

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. We will learn in our lesson today that 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. It was Daniel’s advice that he should have listened to. It was his sin that got him into trouble.

We are going to play 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 have the children 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 (many times this is easier for children!). Take turns playing until all of the words are revealed. The player with the most cards is the winner and can be awarded with the privilege of passing out papers to the class.

LESSON TIME!

Whether or not history is your favorite thing in the world, looking into the past can be a fun thing to do. We can look back in the history of mankind and our own lives to see that God is in control. History is a revelation of God's sovereignty (control over the world), as we recall the past we can see the hand of God acting on our behalf to help us.

The future can also be an interesting thing to learn about. When we live a life of faith and trust in God's sovereignty, we can live with a sense of peace and confidence because He is in control of the future. Looking back at God's faithfulness in our life builds our faith for the future. Trusting Him covers those times when we are not sure about the future.

Our lesson today takes us back to the life of God's faithful servant Daniel. Daniel, now an older man around 80, is thrust into another opportunity to be used by God for His glory. We will learn the importance of allowing God to use us in ministry and everyday life. He has a plan for our lives and we need to be ready to serve when the opportunity comes. **God works out His plans through people.**

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.

A period of 23 years has passed since chapter 4. Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, has died and left several in his family to maneuver their way into being king. Balshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, would finally settle in as king who would reign with his father Nabonidus as co-regent.

King Nebuchadnezzar had left us a beautiful prayer that expressed praise and glory to the true King, God. At one point in his life, Nebuchadnezzar was full of himself, overwhelmed in his heart with pride; but after a season of God's discipline, Nebuchadnezzar confessed that God's dealings were right and just. Confessing his sinful pride, he gave glory to God and let everyone know that God is able to humble those who walk in pride (4:34-37).

Belshazzar was very different from his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. You would think that he would have learned the importance of being humble before God as Nebuchadnezzar, yet he reveals his prideful heart by using the holy vessels from the temple of God for drinking wine to get drunk.

This was a rebellious display before everyone to show his defiance against God and His people. These precious vessels of the temple revealed a glorious picture of God's Son the Messiah. They were special to God and His people for worship and now Belshazzar uses them for a sinful party of drunkenness and idol worship.

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 and fear gripped the heart of the king. Only a person with a guilty conscience would respond in such fear. Undoubtedly

Belshazzar knew what he was doing when he used the holy vessels to defy God before everyone. Instead of responding with curiosity, fear overwhelmed him to the point of collapse.

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 and let him interpret the writing on the wall. She evidently knew of Daniel who had the Spirit of God in his life and having insight, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, understanding and the ability to interpret dreams.

For 23 years those in Babylonian leadership never sought out Daniel. Though he was an important person with Nebuchadnezzar, those who sought to be king in Babylon ignored him. Now at this time, he is given the opportunity to be God's messenger at a turning point in Babylon's history. Daniel is ready and available to be used by God. God gave Daniel alone the ability to interpret the message of doom to Babylon. **God works out His plans through people.**

Like Daniel, we need to be ready to be used by God to be His witness. We need to take every opportunity given to us to tell others about Jesus and His love. Be prepared, courageous, and sensitive to God-given opportunities to tell the good news. This is one of our greatest responsibilities we have as Christians. Let us be found faithful to preach the Word of God whenever you 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. The king seemingly belittled Daniel, referring to him as one of the captives from the conquered land of Judah. He was from the same land whose God Belshazzar was holding in contempt. Not a very nice thing to say to someone when you're getting ready to ask them for a favor.

Daniel is offered the same reward as the king's wise men and enchanters, to read the writing on the wall and interpret it. God had set the stage for Belshazzar to find out first-hand what He had planned for him. Daniel is not concerned about the king's reward. He was not showing disrespect in refusing the gifts, but he knew they would be short-lived and he wanted to show that he was giving an unbiased interpretation to the king.

Daniel is quick to remind Belshazzar that his grandfather had acted in a similar way, having a prideful heart towards God. He related lessons that Nebuchadnezzar had learned from God's dealings with him. Nebuchadnezzar's pride grew as big as the power and authority he had to rule over the known world. But the Babylonian

Empire was given to him by divine appointment. **God works out His plans through people.**

When Nebuchadnezzar failed to recognize that the power was God's and not his own, he became arrogant and proud. God then humbled him and stripped him of his throne while he lived like an animal with the wild donkeys, eating grass like a cow. Through God's discipline, Nebuchadnezzar came to recognize the greatness of God's authority.

Belshazzar knew what his grandfather had experienced and so he knew how God had humbled him. Nevertheless, his banquet was a rebellious challenge to God's authority. By drinking from the holy vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem, and praising man-made gods, Belshazzar shook his fist at God.

Daniel assured Belshazzar that it was God who held his life in His hand. Belshazzar would not give the glory to God, though he was blessed with the breath of life and the privilege to rule as king of Babylon. Belshazzar, knowing about God, failed to honor Him. It was God's hand that had blessed Belshazzar, now it would bring judgment to him and his kingdom.

The Writing on the Wall

As a demonstration you can use lemon juice and a lamp to have words appear on paper. 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.

As an option you can allow the children to write messages (edifying and appropriate of course) and have them appear.

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. God's time of judgment comes for all people. The time of repentance is now. God gives everyone an opportunity to turn away from their wicked ways. Belshazzar refused to repent, and so the judgment came.

Then 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. Also PARSIN 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, so if it didn’t it was rejected as unacceptable. Belshazzar’s moral and spiritual character did not measure up to God’s righteous standard, so he was rejected along with his kingdom. In fulfilling Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2, the silver chest and arms would represent the new kingdom of the Medes and Persians to be established.

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 walks of Babylon by diverting the river that ran through the city, then walking in on the dry riverbed. And just like that, it was over.

Belshazzar should have listened to the wise words of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. He refused to believe that the Most High God was ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes (vs 21-22). He could have learned from the past, to live for the future. God is sovereign and rules over nations and appoints kings according to His own will.

Daniel had not been heard from in 23 years and was sought out for God's wisdom. Daniel saw God's judgment on the rebellious people of Israel, and he knew Babylon was not above His sovereignty. Daniel was faithful to deliver God's message in the eve of God's judgment of those around him, trusting God with his life.

We too can look back to the past and see the sovereignty of God through His Word and the work He does in our lives. **God works out His plans through people.** He can be trusted, for our lives are in His hands.

The King's Decree

In our lessons in Daniel we have seen how that the kings will often make decrees that the people have to follow. We see in today's lesson that the king decreed to bless Daniel with riches and honor because he was the only one who could interpret the writing on the wall. 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). Have the children 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 thanksgiving that God is still in control of everything. Ask the Lord to help you to learn from the past and trust in Him for the future. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

Template –King’s Decree

Cut on dotted line, roll and tape.

