

# THE KING



The Book of Daniel

# Daniel 5

## The Writing on the Wall

Our focus is on a key theme in the book of Daniel:

*Everyone must choose which king to serve, but we are designed to live under the one true King, not any other ruler or rules. God gets to define who we are and what we do.*

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# Some Background

- 539 B.C.
- Nebuchadnezzar is dead, Belshazzar is co-King

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# Some Background

Similar names:

- King=*Belshazzar*: “Bel protect the king,”
  - Bel was the Babylonian name for Baal.
- Daniel=*Belteshazzar*: “Beltis protect the king,”
  - Beltis, in Babylonian mythology, was the sister and consort of the deity Bel.

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# Babylon



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Many years later King Belshazzar gave a great feast for 1,000 of his nobles, and he drank wine with them.<sup>2</sup> While Belshazzar was drinking the wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver cups that his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. He wanted to drink from them with his nobles, his wives, and his concubines.

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<sup>3</sup> So they brought these gold cups taken from the Temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. <sup>4</sup> While they drank from them they praised their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

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<sup>5</sup> Suddenly, they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king's palace, near the lampstand. The king himself saw the hand as it wrote, <sup>6</sup> and his face turned pale with fright. His knees knocked together in fear and his legs gave way beneath him.



<sup>7</sup> The king shouted for the enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers to be brought before him. He said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever can read this writing and tell me what it means will be dressed in purple robes of royal honor and will have a gold chain placed around his neck. He will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom!" <sup>8</sup> But when all the king's wise men had come in, none of them could read the writing or tell him what it meant. <sup>9</sup> So the king grew even more alarmed, and his face turned pale. His nobles, too, were shaken.

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<sup>10</sup> But when the queen mother heard what was happening, she hurried to the banquet hall. She said to Belshazzar, "Long live the king! Don't be so pale and frightened. <sup>11</sup> There is a man in your kingdom who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. During Nebuchadnezzar's reign, this man was found to have insight, understanding, and wisdom like that of the gods. Your predecessor, the king-- your predecessor King Nebuchadnezzar-- made him chief over all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers of Babylon.

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<sup>12</sup> This man Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, has exceptional ability and is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means." <sup>13</sup> So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king asked him, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles brought from Judah by my predecessor, King Nebuchadnezzar?" <sup>14</sup> I have heard that you have the spirit of the gods within you and that you are filled with insight, understanding, and wisdom.

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<sup>15</sup> My wise men and enchanters have tried to read the words on the wall and tell me their meaning, but they cannot do it. <sup>16</sup> I am told that you can give interpretations and solve difficult problems. If you can read these words and tell me their meaning, you will be clothed in purple robes of royal honor, and you will have a gold chain placed around your neck. You will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom." <sup>17</sup> Daniel answered the king, "Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means.

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<sup>18</sup> Your Majesty, the Most High God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honor to your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> He made him so great that people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. He killed those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted to spare. He honored those he wanted to honor and disgraced those he wanted to disgrace. <sup>20</sup> But when his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance, he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory.

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<sup>21</sup> He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them. <sup>22</sup> "You are his successor, O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself.

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<sup>23</sup> For you have proudly defied the Lord of heaven and have had these cups from his Temple brought before you. You and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone-- gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny!

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<sup>24</sup> So God has sent this hand to write this message. <sup>25</sup> "This is the message that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. <sup>26</sup> This is what these words mean: *Mene* means 'numbered'-- God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end. <sup>27</sup> *Tekel* means 'weighed'-- you have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up. <sup>28</sup> *Parsin* means

'divided'-- your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians."



<sup>29</sup> Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was dressed in purple robes, a gold chain was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

<sup>30</sup> That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed. <sup>31</sup> And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.



# The Writing on the Wall for Belshazzar

- Your time's up.
- You haven't measured up.
- You've lost your kingdom.

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# The Writing on the Wall for Daniel

"As for you, go your way until the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days, you will rise again to receive the inheritance set aside for you." (Daniel 12:13 NLT)

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# The Writing on the Wall for Us

We need to clarify some things about *sin*.

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# C.S. Lewis on Sin

“The moment you have a self at all, there is a possibility of putting yourself first—wanting to be the centre—wanting to be God, in fact. That was the sin of Satan: and that was the sin he taught the human race. Some people think the fall of man had something to do with sex, but that is a mistake. (The story in the Book of Genesis rather suggests that some corruption in our sexual nature followed the fall and was its result, not its cause.)

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## C.S. Lewis on Sin

“What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could “be like gods” —could set up on their own as if they had created themselves—be their own masters—invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God, apart from God. And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.

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# C.S. Lewis on Sin

“The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion.

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# C.S. Lewis on Sin

“God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing. That is the key to history. Terrific energy is expended—civilisations are built up—excellent institutions devised; but each time something goes wrong.

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# C.S. Lewis on Sin

“Some fatal flaw always brings the selfish and cruel people to the top and it all slides back into misery and ruin. In fact, the machine conks. It seems to start up all right and runs a few yards, and then it breaks down. They are trying to run it on the wrong juice. That is what Satan has done to us humans.”

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# The Core of Sin

Thinking we can be gods.

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# The Writing on the Wall for Those Who Choose a Different King

Those who choose to live apart from God will spend eternity apart from God

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# The Writing on the Wall for Those Who Live with Jesus as Their King

<sup>3</sup> I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.<sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." (Revelation 21:3-4 NLT)

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# C.S. Lewis on Making Choices

“Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different than it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing into a heavenly creature or a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures, and with itself.

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# C.S. Lewis on Making Choices

To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state of the other.”

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# Invitation

- Think about some recent choices you've made and ask God to show you whether you are moving toward God as your king or choosing to serve other gods.
- Ask God for mercy and forgiveness for any bad choices.
- Ask God to show you how to be more dedicated to Jesus as your King, and to help you do so.

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