

Get The Message?

NIGHT HAD COME AND MIDNIGHT WAS APPROACHING. Hours earlier the Medo-Persian army had slipped under the huge walls surrounding Babylon through the muddy, waterless Euphrates River. The army had diverted the river so that it could slip under the huge wall and enter the city. As we come to Daniel 5, the Medo-Persian army is moving through the outer region of the city and approaching the king's palace. Ancient historians tell us that when the Medo-Persian army had first approached the city of Babylon to conquer it, the military men on the city wall had teased them. The Babylonians trusted in their three hundred foot (one hundred meters) high wall which was fifty feet (seventeen meters) wide. The city had looked so impossible to defeat that the Medo-Persian army had left and defeated other Babylonian cities first. The victorious army had now returned and was searching for the palace. Xenophon recorded Cyrus, the king of the expanding Medo-Persian empire, as saying to his army on this night before they entered the city, "Tonight we go against them when some are asleep and some are drunk and all are unprepared." That was the Babylonian New Year, the night when every good Babylonian citizen got drunk.

HAPPY NEW YEAR. The events of Daniel 5 occurred just before midnight on the night of this invasion. It was the New Year, and Belshazzar the king had invited his family and the government officials to a New Year's party to get drunk. That was the goal of the evening according to ancient records.

Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, in order that the king and his nobles, his wives, and his con-

cubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of

God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone. (NASB) Daniel 5:1-4



Eat, drink and be merry!

the gold and silver vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem to be brought in. I am sure they thought this was great! He did

not realize he was pursuing emptiness.

“PLEASURE” INTERRUPTED. God now interrupted the party with a riddle which frightened the king and his guests. Riddle, riddle on the wall, what have you written on the wall?

Suddenly the fingers of a man’s hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. Then the king’s face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him; and his hip joints went slack, and his knees began knocking together. (NASB) Daniel 5:5-6

The king panicked when he saw the fingers of a man’s hand appear out of nowhere. A riddle was written on the plaster wall. Archaeology has found a massive sixty-three foot by one hundred and seventy-three foot (nineteen meters by fifty-three) white plaster wall in the king’s palace in Babylonian ruins. Did the writing fill this wall?

In his panic, the king called for the “wise guys” of the kingdom to come and explain the writing.

The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, “Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me will be clothed with purple, and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom.” Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king. Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed. (NASB) Daniel 5:7-9

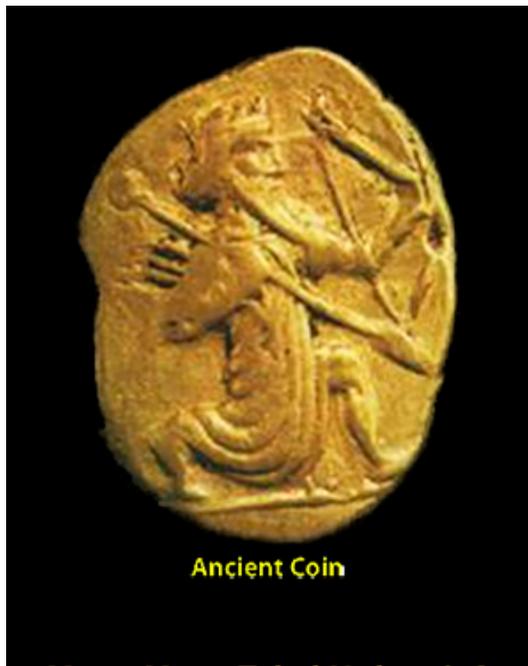
But these magicians, conjurers, sorcerers and Chaldeans - wise men - did not understand. In Aramaic the words seem to refer

to money. That would have been confusing and would have made no sense. It is not surprising the king was over powered by fear. God had stepped in once more.

A MESSENGER OF GOD. In walked the queen, Belshazzar’s mother with help. Apparently, she did not want to join this party. Did the queen not respect her son?

The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, “O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found

in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners. This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas, and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned, and he will declare the interpretation.” (NASB) Daniel 5:10-12



Ancient Coin

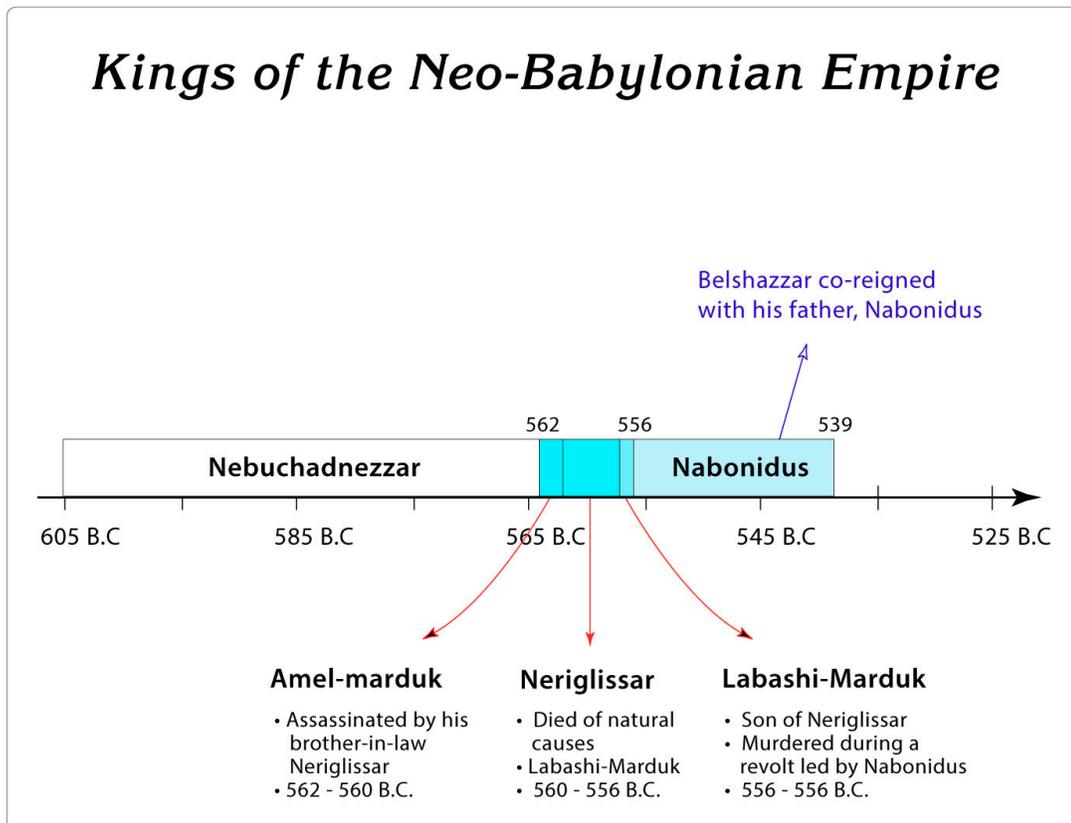
She had heard about the writing on the wall and she offered her advice, call for Daniel! The fearful king summoned Daniel.

Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight, and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message.

But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.” (NASB) Daniel 5:13-16

I AM NOT INTERESTED. When Daniel arrived, the king explained what had happened and offered Daniel gifts and a promotion to the third position within the kingdom if he would explain the meaning of the writing. Belshazzar was

however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him. O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory, and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. And because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations, and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed, and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated, and whomever he wished he humbled. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne, and his glory was taken away from him. He was also driven away



the son of Nabonidus, who was the king of the Babylonian empire at this time. Belshazzar had been left at Babylon while dad commanded the empire’s army against Cyrus. So the offer of being “third ruler” would have placed Daniel just under Belshazzar, but Daniel was not interested.

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Keep your gifts for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else;

from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind, and that He sets over it whomever He wishes. Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven;

and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified. Then the hand was sent from Him, and this inscription was written out. (NASB) Daniel 5:17-24

Daniel's response was almost insulting to the king when he said, "Keep your gifts for yourself." He knew the end was coming. But Daniel did not miss the opportunity to remind Belshazzar of his great-grandfather's pride and humiliation. That was the work of God Most High and He was now talking to Belshazzar. Pride was the problem of Nebuchadnezzar and it was the problem with Belshazzar!

WHAT DID GOD SAY? Daniel now gave the interpretation.

Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.' This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE' --God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 'TEKEL' --you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. 'PERES' --your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians." (NASB) Daniel 5:25-28

The message was simple - it was over! Only the king and his party did not understand that the Medo-Persians were approaching the palace that very evening. History says the invasion was victorious shortly after midnight.

Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and

issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom. That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. (NASB) Daniel 5:29-30

The conquest was easy according to the Cyrus Cylinder which says,

When I entered Babylon I set-up the seat of government in the royal palace amidst jubilation and rejoicing.

The Babylonian Chronicle adds,

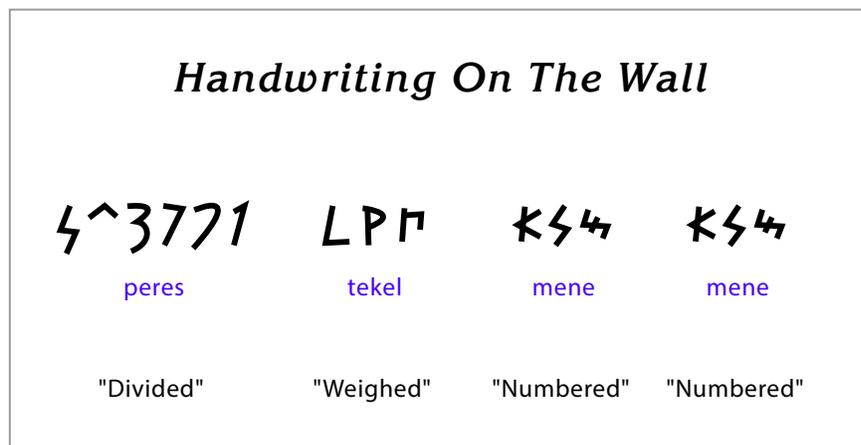
On 12 October, Ugbaru, governor of Gutium, and the troops of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle.

God had predicted the defeat of the Babylon Empire by the Medo-Persians. God also predicted that Babylon would never be lived in again and that prophecy has been fulfilled.

God has a message for all of us in this book. His Spirit

has been speaking to us again. Have you gotten tired of it? The message is important because we have heard it for four chapters: Daniel 2, Daniel 3, Daniel 4, and now Daniel 5. The message is simple - our relationship with God Most High needs to change. Pride and arrogance are only the symptoms of a deeper spiritual problem. These occur when one fails to submit to God Most High AND fail to give Him the credit for every positive thing we accomplish in life. We all have this problem. Here is one illustration.

Two ducks were preparing for their annual flight south for the winter, when their friend Mr. Frog informed them of his desire to travel along too!. "You have no wings,"



said the ducks. “No,” said the frog, “but if you two ducks will kindly hold this stick in your mouths, I will grasp it in the middle with my mouth, and we’ll all go along together. The whole thing was working out quite well. However, as they flew over a pasture, two cows looked up and saw the three. One of the cows commented, “Now there go a couple of intelligent ducks!” Mr. Frog heard this and, wanting to get full credit for his idea, said to the cows, “No, it was my id-eee-aa . . .”



submission to the Father. Did you know that the mark of humility is submission? Have you ever wanted to be humble? Then submit! Submission is a mark that you are humble.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (NASB) Philippians 2:8

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “GOD IS OPPOSED

TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” Submit therefore to God . . . (NASB) James 4:6-7

Here are two more.

I often quote myself. It adds spice to my conversation.
George Bernard Shaw

Two well-bred female AKC-approved dogs were proudly strutting down the street with their noses held high in the air when along came a big alley dog, a mutt. Embarrassed at being in the company of such a no-account dog, one of the dogs said, “We must go, My name is Miji, spelled M-I-J-I.” The other one said, “My name is Miki, spelled “M-I-K-I.” The alley dog put his nose up in the air also and said, “My name is Fido, spelled “P-H-Y-D-E-A-U-X.”

CONCLUSION. What a contrast to Jesus! Jesus was not like this. He did not seek His own glory. Jesus gave all the glory and praise that was offered to Him to God the Father.

But I do not seek My glory . . . (NASB) John 8:50

He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but he who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, he is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him. (NASB) John 7:18

Jesus purposely directed the glory to His Father. He was in

This is one of several marks of a Spirit-filled Christian.

. . . always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (NASB) Eph. 5:20-21

This is God’s desire for us.

Corrie ten Boom was once asked if it was difficult for her to remain humble. Her reply was simple, “When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on the back of a donkey, and everyone was waving palm branches and throwing garments on the road, and singing praises, do you think that for one moment it ever entered the head of the donkey that any of that was for him? She continued, “If I can be the donkey on which Jesus Christ rides . . . I give Him all the praise and all the honor.”

Prophecy About Babylon

SOMETIME AFTER THE BABYLON EMPIRE was defeated, it became a desolate place. The once beautiful, wealthy city with the seventh wonder of the ancient world is today a empty, deserted, desert.

This was predicted in the Old Testament.

Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them [Babylon], who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold, and their bows will mow down the young men, they will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb, nor will their eye pity children. And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation; nor will the Arab pitch his tent there, nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there. But desert creatures will lie down there, and their houses will be full of owls, ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there. And hyenas will howl in their fortified towers and jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her fateful time also will soon come and her days will not be prolonged. (NASB) Isaiah 13:17-22

The prophecy predicts that Babylon will be defeated by the Medo-Persians and become a wasteland. That is what happened. Listen to these secular quotes,

“... until the 19th century the knowledge of the Babylonia and Assyria was based on the Old Testament and a few Greek writers. Not until the discovery of ancient documents . . . and the decipherment of the cuneiform script and the languages written in this script, did the history and civilization of Babylonia and Assyria become

known.”¹

“The great city has become a desert.”

Strabo 16.1

Trajan visited Babylon in A.D. 116 during his campaign against the Parthians and found, according to Dio Cassius, ‘mounds and legends of mounds.’”

Dio Cassius 58.30

“Nothing breaks the deathly silence . . .”

Strabo 16.1

Here is a summary from two Christian publications.

“A dead city . . . Here only is real death.”²

“What a contrast between the ancient civilization and modern degradation. Wild animals, boars, and hyenas, jackals, and wolves, and an occasional lion infest the area.”³ [Kilprecht, Kerman, a professor of archaeology]

On October 13, 539 B.C., Babylon fell to Cyrus of Persia and from that time on the decay of the city began. Xerxes plundered it. Alexander the Great thought to restore this great temple, in ruins in his day, but was deterred by the prohibitive cost. During the period of Alexander's successors the area decayed rapidly and soon became a desert.⁴

Unger's Dictionary

Glory to God for His fulfillment.

1 Encyclopedia Britannica.

2 Stoner, Peter. Science Speaks: An Evaluation of Certain Christian Evidences. Moody Press. Chicago. 1963

3 Davis, George. Bible Prophecies that Prove the Bible. The Milton Testament Campaign. 1931.

4 Under, Merrill F. Unger's Bible Dictionary. Moody Press. 1966.