

# Introduction to Daniel Chapter 5

## *The Writing on the Wall: The Night a Kingdom Ended and God's Patience Ran Out*

Daniel chapter 5 is the chapter that proves what chapters 1 through 4 have been building toward: that the patience of God, though vast and genuine, has a limit — and that the generation which inherits the warnings given to its predecessors and refuses to receive them will face a judgment without the mercy of another window. The chapter unfolds in a single night. It opens with a feast and closes with a funeral. The king who holds the feast is dead before sunrise. And the empire that seemed invincible — the Babylon that Nebuchadnezzar built and boasted of from his palace roof — falls in the same night that its final king desecrates the vessels of the Lord and drinks wine from them in praise of gods of gold and silver and bronze and iron and wood and stone.

Belshazzar is not Nebuchadnezzar. The relationship between them in the text — Belshazzar is called the son of Nebuchadnezzar, though historically he appears to have been a grandson or royal successor — matters less than the theological point the chapter is making about inheritance. Belshazzar has inherited the throne of the most powerful empire on earth. He has also inherited the testimony of what the God of Israel did to Nebuchadnezzar — the seven years in the field, the restoration, the doxology, the testimony written and circulated to all peoples, nations, and languages throughout the earth. He knows. The Queen Mother, entering later in the chapter, will say it directly: there is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods — your father the king appointed him chief of the magicians, and his God gave him wisdom and understanding. Belshazzar knows the story. He has simply chosen to ignore it.

The act that triggers the judgment is not random wickedness. It is a specific, deliberate, theologically loaded desecration. Belshazzar orders the vessels of the Lord — the sacred gold and silver cups that Nebuchadnezzar carried from the temple in Jerusalem at the beginning of chapter 1 — to be brought to the feast. He drinks from them, his nobles drink from them, his wives and concubines drink from them. And as they drink, they praise the gods of gold and silver and bronze and iron and wood and stone. The vessels that were consecrated to the worship of the living God are used as serving ware for the worship of dead idols. The desecration is not accidental or ignorant. It is defiant. Belshazzar knows whose vessels these are. That is precisely why he uses them this way.

The response is immediate and terrifying. The fingers of a human hand appear and write on the plastered wall of the banquet hall, in the light of the lampstand, where the king can see. The feast stops. The music stops. The king's face turns pale. His thoughts alarm him. His knees knock together and his legs give way. The laughter of a thousand lords and ladies has been replaced, in a moment, by the silence of an entire court that cannot read what has been written on the wall and cannot explain what has written it. Every professional resource is summoned. None can help. And this is where Daniel enters — summoned at last, by the Queen Mother's memory of what Nebuchadnezzar's

Daniel could do — to read a word that was written not for the wise men of Babylon but for the king of Babylon, from the God whose vessels are now on the banquet table.

Daniel's speech to Belshazzar before the interpretation is the most theologically direct confrontation of an earthly king in the entire book — more direct than anything he said to Nebuchadnezzar, because the situation is more urgent and the mercy is more nearly exhausted. He does not soften the word. He does not open a pastoral window of opportunity. He narrates the history that Belshazzar knows and has refused to learn from: Nebuchadnezzar, the pride, the humbling, the seven years, the restoration, the lesson. And then he delivers the verdict. You have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this. You have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords and your wives and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know. But the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored. The writing has been sent. The kingdom is finished. That very night.

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## Opening Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

*We come to Daniel chapter 5 sobered. Not frightened in an unproductive way, but genuinely sobered — because this is the chapter that removes the assumption we most want to keep: the assumption that the window of mercy always remains open, that the patience of God is always available for one more chance, that we can inherit the warnings given to the generation before us and treat them as someone else's story without consequence.*

*Belshazzar knew. He had Nebuchadnezzar's testimony. He had the vessels of the Lord in his storerooms as constant physical evidence of the God who governs empires. He had Daniel in his kingdom, the man in whom the spirit of the holy gods was known to dwell. And on the night of his last feast, he brought out the vessels and praised the gods of silver and gold, as though none of it had happened, as though the testimony of his predecessor was a story that applied to everyone except him.*

*Lord, save us from Belshazzar's posture. Save us from the presumption that inherits warnings and treats them as history rather than word, that has heard the testimony of what You did in someone else's life and decided it does not speak to ours. Give us ears to hear the handwriting on every wall where You are writing — in Scripture, in conscience, in the testimonies of those who have been to the field and come back — before the night falls in which the writing becomes a verdict rather than a warning.*

*And for those who are reading these words with the cold recognition that there are vessels on their table — things consecrated to You that they have been using for other purposes, gifts given for Your glory that they have been drinking from in praise of other gods — give them the courage to receive the word that Daniel delivers tonight. Not the word of condemnation but the word of a God who writes on walls before He closes doors, who sends the writing because He has not yet sent the Medes and Persians, and who is still — even now — the God whose patience, though it has a limit, has not yet reached it for them.*

*In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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## **Daniel 5:1–9**

### **Belshazzar's Feast: The Night the Vessels Were Brought Out**

(1) King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them.  
(2) While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.  
(3) So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.  
(4) As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.  
(5) Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote.  
(6) His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.  
(7) The king summoned the enchanters, astrologers and diviners. Then he said to these wise men of Babylon, 'Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.'  
(8) Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant.  
(9) So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale.  
*His nobles were baffled.*

#### **THE CONTEXT**

The setting of chapter 5 is a single night in approximately 539 BC — the last night of the Babylonian empire. What the text does not tell you, and what the original readers would have known, is that the armies of Cyrus the Great of Persia are at that very moment outside the walls of Babylon. The city is under siege. The Babylonians, however, are confident: the walls of Babylon were among the most formidable fortifications in the ancient world, and the city's massive food stores could sustain it for years. From inside the walls, the empire feels invincible. Belshazzar has called a feast — a thousand of his nobles, wine flowing, the full celebration of Babylonian imperial power — as a display of confidence that nothing outside the walls can touch what is inside.

It is precisely in this moment of imperial bravado that Belshazzar gives the order that triggers everything. Bring the vessels. The gold and silver goblets taken from the temple in Jerusalem — the vessels that have been sitting in Babylonian storage since chapter 1, the physical trophy of Nebuchadnezzar's theological claim that the God of Israel had been defeated — are brought out and used as drinking vessels at the feast. The act is drenched in theological significance. The vessels are not merely functional cups. They are consecrated objects — dedicated to the worship of the living God, removed from His temple as the opening act of the exile, preserved in storage as the silent testimony of what God allowed to happen to His people. To bring them out and drink from them while praising the gods of gold and silver and bronze is to make a statement: the God of Israel is our trophy. His sacred things are our party favors.

The response comes immediately, and it comes in the place that gives it maximum visibility: on the wall of the banquet hall, illuminated by the lampstand, in full view of the king's face. The fingers of a human hand appear — not the whole hand, just the fingers — and write. The king watches the hand as it writes. Everything else in the room ceases to matter. The feast is over. The celebrating is done. The king's face drains of color, his legs collapse, and his knees knock together. The man who ordered the vessels brought out in an act of imperial defiance is now barely able to stand. And none of his professional resources can tell him what was written.

#### PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*King Belshazzar threw a huge banquet for a thousand of his top officials and was drinking heavily with them. In the middle of the feast, he gave orders for the gold and silver goblets that his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar had taken from God's temple in Jerusalem to be brought in — so that he and his officials, his wives and his concubines, could all drink from them. They brought the gold goblets from the Jerusalem temple, and everyone drank from them. And as they drank, they praised their gods — the gods made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Then, suddenly, the fingers of a human hand appeared and began writing on the plaster wall of the palace banquet hall, right next to the lampstand. The king could see the hand as it wrote. His face went completely pale, and he was so terrified that his legs buckled and his knees knocked together. He immediately called for his enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers, announcing that whoever could read the writing and explain what it meant would be dressed in royal purple, given a gold chain to wear, and made the third highest ruler in the kingdom. All the king's wise men came in, but not one of them could read the writing or tell the king what it meant. King*

*Belshazzar became even more terrified, and his face went even paler. His nobles were completely at a loss.*

#### KEY OBSERVATIONS

**"He gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem":** This signifies **The Deliberate Desecration of What Is Consecrated to God Is an Act of Theological Defiance, Not Merely Poor Taste.**

Belshazzar does not stumble upon the vessels by accident. He orders them brought in — a deliberate, intentional act that requires someone to retrieve them from the royal storerooms where they have been kept since Nebuchadnezzar's campaign. The vessels' significance is stated in the same breath as the order: taken from the temple in Jerusalem. He knows what they are. He knows whose they were. And he brings them to a party where they will be used to drink wine in praise of Babylonian gods. This is not the irreverence of ignorance. It is the irreverence of informed defiance — the most theologically dangerous kind, because it compounds the original desecration with the full knowledge of what is being desecrated. God holds what is known differently from what is unknown. Belshazzar knows.

**"As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone":** This signifies **The Vessels of the Living God Used in the Service of Dead Idols Is the Chapter's Central Image of Spiritual Prostitution.**

The six materials of the idols — gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone — are the materials of the statue in Daniel chapter 2, the composite image of human imperial power that the stone cut without human hands will shatter and sweep away. The praise of these gods, from the vessels of the living God, is the most complete possible inversion of proper worship: the consecrated objects of the God who gives all kingdoms are being used in the worship of the gods that represent all kingdoms. The theological obscenity is precise and intentional. And the response it provokes is proportional: not a gentle warning, not a dream, not twelve months of opportunity, but fingers writing on a wall before the feast has ended.

**"Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall":** This signifies **When God Writes, He Writes Where It Cannot Be Ignored and in a Moment That Cannot Be Strategically Managed.**

The appearance of the writing hand is described as sudden — the Aramaic suggests immediacy, the eruption of something into the scene without warning. And everything about its placement is chosen for maximum communicative impact: on the plaster wall, which will receive and hold the writing; near the lampstand, which illuminates it perfectly; in the direct line of the king's vision, so that he watches the hand as it writes. God does not send a messenger who can be dismissed, a dream that can be forgotten, or a prophet who can be imprisoned. He writes on the wall of the room where the desecration is happening, in the light of the lamp that was burning while it happened, in the king's full view. The word is inescapable. The audience is the king himself. And the timing is the feast, not the morning after.

**"They could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant": This signifies The System That Cannot Read What God Has Written Has No Resource for the Moment That Requires It.**

The failure of the Babylonian wise men to read the writing is the chapter's reprise of the failure of chapter 2 — with a significant escalation. In chapter 2, they could not tell the king what he had dreamed. In chapter 5, they cannot even read the words that have been written in plain sight on the wall. The writing is visible to everyone in the room. It is the meaning that is inaccessible. And the inaccessibility of the meaning to the entire professional wisdom establishment of Babylon — in a room where the writing is clearly visible — is the chapter's most precise statement about the limits of human wisdom: it can see what is written, but it cannot understand it. Only the One who wrote it, or the servant of that One, can supply the understanding. And no professional credential, no amount of imperial incentive, and no combination of divinatory technique can bridge that gap.

**WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY**

**1. Recognize the Vessels on Your Table:** The vessels of Daniel chapter 5 are not ancient artifacts with no contemporary relevance. They are the precise, vivid representation of any gift consecrated to God's purposes that has been redirected to other uses — the time that was given for prayer and scripture being spent in the praise of other gods, the creativity given for the glory of God being deployed for the building of personal reputation, the platform entrusted for the gospel being used for other proclamations, the relationships given for the formation of the kingdom being cultivated primarily for personal advancement. The question is not whether the vessels exist — they always do. The question is what they are being used to serve, and whether the one using them knows whose they are. Belshazzar knew. That is what made it defiance rather than ignorance.

**2. The Silence of the Professional Establishment in the Face of the Writing on the Wall Is a Permanent Portrait of Human Wisdom's Ceiling:** Every generation has its version of the Babylonian wise men — the most credentialed, most sophisticated, most institutionally prestigious system of human inquiry that the surrounding culture can produce. And every generation eventually encounters, in some form, the writing on the wall: the question that the system cannot answer, the crisis that the expertise cannot address, the word whose meaning none of the available methodologies can supply. The failure of the wise men is not a failure of effort or intelligence. It is the failure of a system that has reached the ceiling that all human systems eventually reach. When the writing appears on the wall of your situation, the professional establishment will see the letters. Only the God who wrote them can give the meaning.

**3. The Terror That Judgment Produces Is Not the Same as the Repentance That Receives Mercy:** Belshazzar is genuinely terrified by the writing on the wall. His face goes pale. His legs buckle. His knees knock. And yet — as Daniel's speech will make clear — the terror does not produce repentance. It produces urgency in finding an interpretation, but not humility in receiving a word. The person who is frightened by the prospect of divine judgment is not the same as the person who has genuinely received

the judgment as the word of God about their life and responded with the brokenness that produces change. Terror and repentance are not synonyms. And the chapter makes clear which of the two was present on the night of the feast.

#### HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The image of the sacred vessels brought to Belshazzar's feast is one of the most enduring and most widely applicable images in the book of Daniel — precisely because the structure it describes is so recognizable in so many different contexts. The gifts and callings and resources that God consecrates to His purposes do not remain in His service automatically. They can be redirected. They can be brought out of the storeroom where they were kept for His use and placed on the banquet table of a feast that has no room for Him. The redirection can be gradual and barely noticeable — a slow drift from the use that was intended to the use that is convenient or profitable or self-serving — or it can be as deliberate as Belshazzar's order. In either case, the vessels are now on the table. And the writing tends to appear.

The fear that the writing on the wall produces in Belshazzar — the pale face, the buckled knees, the knocking joints — is also a portrait of the specific terror that comes not from general uncertainty about the future but from the sudden, unavoidable confrontation with the knowledge that the God whose vessels you have been using has written something specifically about you. This terror is not the generalized anxiety of a world without God. It is the precise terror of a world with God — the terror of a person who has known, somewhere beneath the surface of the feast, that the desecration was not going unnoticed, and who discovers in a moment that the noticing was as real as the desecration. This is the terror that is one step closer to genuine repentance than the comfortable presumption that nothing has been seen.

**Key Lesson:** *The vessels brought from the storeroom of God's temple to Belshazzar's feast are the precise image of what happens when the gifts and callings and resources consecrated to God's purposes are redirected to serve other masters — and the writing that appears on the wall is the response of a God who sees the desecration, who has a particular interest in what has been consecrated to Him, and whose patience with the knowing desecrator is not the same as His patience with the ignorant one.*

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## Daniel 5:10–16

### The Queen Mother's Memory: When the Answer Has Been in the Kingdom All Along

(10) *The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall.  
'May the king live forever!' she said. 'Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale!*  
(11) *There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him.  
In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and*

wisdom

like that of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the

enchanters, astrologers and diviners.

(12) He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems.

Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.'

(13) So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, 'Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah?

(14) I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom.

(15) The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it.

(16) Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult

problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.'

## THE CONTEXT

The Queen Mother's entrance into the banquet hall is the pivot that the chapter has been waiting for. She has not been at the feast — she is not among the thousand nobles and wives and concubines who have been drinking from the vessels of the Lord — which may itself be a detail of significance. She hears the commotion, the voices of the king and his nobles in their new register of terror, and she comes in with the composure of a person who has not been participating in what caused the crisis. Her address — may the king live forever, do not be alarmed, do not look so pale — is the composure of someone who knows that the solution exists and knows where to find it.

Her memory of Daniel is one of the most important witnesses in the chapter to the theology the book has been building. She remembers, specifically and precisely, what Nebuchadnezzar found in Daniel: the spirit of the holy gods, insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods, the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. She attributes these capacities accurately and without embellishment: they are the gifts of the God in whom the spirit of the holy gods — meaning, in the context of this chapter, the Spirit of the living God — resides. And she connects Daniel explicitly to Nebuchadnezzar's history: your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians. She is telling Belshazzar, in the most direct possible terms, that the answer to the crisis of this night is the same as the answer to every previous crisis in the book: the God of Daniel.

Belshazzar's question to Daniel — are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah? — is the question of a man encountering for the first time someone whose reputation he has apparently not bothered to investigate. Daniel is in the kingdom. He has been there for decades. He was the chief of the magicians under Nebuchadnezzar. And Belshazzar is asking, on the night of his last feast, as if for the first time, whether this is the man. The distance between Belshazzar and Daniel is the

distance between Belshazzar and the God of Daniel — and that distance has been entirely Belshazzar's choice.

#### PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*The queen mother — hearing the voices of the king and his nobles from the banquet hall — came in. She said: 'Long live the king! Don't be so alarmed — don't look so pale! There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods living in him. During your father's time, he was known for having insight, intelligence, and wisdom that was extraordinary — like that of the gods. Your father King Nebuchadnezzar made him chief of all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers. His name is Daniel — the king gave him the name Belteshazzar. He has been known for his sharp mind, his knowledge and understanding, and his ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Send for Daniel — he'll tell you what the writing means.' So Daniel was brought before the king. The king asked him: 'Are you Daniel, one of the Jewish exiles my father brought from Judah? I've heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence, and outstanding wisdom. My wise men and enchanters couldn't read this writing and couldn't tell me what it means. But I've heard you can interpret things and solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and explain it to me, you'll be clothed in purple, given a gold chain, and made the third highest ruler in this kingdom.'*

#### KEY OBSERVATIONS

**"There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him":** This signifies **The Answer That a Crisis Requires Has Often Been Present in the Kingdom All Along — Unnoticed and Unsought.**

Daniel has been in Babylon for decades. He was appointed chief of the magicians by Nebuchadnezzar. He is in the kingdom on the night of the feast. And Belshazzar does not know to look for him until his mother comes into the banquet hall and reminds him. The resource that the crisis needs has been available the entire time — and was unused not because it was inaccessible but because Belshazzar had not thought to seek it. This is the portrait of every person who lives in proximity to the wisdom of God — to the Scripture, to the community of faith, to the servant of God who is in their kingdom — and who, in the day of crisis, does not know to reach for it because they have spent the days before the crisis in the feast rather than in the formation that would have made the resource familiar.

**"Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him":** This signifies **The Testimony of the Previous Generation Is Available to Every Generation That Is Willing to Receive It.**

The Queen Mother's appeal to the precedent of Nebuchadnezzar is a theological argument embedded in a practical suggestion: this worked before, under your father, in situations like this one. The testimony of what God did in the previous generation — the dreams, the interpretations, the furnace, the humbling, the restoration, the doxology — is not merely historical information. It is a living testimony available to every subsequent generation. Belshazzar has access to all of it. He has chosen not to receive it. The tragedy of the night of the feast is not that Belshazzar lacked the information. It is that he had the information and treated it as someone else's story.

**"Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah?":** This signifies **The Distance Between the King and the Servant of God Is a Distance the King Has Chosen.**

Belshazzar's question reveals the character of the distance between himself and Daniel: he barely knows who Daniel is. This is not a geographical or institutional distance — Daniel is in the kingdom, presumably in a position of some standing. It is a relational and attentional distance — the distance created by a king who has organized his court, his priorities, and his attention around the feast and the vessels, not around the wisdom that has been in his kingdom since before he took the throne. The person who has the spirit of the Most High God in him is an exile whom the king barely recognizes. And the night on which the king finally sends for him is the last night of his reign.

**"If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple":** This signifies **The Rewards Offered for Divine Revelation by Those Who Have Refused to Seek the God Who Gives It Are Always Beside the Point.**

Belshazzar's offer of purple robes, a gold chain, and the position of third ruler in the kingdom is the same offer he made to the professional wise men — and Daniel will decline it with the same directness with which the wise men failed to earn it. The attempt to purchase divine revelation with imperial honors is the confusion of the person who has never understood what divine revelation is or where it comes from. It does not come from a particularly gifted individual who can be compensated for their services. It comes from the God of heaven, who gives it to whom He will, through the servants He has prepared, for His own purposes and on His own terms. The purple robe is not the incentive that produces the interpretation. Daniel already has what he needs to interpret it — and the king's offer reveals everything about how little Belshazzar has understood about what he is dealing with.

#### **WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY**

**1. Do Not Wait for a Crisis to Discover the Resources That God Has Placed in Your Kingdom:** The Queen Mother's role in this chapter is to point Belshazzar toward a resource that has been available the entire time. In every community of faith — in every family, every workplace, every network of relationships — there are people in whom the spirit of the holy gods dwells, people whose wisdom and understanding and track record of faithfulness to God constitute exactly the resource that the crises of life require. The tragedy is not when these people are absent. It is when they are present and unknown — present in the kingdom, available for consultation, ignored during the feast, and frantically sought on the night that the writing appears. Form the relationships before the crisis. Seek the wisdom before the wall.

**2. Receive the Testimony of the Previous Generation as a Living Word, Not a Historical Curiosity:** The Queen Mother remembers what Nebuchadnezzar found in Daniel and what the God of Daniel did through Nebuchadnezzar. She has received the testimony of the previous generation as relevant, living, applicable information. Belshazzar has the same testimony and has treated it as ancient history. The difference between these two postures is the difference between a person who enters the crisis with a prepared faith and a person who enters it unprepared. The testimonies of what God

has done — in Scripture, in church history, in the stories of people you know — are not archive material. They are the formation of the faith that holds when the writing appears.

**3. The Rewards of the World Cannot Purchase What the Spirit of God Alone Can Give:** Daniel will decline Belshazzar's offer before he delivers the interpretation — not because he is above reward, but because he understands that the interpretation is not his to sell. The wisdom that reads the writing on the wall is not a professional skill that can be compensated at market rate. It is the gift of the God of heaven, given to the servant He has prepared, for the purposes He intends. The person who has genuinely received the spirit of the living God does not operate with the logic of the marketplace — trading their gifts for institutional advancement and material reward. They operate with the logic of stewardship: this was given to me for His purposes, and I will use it for those purposes, and the reward, if any comes, will come from the One who gave the gift.

#### HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The Queen Mother's role as the person who carries the institutional memory of what God has done is one of the most important and most undervalued roles in any community. In churches, in families, in organizations that have had genuine encounters with God, there are always people who carry the testimony of what happened — who remember the revival, who were present at the founding, who watched the miracle occur and have never forgotten it. These people are the Queen Mother figures of their communities — the ones who, when the writing appears on the wall and the professional establishment cannot read it, say: there is a man — or a woman — in this kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods, and your father the king appointed them, and they can tell you what this means. The testimony-carriers are not merely nostalgia figures. They are the institutional memory of the kingdom's relationship with God.

Belshazzar's near-ignorance of Daniel — asking, on the night of the crisis, whether this is the man who is an exile from Judah — is also a portrait of the generational disconnection that occurs when a community stops actively transmitting its story. Daniel is in the kingdom. The testimony of Nebuchadnezzar is in the public record — Nebuchadnezzar wrote it and distributed it to all peoples, nations, and languages throughout the earth. And Belshazzar, on the night of the last feast, barely knows who Daniel is. The disconnection is not geographical. It is attentional — the consequence of a generation that was so absorbed in its own feast that it never bothered to learn the story of the generation that came before it.

**Key Lesson:** *The answer to the writing on the wall has been in the kingdom all along — the servant of God in whom the spirit of the Most High dwells, the testimony of the previous generation, the wisdom that no professional establishment can replicate and no imperial reward can purchase — and the tragedy of Belshazzar's last night is that all of these resources were present and were not sought until the moment when seeking them still yields the interpretation but can no longer change the verdict.*

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## Daniel 5:17–24

### Daniel's Speech: The History Belshazzar Knew and Would Not Learn From

(17) Then Daniel answered the king, 'You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.  
(18) Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor.  
(19) Because of the high position he gave him, all the nations and peoples of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled.  
(20) But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory.  
(21) He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.  
(22) But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.  
(23) Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them.  
You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds your life in his hand and who controls your every way.  
(24) Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.

#### THE CONTEXT

Daniel's refusal of the king's offer — keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else — is the first and most important signal of what kind of speech is about to be delivered. He is not here to impress the king, to secure a promotion, or to perform a professional service for compensation. He is here because he has been summoned and because the God who gave the interpretation has given him the obligation to deliver it faithfully. The disclaimer of the reward is the declaration of the interpreter's independence: his assessment will not be shaped by what the king wants to hear, and his conclusions will not be softened by the desire to earn what the king is offering. He will read the writing, and he will tell the king what it means.

What follows the disclaimer is the most direct prophetic speech in the book of Daniel — and it is structured as a history lesson. Daniel does not begin with the words on the wall. He begins with Nebuchadnezzar: the sovereignty and greatness and glory given by the Most High God, the absolute power that followed from that position, the arrogance and

hardened pride that produced the humbling, the seven years in the field, and then — most importantly — the lesson: until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes. This is the story Belshazzar knows. This is the story he has chosen not to receive. And Daniel states the implication with the directness that the hour requires: but you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.

The though you knew all this is the most important phrase in the speech — and perhaps in the entire chapter. The indictment of Belshazzar is not ignorance. It is informed defiance. He knows the story of what happened to Nebuchadnezzar. He knows the lesson it was designed to teach. He has in his storerooms the physical evidence — the vessels of the Lord's temple — of the God whose sovereignty that lesson declared. And on the night of the feast, with all of this knowledge available, he brings out the vessels and praises the gods that cannot see or hear or understand, while failing to honor the God who holds his life in His hand and who controls his every way. The writing has been sent. And the reason for the writing, stated explicitly in Daniel's speech, is this: because you knew, and you did not humble yourself.

#### PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*Daniel answered the king: 'You can keep your gifts and give your rewards to someone else. But I will read the writing and tell you what it means. Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your predecessor Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom, his greatness, his glory, and his honor. Because of the high position God gave him, people of every nation trembled before him. He could put anyone to death or spare anyone he wanted. He could promote or demote anyone he chose. But then his heart became proud and hardened. He was removed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven away from human society and given the mind of an animal. He lived with wild donkeys and ate grass like an ox, soaked by the dew of heaven, until he came to acknowledge that the Most High God rules over all human kingdoms and appoints whoever He chooses to lead them. But you, Belshazzar, his son — you have not humbled yourself, even though you knew all of this. Instead, you have positioned yourself in direct opposition to the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from His temple brought in so you could drink from them — you, your nobles, your wives, your concubines — and you praised gods made of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone: things that cannot see, cannot hear, cannot think. But the God who holds your very breath in His hands — the God who controls every step you take — you have not honored Him. That is why He sent the hand that wrote this message.'*

#### KEY OBSERVATIONS

**"You may keep your gifts for yourself":** This signifies **The Servant of God Who Delivers the Uncompromised Word Must First Refuse What Would Compromise It.**

Daniel's refusal of Belshazzar's offer is not false modesty or a negotiating tactic designed to make the eventual acceptance more impressive. It is a theological necessity — the precondition for the kind of speech he is about to make. A person who has accepted the purple robe and the gold chain before delivering the interpretation has created a conflict

of interest that cannot be resolved once the interpretation begins. The word that the king does not want to hear will be shaped, unconsciously or consciously, by the acceptance of what the king offered before the speaking. Daniel refuses the offer first, speaks the word second, and leaves the king to decide what to do with the gifts after the fact. The independence of the interpreter is the integrity of the interpretation.

**"Though you knew all this":** This signifies **The Weight of Divine Judgment Is Always Proportional to the Knowledge That Was Available and Refused.**

The phrase though you knew all this is the hinge on which Belshazzar's judgment turns. It is the single most important distinguishing feature between his situation and any previous crisis in the book. Nebuchadnezzar received dreams because he was being warned about things he did not yet know. Belshazzar receives the handwriting because the warning has already been given, has already been demonstrated in the life of his predecessor, and has been refused by a man who had full access to the testimony. The New Testament will make the same principle explicit: to whom much is given, much will be required. The weight of divine judgment is always calibrated to the knowledge that was available. Belshazzar had more than enough.

**"You have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven":** This signifies **Pride That Continues After Warning Is Not Merely Self-Deception — It Has Become Active Opposition to God.**

Daniel's description of Belshazzar's posture — you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven — is a significant theological escalation from the description of pride that characterized Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar's pride was the pride of a man who had not yet received the knowledge that the Most High rules. His heart became arrogant and hardened — but the hardening preceded the knowledge. Belshazzar's pride is the pride of a man who has the knowledge and has chosen to position himself in active opposition to it. Setting yourself up against implies confrontation, defiance, the deliberate choice of a posture that recognizes the authority of the Lord of heaven and refuses it anyway. This is a different and more severe form of the same sin — and the difference accounts for the difference in the response.

**"The God who holds your life in his hand and who controls your every way, you have not honored":** This signifies **The Most Complete Statement of Human Dependence on God Is Delivered in the Moment of the Most Complete Defiance of It.**

The description of God as the One who holds your life in His hand and controls your every way is one of the most comprehensive statements of divine sovereignty in the book — and it is delivered in the context of the most complete act of defiance in the chapter. Belshazzar does not hold his own breath. God holds it. Belshazzar does not control his own steps. God controls them. The feast, the vessels, the praise of idols, the assembled nobles — all of it exists within the sovereignty of a God whose governance of this specific man on this specific night is total. And the judgment that is coming is not a contest between equal powers. It is the response of the One who holds the breath to the one whose breath He holds — and who has chosen to use that breath to praise gods that cannot see or hear or understand.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

### **1. The Knowledge You Have Received Creates the Accountability You Will**

**Face:** Belshazzar's judgment is severe precisely because his knowledge was extensive. He had the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar, the vessels of the Lord's temple, Daniel in his kingdom, and forty-plus years of the book of Daniel's story available to him. His thought you knew all this is the sentence that determines the weight of the verdict. The same principle applies to every person who has heard the gospel, read the Scripture, sat under the preaching of the word, experienced the testimonies of God's faithfulness in other lives, and then made the choice to bring out the vessels and use them for the feast. The accumulation of knowledge is not a spiritual achievement if it is not received and acted upon. It is an accumulation of accountability.

### **2. The God Who Holds Your Breath Is the God You Cannot Afford to Not**

**Honor:** Daniel's description of God as the One who holds your life in His hand is not a metaphor. It is a literal, physical, biological fact: the continuance of Belshazzar's breath — the next inhale, the next exhale — is in the hand of the God whose vessels are on the table. There is no more radical statement of dependence, and no more complete exposure of the absurdity of the pride that refuses to honor the One on whom every moment of existence depends. The contemporary equivalent is not difficult to locate: the human being who spends their breath praising the works of their own hands, attributing to themselves what belongs to the God who gave them the breath they are speaking with, is Belshazzar at the feast. And the God who holds the breath is the same God who can withdraw it.

### **3. Refuse the Offer Before You Deliver the Word:**

Daniel's refusal of the purple robe and the gold chain is a practical model for every servant of God who is asked to speak the truth in a context where the truth is unwelcome and where the acceptance of offered rewards would compromise the delivery. The temptation is real and the timing is precise: the offer comes before the speaking, which means the acceptance shapes the speaking before the speaking has happened. Refuse the offer. Speak the word. And let the king decide afterward what to do with the gifts — because by that point, the word will have been delivered without the compromise that the gifts were designed, consciously or unconsciously, to purchase.

## HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The thought you knew all this of Daniel's speech is one of the most searching phrases in the book of Daniel for contemporary readers — because the knowledge that is available to believers in the twenty-first century far exceeds what was available to Belshazzar. Belshazzar had the testimony of one predecessor, the vessels of one temple, and one servant of God in his kingdom. Contemporary readers of the book of Daniel have the complete Old Testament, the New Testament, two thousand years of church history, the testimonies of the martyrs, the accumulated witness of the global church, and the indwelling Spirit of the living God. The thought you knew all this of Belshazzar's judgment is a gentle but serious word to every person who has access to all of this and is still bringing out the vessels for the feast.

The description of the idols as gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand is one of the most consistently used images in

Scripture for the fundamental absurdity of idolatry — and it applies with equal precision to contemporary idols. The things that contemporary people organize their lives around in place of the living God — the careers, the relationships, the experiences, the ideologies, the platforms, the pursuits — cannot see or hear or understand any better than Belshazzar's gods. They provide satisfaction until they don't. They promise meaning they cannot ultimately deliver. They accept the worship given to them and give nothing back. Contrast them with the God who holds your life in His hand and who controls your every way — the God who sees, hears, understands, and is actively involved in the governance of the life He holds — and the absurdity of the exchange is as plain as it was in Belshazzar's banquet hall.

**Key Lesson:** *The speech Daniel delivers to Belshazzar before reading the wall is the most searching prophetic confrontation in the book — not because of its severity but because of its accuracy: you knew all this, and you did not humble yourself, and the God who holds your breath in His hand is the One you chose not to honor; and the writing has been sent because the knowing without the humbling is not ignorance that can be addressed by more information but defiance that can only be addressed by judgment.*

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## Daniel 5:25–31

### Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin: Numbered, Weighed, Divided — That Very Night

(25) This is the inscription that was written:  
MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN  
(26) Here is what these words mean:  
Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.  
(27) Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.  
(28) Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.  
(29) Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple,  
a gold chain was placed around his neck,  
and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.  
(30) That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain,  
(31) and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

#### THE CONTEXT

The words on the wall are four Aramaic words — or three words, since the first is repeated: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin. At one level, they are monetary or weight terms: a mina, a mina, a shekel, and half-shekels. The Babylonian wise men could presumably read the individual words — they were recognizable vocabulary from commercial transactions. What they could not do was understand what the words meant in this context, written by this hand, on this night. The meaning requires interpretation, and the interpretation requires a knowledge of the God who wrote them. Daniel provides

both in three sentences, each of precise brevity and devastating finality: Mene — numbered; Tekel — weighed; Peres — divided.

The three verbs are a complete theological verdict on Belshazzar's reign and on the Babylonian empire. Numbered: God has counted the days of your kingdom and the number is complete — there are no more days, the account is closed, the limit that God set has been reached and the reign is over. Weighed: you have been placed on the scales of divine justice, measured against what you were supposed to be and what you actually were, and the scales have found you wanting — the weight of your life does not meet the standard of the One who weighed it. Divided: your kingdom is not merely ending, it is being transferred — given to the Medes and the Persians, the empire that is at this very moment outside the walls that Belshazzar thought were impregnable.

The chapter closes with two of the most matter-of-fact sentences in the book of Daniel. Belshazzar's command — clothe Daniel in purple, put the gold chain around his neck — is executed. The honors are given. And then: that very night, Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain. And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two. No elaboration. No dramatic description of the battle or the breach. The historian who recorded the fall of Babylon noted that the Persians diverted the Euphrates River and walked into the city through the riverbed, under the walls, while the city's inhabitants were feasting. Babylon fell in the night of its king's last feast, while he was distributing honors to the interpreter of the writing on his wall. The empire that Daniel chapter 2 described as the head of gold became the chaff swept away by the wind — on the night that its king desecrated the vessels of the Lord.

#### PLAIN AMERICAN ENGLISH

*The inscription read: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. And here is what those words mean. Mene: God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to its end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found to be lacking. Peres: Your kingdom is being split up and given to the Medes and the Persians. Then Belshazzar gave the order, and Daniel was dressed in purple robes, given a gold chain to wear around his neck, and declared the third highest ruler in the kingdom. That same night, Belshazzar the Babylonian king was killed. And Darius the Mede took control of the kingdom — he was sixty-two years old at the time.*

#### KEY OBSERVATIONS

**"Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end": This signifies Every Human Reign Has a Number Known to God — and the Number Is Always Finite.**

The word Mene — repeated twice, for emphasis and finality — declares something about every human reign, every era of human power, every season of institutional or personal authority: it has a number. God has counted the days. And when the count is complete, the reign is over — not gradually, not progressively, but with the finality of an account that has been totaled and closed. The repetition of the word is the literary equivalent of underlining: this is done, this is finished, there are no more days. What makes Belshazzar's numbering specific to him is not that it is unusual for God to number days — He numbers all days — but that the number has been reached. The patience has been

extended, the opportunity has been given, the window has been open, and now the account is closed. The number was always there. Tonight it is complete.

**"Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting":** This signifies **The Scale of Divine Justice Measures What a Life Actually Was Against What It Was Given the Capacity to Be.**

The image of the divine scales — the weighing of Belshazzar against the standard of what he was given and what he owed — is one of the most ancient and most universal images of divine judgment in human religious history. What Daniel's interpretation specifies is not the existence of divine measurement but its verdict: found wanting. The scales have been applied. The weight of what Belshazzar was — the knowledge he possessed, the resources at his disposal, the precedent of his predecessor's testimony, the vessels of the Lord in his storerooms, the servant of God in his kingdom — has been placed on one side. The weight of what he did with all of it has been placed on the other. And the deficit is decisive. The wanting is not a close call. The desecration of the vessels on the last night, after decades of refusal to receive the testimony available to him, is the completing act of an account that was never going to balance.

**"Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians":** This signifies **What God Gives, God Gives to Others When the Current Steward Has Forfeited the Stewardship.**

The third word — Peres, the singular form of Parsin — declares not merely the end of Belshazzar's reign but its disposition: the kingdom is divided and given. Given — the same verb that runs through the book of Daniel's theology of human authority. In chapter 2, the Most High gives kingdoms to whom He will, even the lowliest of men. In chapter 4, He gives dominion, power, might, and glory to Nebuchadnezzar. And in chapter 5, He gives the kingdom of Babylon to the Medes and the Persians. The kingdom does not collapse into a vacuum. It is transferred — a transfer already underway, at this very moment, as Cyrus's armies divert the Euphrates and walk into the city. The God who gave Babylon its glory is the same God who is giving it to Persia tonight. The management of the empire has changed. The sovereign above all empires has not.

**"That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain":** This signifies **The Precision of Divine Judgment Is Its Most Sobering Feature — That Very Night.**

That very night. Four words that carry the entire weight of the chapter's theology of divine sovereignty over the timing of human events. The feast, the vessels, the writing, the interpretation, the purple robe, the gold chain — and that very night, the king is dead and the empire is transferred. No delay between the verdict and its execution. No overnight stay of judgment to give one last opportunity for repentance. No morning in which Belshazzar wakes up and considers what he has heard. The timing is precise, deliberate, and total. The God who gave twelve months between the dream and the execution in chapter 4 gives not one night between the interpretation and the verdict in chapter 5. The difference is the difference between a man who had not yet been warned and a man who knew all this. The precision of the timing is calibrated to the precision of the knowledge that was refused.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US TODAY

### **1. The Scales of Divine Justice Are Always Open — and the Most Honest Question Is What They Would Find in You Today:**

The Tekel of Daniel chapter 5 is not a verdict reserved for pagan kings. It is the permanent image of the divine measurement that runs beneath every human life at every moment. Not as a source of anxiety or despair — the believer who is in Christ stands clothed in His righteousness, not their own, and the scales of divine justice are satisfied by what He has placed on them, not by what we bring. But as a question worth sitting with: if the scales were applied to the stewardship of what I have been given — the knowledge, the gifts, the opportunities, the relationships, the platforms, the resources — would the verdict be wanting? Not as a performance anxiety exercise, but as the honest self-examination of a person who wants to use what they have been given in ways that honor the One who gave it.

### **2. The Transfer of Kingdoms Is Always Already Underway When the Writing Appears:**

When the handwriting appeared on Belshazzar's wall, the Medes and Persians were already outside the walls, already diverting the river, already moving through the riverbed toward the city that thought its walls made it invincible. The verdict was written on the wall at the same time as the execution was being carried out in the streets. This is the pattern of divine judgment in history: by the time the writing is visible, the transfer is often already underway. The institution that thinks its size makes it permanent, the culture that thinks its dominance makes it inevitable, the individual who thinks their prosperity makes them secure — the Medes and Persians are always already moving. The question is not whether the transfer will come. It is whether the people of God are living from the certainty of the kingdom that never requires transfer.

### **3. Receive Every Word of Warning as If It Were the Last Night Before the Morning:**

The that very night of verse 30 is the chapter's final and most urgent word to every reader who has not yet been weighed and found the verdict rendered. The night between the writing and the execution is the night you are currently in — whatever night it is, whatever season of life, whatever accumulation of knowledge received and not yet fully acted upon. The book of Daniel does not offer the reader the comfort of infinite tomorrows. It offers the urgency of the night that comes before the morning of whatever the morning will bring. Receive the word. Humble the heart. Honor the God who holds your breath in His hand. That very night is always closer than the feast suggests.

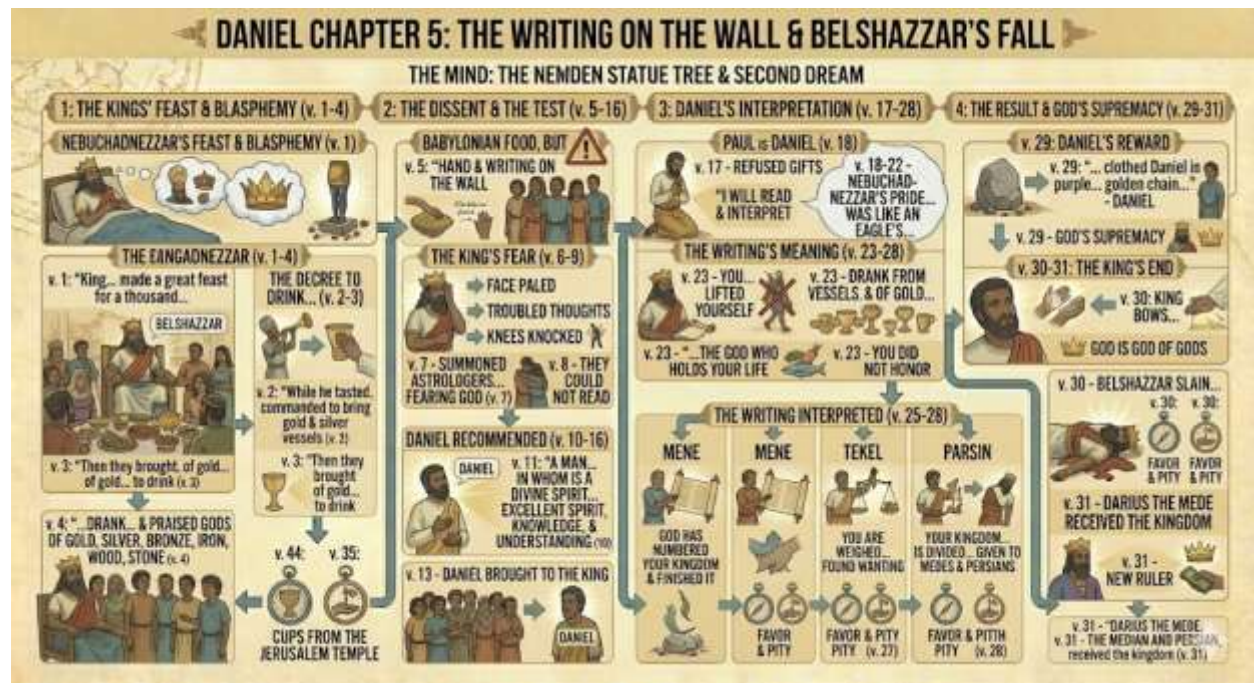
## HOW THIS RELATES TO TODAY

The three words — Mene, Tekel, Peres — have entered the permanent vocabulary of Western culture precisely because they name three things that every human being senses about their life, whether or not they have a theological framework for the naming. A number — the sense that life has a limit, that the days are finite, that what is being lived is being spent. A weight — the sense that what one has done with one's life will one day be measured against what one had the capacity and the opportunity to do. A division — the sense that what is held now will eventually pass to others, that no possession, no position, no achievement, and no legacy is permanently in the holder's hands. What Daniel chapter 5 adds to these universal intuitions is the identity of the One who holds the scales, the One who knows the number, and the One who determines

the disposition. The God who counts and weighs and divides is the God of heaven — and He is the same God who offers, in every generation before the verdict is rendered, the word that Belshazzar heard and refused to receive.

The fall of Babylon on the night of Belshazzar's feast is also the fulfillment of the prophecy of chapter 2 — the first movement of the stone that will eventually fill the whole earth. The head of gold has been struck. The chest of silver — the Medo-Persian empire — is now ascending. The succession of kingdoms that Daniel described to Nebuchadnezzar more than sixty years earlier is proceeding exactly as it was revealed. The God who revealed the dream to Nebuchadnezzar is the God who is executing the dream's content on the night that Belshazzar brings out the vessels. What God speaks, He performs. What He reveals, He fulfills. And the kingdom that the stone cut without human hands will establish is as certain as the fall of Babylon — because the same God who numbered Belshazzar's days has written the number of all kingdoms' days, and only one kingdom's number has no end.

**Key Lesson:** *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Peres* — numbered, numbered, weighed, divided — three words that represent the complete verdict on every human reign that sets itself against the Lord of heaven; and the that very night of their execution is the chapter's final and most urgent word to every generation that has inherited the warnings given to the generation before it and is deciding, tonight, whether to receive them or to bring out the vessels for one more feast.



## Closing Prayer

*Heavenly Father,*

*We close Daniel chapter 5 at the site of a ruin — the ruin of the most powerful empire of the ancient world, fallen in a single night, because the man who held its throne brought out the vessels of the Lord for a feast that was also his last feast. And we are not sitting here as distant observers of someone else's failure. We are sitting here as people who know whose vessels are in our storerooms, who have access to the testimony that Belshazzar ignored, and who are deciding, in the ordinary days of our ordinary lives, what to do with what has been consecrated to Your use.*

*Lord, we confess that there are vessels on our tables that belong to You. Gifts that were given for Your purposes that we have been using for our own. Time that was consecrated for Your worship that we have been spending in the praise of other gods. Creativity, platform, influence, relationships, resources — things that You gave us for the building of Your kingdom that we have allowed to drift toward the building of our own. We have not always noticed the drift. But some of us have noticed it and brought out the vessels anyway, because the feast was better attended and more immediately satisfying than the stewardship You had in mind.*

*Forgive us. And write on our walls before You write on our walls — by which we mean: let the word of Scripture, the voice of the Spirit, the counsel of the faithful people in our lives, and the quiet persistent conviction of conscience do in us what the handwriting did in Belshazzar's court: interrupt the feast, drain the color from our comfortable assumptions, and direct us to the One who can read what has been written and tell us what it means for how we live.*

*Let us not be the generation that inherits the testimony of the previous generation and treats it as someone else's story. Let Nebuchadnezzar's seven years in the field, and his doxology from the other side of them, be a word that we receive and act upon — not an ancient historical curiosity. Let Daniel's refusal of the vessels' food in chapter 1 be a model we apply in our own chapter 1, before the writing appears in chapter 5. Let the though you knew all this never be the sentence that defines the verdict on how we used what we were given.*

*And for those reading these words who are sensing — perhaps for the first time, perhaps with a recognition that has been building for a while — that there is writing on their wall: receive it. Not with the terror that buckles the knees and drains the face but cannot produce repentance. Receive it with the humility that says: the God who holds my breath in His hand has written something about how I am using it, and I want to hear it, and I want to respond before the Medes and the Persians arrive.*

*The window is still open. The though you knew all this has not yet become the verdict. Receive the word tonight.*

*In the name of the One who numbers our days and knows their number, who weighs our lives and has supplied in Himself everything the scales require, and who gives the kingdoms of this world to whom He wills — and who has promised that His kingdom shall have no end — in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

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***Soli Deo Gloria***  
*Glory to God Alone*