

The Writing On The Wall & Courage - Daniel Study - Chapter 6

We have all heard the statement “the writing is on the wall.” Coaches have felt the truth of this statement after a big loss, during a losing season or after their job was terminated. If you have gone through the “writing is on the wall” experience, share the heart issues you wrestled with during that difficult time.

Note: King Belshazzar experienced the writing on the wall because of pride and rebellion, but that may not be why you went through your experience. If it is, then confess it to God. If not, then know that God wants to use your trial and pain for His glory.

In chapter five, the writing was on the wall for King Belshazzar regarding his leadership and the Babylonian rule. He was arrogant and defiant to the most high God, and now his time of judgment was at hand.

The Setting

Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. After Nebuchadnezzar, a co-regency was established between Nabonidus and his son, Belshazzar. Nabonidus settled to the west in a city called Tema. Belshazzar settled and ruled in Babylon. Chapter five takes place in the year 539 B.C. The Medo-Persian army, under the leadership of Cyrus, was camped outside the city walls of Babylon. The Persians had become strong and a rival for power. They defeated the Babylonians at every turn, and the last fortress to conquer was Babylon. Belshazzar threw a party inside the palace because he thought that the city was impossible to penetrate. Babylon had not one, but two walls built around it so that no foreign army could invade the city. If an intruder got over the first wall, he would be killed before he reached the second one.

The Babylonians, in anticipation of a war with the Persians, stocked food that would last 20 years. Security was also high because the city was built over the Euphrates River, which provided a constant water supply. Belshazzar and the people of Babylon thought they had a security system that would never fail.

The Writing on the Wall

Daniel 5:1-6. The chapter begins at Belshazzar’s party. He and all of his officials partied while the Persians camped outside the city. There were a thousand people there. Belshazzar gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets taken from the temple in Jerusalem so that he and his guests could drink from them. While they drank the wine,

“they praised the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.”(vs. 4) Suddenly, “the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall,...His face turned pale, and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.” (vs.

Belshazzar had just slapped the God of Nebuchadnezzar in the face by bringing out the goblets from the temple in Jerusalem. He may also have been defying the prophetic dream that Nebuchadnezzar had in chapter two that predicted the Persian take over of Babylon. Belshazzar thought his walls were impenetrable even by the most high God.

Daniel, God's Courageous Spokesman

Daniel 5:7-17. As usual, the wise men were unable to interpret the writing on the wall. The queen told Belshazzar about Daniel. It is probable that Daniel had lost his high-ranking position that he held under Nebuchadnezzar. To Belshazzar, Daniel was insignificant until now. He promised Daniel that if he could interpret the writing, he would be clothed in purple (become royalty), given a gold chain and be named third-highest ruler in the kingdom.

Is there a Daniel-figure (someone who will provide spiritual influence) in your life? Are they on a shelf, or are you letting them speak to your heart? I believe everyone needs someone who will help them stay grounded spiritually.

If you were Daniel, how would you have responded?

Daniel probably does not have the bank account or influence that he once had, and now he is being offered the keys to the Kingdom and yet, this is his response:

"You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else."

Here is a man that is not tied to the praise or riches of this world.

How tied are you to recognition, power or wealth? Why are these things so important to us?

God's Judgment

Read Daniel 5:18-23. Daniel reminded Belshazzar of the legacy of Nebuchadnezzar and that the most high God is Lord of all. Belshazzar ignored Nebuchadnezzar's legacy and did things his way. He would pay the ultimate price.

"But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven... But you did not honor the God who holds in his hands your life and your ways." Vs. 22-23

Have you built a legacy that others are ignoring? Are you ignoring a legacy that was passed down to you?

The Writing on the Wall Interpreted

Read Daniel 25-30. The words on the wall were, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin. The interpretation was God's evaluation of Belshazzar's legacy. For all eternity, Belshazzar will have those words haunting him. Coaches, I pray that none of us will be weighed on the scales of eternity and found lacking. Nobody is perfect, but are you committed to coaching God's way and telling others about Him?

That very night Belshazzar was killed and the Medo-Persian army took Babylon. History tells us that the Persians established a blockade in the Euphrates River which lowered the water level. The lower water level allowed the army to walk into Babylon underneath the walls. They

caught the Babylonians by surprise and took the city.

What God says to us will surely happen. Never think that you, I or anyone can escape the hand and will of God.

What are some promises from God's Word (the Bible) that you need to start counting on?

Humble yourself to the love of God and let Him rule your life!

Memory verse: Daniel 5:22, "But you His son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself though you knew all this."

TALKING POINTS: THE WRITING ON THE WALL & COURAGE

Main thought:

Those who live life for themselves will be weighed on the scales of God's judgment and found lacking (empty). Live to serve God and others, and your life and eternity will be full.

Key Scripture:

Daniel 5:13-28

Discussion questions:

1. Why are recognition, power and wealth so important to us?
2. What should we pursue that will be valued for eternity?

COACH'S TESTIMONY: THE WRITING ON THE WALL & COURAGE

Les Steckel, President of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and former NFL Coach

Les Steckel is an example of seeking God to make wise decisions.

A football coach for more than 30 years, Steckel spent much of that time in various roles in the NFL, including offensive coordinator and head coach. In the course of his career, he's been unemployed eight different times.

Steckel on control:

"I always felt a slight identity with Christ when I was fired because there was an element of rejection and ridicule. People are always asking if it gets easier after the first time. It's as tough the first time as it is the last. You feel like you've given it everything you had, yet there were a lot of things within your circumstances that you couldn't control. That's a common struggle in the world of sports. We want to have control, and that's the antithesis of living the Christian life."

Steckel on keeping the family together:

"During these times, you're concerned about your children and where they are going to have to move. I purposefully stepped out of coaching for two years so that my youngest son didn't have to go to his third high school in three years. As the spiritual leader of the family, you have to set rules because children need stability. The neat thing that I saw in all the moves we made was that our family became closer instead of falling apart. Because Christ was at the

center of our marriage and our family, He held us together during our toughest times.”

Steckel on discerning what job to take next:

“In the Christian world people say that God will open the door. He often does, but just because a door is opened doesn’t mean it’s the one God wants you to walk through. I’ve been offered jobs when I was without a job and have turned them down because I didn’t have peace about the opportunities when I took them to the Lord. And later on something came along. It might have been four or five months later, but God made it clear. Exercise patience, and spend a lot of time in prayer. Prayer, patience, process and then let peace be your umpire.”

Bible Reference:

Daniel 5



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