Daniel proceeded to interpret the meaning of these words. He explained that MENE means “numbered”: God has numbered the days of your reign and they are ended. And, TEKEL means “weighed”: You have been weighed in God’s balances and have failed the test. UPHARSIN means “divided”: Your kingdom will be divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

A balance was the normal device used in weighing out payments in ancient times. A payment was to meet a certain standard; if it did not, it was rejected as unacceptable. Belshazzar’s moral and spiritual character did not measure up to God’s standard, so he was rejected along with his kingdom. Now, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2 would be fulfilled. The kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and Persians who were represented by the silver chest and arms.

It appears that Belshazzar had no concern for Daniel’s interpretation or his refusal of the reward. Yet in his self-denial of God’s message, Belshazzar follows through in rewarding Daniel. But it was short-lived; for that very night, Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom. Darius and his soldiers entered through the great walls of Babylon by diverting the river that ran through the city, then walking in on the dry riverbed. Just like that, it was over.

Things could have turned out so differently. Belshazzar could have learned important lessons from the experiences of Nebuchadnezzar. He could have guarded his heart from blinding pride. The time came when it was too late to recognize his sin and failure and turn his life around.

God is long suffering toward all men; yet sin has consequences and those who continually harden their heart store up judgment. Do we learn the important lessons God would teach us? Do we fear (respect and reverence) the Lord? Do we understand that continual rejection of God's message to us will have serious consequences. Sin will always bring destruction to ourselves and others.

Have you accepted God's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? Judgment will surely come to those who have rejected God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. No one can escape it. If you have not believed on Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, do not delay, lest your heart, like Belshazzar, become hardened. In 2 Corinthians 6:2 we read, "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

Those of us who call ourselves Christians must guard our heart, not neglecting the great salvation we have been given. We must be careful to keep our hearts teachable and sensitive in order that we might learn the important lessons He would teach us and heed His warnings. In Hebrews 2:1-3 we are exhorted, "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him...." **Let us learn easily the lessons God wants to teach us.**

The King's Decree

We've heard a lot about "decrees" in the book of Daniel. When a king made a decree, it became a law—people had to obey. When kings made decrees, they often used scepters as symbols of authority. These were decorative sticks usually pointed towards someone to whom the king was decreeing something.

In this craft, you will make a scepter and have a chance to make three decrees for your own life concerning how you would like to serve God. You will need a "King's Decree" template for each child, scissors, markers or crayons, and tape.

Cut out the template. Decorate the scepter using markers or crayons (option: glue on sequins or plastic gems). Ask the children to write down, "I decree..." at the top of the blank area, then write three decrees of how they would like to serve God (for example: "I decree...to serve others in my home"). Roll the back flap to make a circle. Tape it to the other end. Also, as an option, you may want to have it glued to cardstock to make it sturdier.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to keep a heart willing to yield and obey. May we learn the important lessons God would teach us quickly and easily and never harden our hearts to His Word. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

Template –King’s Decree

Cut on dotted line, roll and tape.

