Dan 5:1, 5-8, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23

1Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

“*Belshazzar —*The son of Evil-merodach, and grandson of Nebuchadnezzar; *made a great feast to a thousand of his lords —*To the principal officers and great men of his court, and was himself present at it. This feast was made at a time of public rejoicing, being an annual festival, when the whole night was spent in reveling” (Benson Commentary).

“Most historians consider that Cyrus then besieged Babylon. Security and sensuality are sad proofs of approaching ruin (Matthew Henry’s Commentary).

“Belshazzar's Impious Feast; the Handwriting on the Wall interpreted by Daniel of the Doom of Babylon and Its King” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

5¶ In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

“**In the same hour-** suddenly and unexpectedly. Observe that it was only a portion of the hand that the king saw, and that we are not told whether the guests saw the hand or not. That the writing was visible to all is plain from [Daniel 5:8](http://biblehub.com/daniel/5-8.htm)” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

“And wrote over against the candlestick - The candlestick, or lamp-bearer, perhaps, which had been taken from the temple at Jerusalem, and which was, as well as the sacred vessels, introduced into this scene of revelry. It is probable that as they brought out the vessels of the temple to drink in, they would also bring out all that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Two objects may have been contemplated in the fact that the writing was "over against the candlestick;" one was that it might be clearly visible, the other that it might be more directly intimated that the writing was a rebuke for the act of sacrilege” Barnes’ Notes).

“fingers of … hand—God admonishes him, not by a dream (as Nebuchadnezzar had been warned), or by a voice, but by "fingers coming forth," the invisibility of Him who moved them heightening the awful impressiveness of the scene, the hand of the Unseen One attesting his doom before the eyes of himself and his guilty fellow revelers.

“against the candlestick—the candelabra; where the mystic characters would be best seen. Barnes makes it the candlestick taken from the temple of Jerusalem, the nearness of the writing to it intimating that the rebuke was directed against the sacrilege.

“upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace—Written in cuneiform letters on slabs on the walls, and on the very bricks, are found the perpetually recurring recital of titles, victories, and exploits, to remind the spectator at every point of the regal greatness. It is significant, that on the “same wall on which the king was accustomed to read the flattering legends of his own magnificence, he beholds the mysterious inscription which foretells his fall.” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

6Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

“*Then the king’s countenance was changed,* — His face became pale with terror: for although he could not read the writing, and therefore did not know what was its purport, yet a sense of guilt made him forebode that the words had some dreadful meaning; *and his thoughts troubled him —*His remorse of conscience respecting the past, and his fearful apprehensions with regard to the future; *so that the joints of his loins were loosed —*He discovered the disorder of his mind by the trembling which seized his whole body. *And his knees smote one against another” (Benson Commentary).*

*“***The king’s countenance was changed.—**The effect of the vision on the king changes his whole expression to that of alarm instead of drunken mirth.

“*he joints of his loins were loosed*, He trembled violently, and could not stand firm.

(Ellicott’s Commentary).

7The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. *And* the king spake, and said to the wise *men* of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and *have* a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

“*The king cried aloud —*Manifesting at once great fear and great impatience; *to bring in the astrologers,--* In this he imitated Nebuchadnezzar his grandfather: it seems indeed to have been the general practice of these heathen kings, in all unexpected emergencies, to apply to these their wise men for help. But the ill success of Nebuchadnezzar, in such applications, might have taught Belshazzar a better lesson.

“*The king said, Whosoever shall read this writing,*— To engage these wise men to exert the utmost of their skill in this matter, he promises that whosoever would give him a satisfactory account of this writing should be dignified with the highest honors of the court; *and be the third ruler in the kingdom —”* (Benson Commentary).

8Then came in all the king’s wise *men:* but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

“But they could not read the writing - The character was an unknown character to them. It may have been a character which was not found in any language, and which made the power of Daniel to read it the more remarkable, or it may have been, as suggested in the notes at [Daniel 5:7](http://biblehub.com/daniel/5-7.htm), a foreign character with which they had no acquaintance, though familiar to Daniel” (Barnes’ Notes).

17¶ Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

“**Let thy gifts be to thyself.—**Daniel refused the king’s offer of reward at first, but afterwards accepted it. In this way he showed his determination to speak the truth without any respect to fee, gift, or reward” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

“Daniel means undoubtedly to intimate that what he would do would be done from a higher motive than a desire of office or honor. The answer is one that is eminently dignified. Yet he says he would read the writing, implying that he was ready to do anything that would be gratifying to the monarch. It may seem somewhat strange that Daniel, who here disclaimed all desire of office or reward, should so soon  have submitted to be clothed in this manner, and to receive the insignia of office. But, it may be remarked, that when the offer was proposed to him he stated his wishes, and declared that he did not desire to be honored in that way; when he had performed the duty, however, of making known the writing, he could scarcely feel at liberty to resist a command of the king to be clothed in that manner, and to be regarded as an officer in the kingdom” (Barnes’ Notes).

18O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor:

“Before interpreting the writing Daniel reads the king a lesson. Nebuchadnezzar’s pride, combined with his refusal to recognize the sovereignty of the true God, had brought upon him a bitter humiliation: Belshazzar has exhibited the same faults yet more conspicuously: and the present sign has been sent in order to warn him of the impending punishment” (Cambridge Bible).

20But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

“He ruled arbitrarily, and had power of life and death, he did what he would, his will was a law. And this lifted up his heart in pride, and hardened it as Pharaoh’s, for which, being incorrigible he could expect punishment.” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary).

22And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

23But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath *is,* and whose *are* all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

“**Though thou knewest.—**The whole history of Nebuchadnezzar was known to Belshazzar. He had not, however, learned the moral lesson conveyed by it. He was therefore doubly guilty in the sight of God, because his blasphemy was willful” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

“Sins against knowledge, experience, and example have the highest aggravation. Thy father was punished for his pride most dreadfully, and thou knewest it, and behold thou art worse than he” (Matthew Poole’s Commentary).