

Daniel before Belshazzar



Daniel 5

At a great feast King Belshazzar used the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. During this feast, fingers of a hand suddenly appeared on the wall and wrote the words: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." Only Daniel could decipher this mysterious writing in which God condemned the mockers.

For Belshazzar the words meant: God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought them to an end. He has weighed you and found you wanting. Your kingdom will be divided and given to others.

God's revelation was fulfilled very quickly. Belshazzar died that same night.

The children recognize of God's power.

Nebuchadnezzar learnt much about God from Daniel. When he reached a high age this king of Babel esteemed God. Then he died. His son, Belshazzar, succeeded him. He did not concern himself, however, about Daniel and his friends.

One day Belshazzar gives a banquet for a thousand of his most important subjects. Musicians play. A sumptuous meal has been prepared and choice wines are served to the guests. The festivities continue until far into the night. The carousing and drunken revelry can be heard from the banqueting hall of the royal palace. Belshazzar has also had too much wine. Suddenly he gets up and calls: "Servants, come here! At a banquet golden and silver goblets should be used. Out of these the wine will taste even better."

The guests howl their approval enthusiastically. "Fetch the golden and silver goblets which my father Nebuchadnezzar brought from the temple in Jerusalem!"

The servants are shocked by this order; they know that these goblets are sacred, but they do not dare oppose the king's command.

Soon the guests are drinking wine from these sacred vessels while singing their rowdy songs. They praise their idols of gold, silver, iron, brass and wood. Belshazzar shouts: "Out of these goblets the wine tastes much better still! Come, let us praise our great and mighty idols ..."

Suddenly he stops speaking and his face turns quite pale. His knees start to tremble. His eyes stare at the white wall on the opposite side of the room. An eerie silence has fallen over the room. And then, everyone sees it quite clearly, a man's hand appears, and with a finger starts to write strange words on the wall. Then the hand vanishes.

"Summon all the wise and learned men immediately!" shouts Belshazzar loudly through the banqueting hall. "They must read this writing and tell me what it means."

2

Agitatedly the king receives these men. But not one of them can decipher the strange writing. Despondently Belshazzar sinks back into his chair.

Then the king's mother enters the hall. "Do not despair, O king! There is a very learned man in your kingdom who possesses godly wisdom. His name is Daniel. He could even interpret dreams for your father! He will surely be able to help you."

God is close to his own - Daniel

Daniel is immediately brought before the king.

"Daniel, I will reward you richly if you can tell me what the writing on the wall means," pleads the king. Daniel replies: "Keep, O king, your gifts or give them to someone else! I will still tell you what this writing means. You have blasphemed and mocked and ridiculed God. Then you desecrated the golden and silver goblets from the temple of God in that you drank from them. That is why God has had this writing written on the wall. It says: Mene, Mene Tekel, U-pharsin. The meaning of these words is as follows:

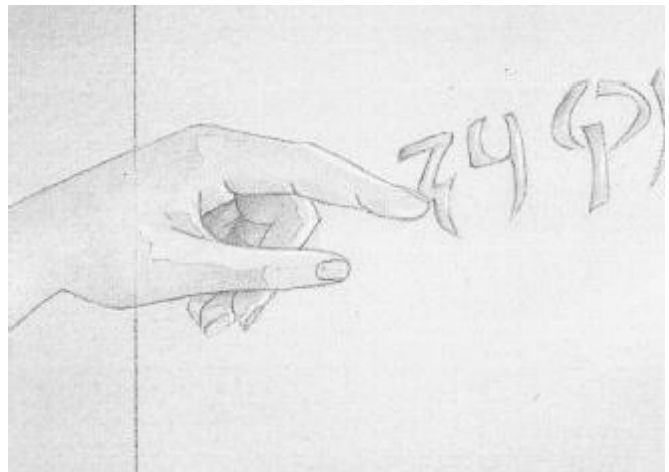
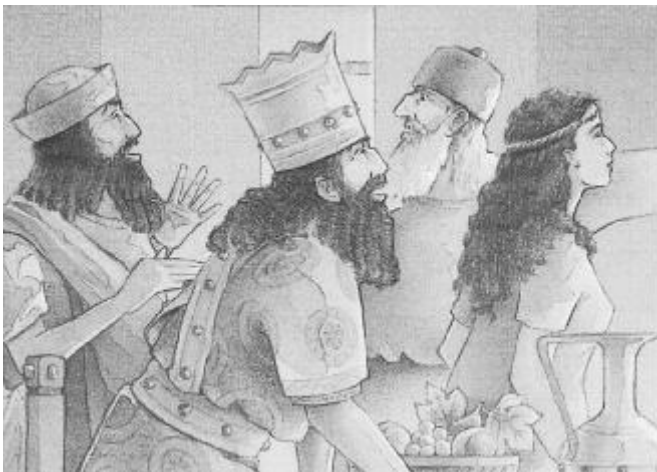
Mene: God knows the duration of your life. It has now come to an end.

Tekel: God has looked at your deeds and found that you have done too little good.

U-pharsin: Your kingdom will be divided and given to others."

The king wants to reward Daniel, but Daniel leaves unobserved. The words of God are soon fulfilled. Still that same night Belshazzar is killed.

3



During a banquet given by King Belshazzar, a hand appeared and wrote on the wall: Mene, Mene, Tekel, U-pharsin. Only Daniel could read this mysterious writing: God had numbered, weighed and divided.

1 We start the Sunday-school lesson with the question: When does your mother or father say to you: "That is good."

After that we lead up to the story with the following sentences: The Lord is happy about everything that is good. He even weighs the good each person does. In the following story he showed this to a king in a most unusual way.

2 We look with the children at the picture of the mysterious writing. The children speculate about its meaning.

3 We have experienced that God knows our life. He weighs the good. That is why we are concerned to do that which is good. Now we focus attention on the following question: What are the good deeds which bring joy to our heavenly Father?