

Daniel 5:13-31 - Sober Words for Then & Now

Intro - Daniel 5 is a sobering story of a drunken king. Last week we left this story mid-story. It is a great story from *way back when*, but it also comes with an archaically fresh message for today *Back in the day* these events happened on the last day of a great kingdom & the last day of a prideful king's life. King Belshazzar was under siege from the Persians, but he felt so invincible that he had a blowout party in defiance of his enemies. In his merriment he also defied Israel's God & brazenly blasphemed the High King of Heaven. So, God sent a *hand* to write a message on the wall...which sobered him up quick and scared him half to death. that was then...what about now? This ancient account is so fresh it is alive & well in our everyday speech - "*Read the hand-writing on the wall.*" But just as that drunken king did not understand the writing so too our depraved society cannot read *the writing on the wall* which is so plain for all see. We pick up the story mid-way thru... *AVERSION* *LESSON* *APPLICATION*
INTERPRETATION

AVERSION

- Belshazzar's Ball came to screeching halt with *The Hand's* appearance and its message.
 - The king's occultic experts could not understand the message. Freaks out even more.
 - Mom comes in and councils him to send for the forgotten Daniel.
- 5:13 - this king seems ignorant of Daniel and his exploits for the kingdom. Daniel shelved
 - *Are you one of captives from Judah?* There seems to be a tone of derision in this question
- The king recounts what the Queen-mom said & the conjurer's ignorance/incompetence
 - The king offers a huge reward to Daniel for success in reading the words - 5:16
- Daniel is not impressed with this king or his rewards.
 - 5:17
 - I think there is a mutual aversion between these two....but brought together
 - The king is forced to consult his slave....and Daniel is compelled to correct drunken king.

LESSON

- Daniel gives a brief history lesson before he gives the interpretation of the handwriting.
 - Now...Nebuchadnezzar...he was king! (jab, jab) 5:18
 - Daniel recounts Neb's greatness but he says it was all GRANTED to him from *The Most High God*. Nebuchadnezzar was great because God made him great.
- But that great king was full of great pride. 5:20
 - God took away his majesty, his dignity, and his humanity 5:21 (Dan. 4)
- Neb was punished for 7 years until he acknowledged some basic truths:
 - 1] God is the Ruler over mankind. God is sovereign...man is not

2] God set over mankind anyone He wishes. (God puts people in power & deposes) 1 Sam. 2:7 Rom. 13:1

APPLICATION

- ❖ Daniel gives an application of this history lesson. Recent history from 30 years prior

- ❖ 5:22 Belshazzar knew it (probably witnessed it) but he didn't learn from it.
 - Belshazzar saw that *pride goes before a fall*, but he himself refused to be humbled.
 - It is a lot easier (and better) to learn from someone else's mistakes.
 - God graciously gives us many examples to see the consequences of sin.
- ❖ Belshazzar doubled down on his own pride and arrogance.
 - Brought in the holy vessels. He mocked *The Most High God* 5:23
 - He praised false gods not thinking he must answer to the True God
 - Psalm 94:7-11 Psalm 135:15-18
- ❖ His pride and sin had blinded him to some obvious facts: 5:23c
 - 1] God holds our life-breath in His hand. Gen. 2:7 Job 34:14-15
 - 2] God holds our ways in His hand Acts 17:28 Ps. 31:15a
 - 3] Bel had not glorified God.
 - Bel had offended the One who he was totally dependent upon.
- ❖ So God sent *the hand* to remind him Whose Hand his life and soul was in 5:24

INTERPRETATION

Daniel gives the interpretation without much elaboration. 5:25

1. MENE 5:26
 - a. Your days are numbered Numbers up. Times up
 - b. Turn out the lights the party is over.
2. TEKEL 5:27
 - a. You are a lightweight. You don't measure up you are a vapor
 - b. 1 Sam. 2:3
3. UPHARSIN / PERES 5:28
 - a. Your kingdom is given to the Persians your stuff is divided up

Belshazzar was killed that very night and Babylon fell that very night...in one hour of one day

- 5:30-31 their party fulfilled a prophecy - Jer. 51:56-57
- Babylon fell without a fight on the very night of their drunken/blasphemous/ prideful party.
- *The Hand* was sent to remind them *Whose Hand* their life and soul was in

That was then (October, 539 BC) What about now (March 2023) ?
Can we read the handwriting on the wall?

- Times up life is fleeting.... Numbers up - Psalm 139:16
 - Ps. 31:15a God holds our life/breath/souls in His Hand
- We don't measure up *we are weighed in balances and found wanting* We are but dust
 - We weigh nothing - Daniel 4:35 Is. 40:15, 17 James 4:14 Gen. 3:19
 - Our sin is our only "*weight*". Rom. 3:23 the only thing weighty about us is our wickedness
 - We fall short....and we don't measure up. God sees us and measures us
 - The God we offend is the God in whom we totally depend
- Divided up Eccles. 5:15
 - we brought nothing into this world and will take nothing out of this world...except our souls