

God's Signature

by

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"This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN."

Daniel 5:25



Ever since I started reading God's Word daily, not only have I been rewarded with vast treasures of wisdom and insight and blessing, but I also have marveled at how many of our modern-day cultural references find their origins in Scripture. One such reference is "The Handwriting on the Wall". We have all heard this phrase being said, usually in a situation where someone cannot understand something that is right in front of them. Well, you may know that this reference comes from Daniel 5:25, where King Belshazzar is throwing a great banquet for his nobles. He went as far as to smite God by using the temple goblets of gold and silver, which had been stolen from Jerusalem, for serving wine to his guests. Suddenly, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the wall in front of the king. It says he was *"so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way."* None of the king's enchanters, astrologers or diviners could read the inscription. The queen remembered that Daniel was known to have interpreted dreams and explained riddles unlike anyone else in the kingdom. So, Daniel was brought before the king, and he proceeded to recount the life of Belshazzar's father, Nebuchadnezzar. He recalled how *"when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory."* He went on to say:

"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. You had the goblets from His temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver, gold, of bronze, iron, wood and

stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor God Who holds in His hand your life and all your ways. Therefore He sent the hand that wrote the inscription. This is what these words mean:

Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

That very night Belshazzar was slain. We must understand what Belshazzar did not. Our God is a Holy God, and he expects our reverence, our worship and our obedience. If we do not honor Him, we will be left to dire consequences. In studying this dramatic story, my favorite devotional writer, Selwyn Hughes, pointed out that this event was 1 of 3 times recorded in Scripture where God Himself wrote something down for us with His own finger. Can you think of the other two times?

You may have guessed the first such account in Exodus 20 and 34, where God wrote on the two stone tablets the 10 Commandments:

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord Your God, am a jealous God...."

"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord Your God..."

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."

"Honor your father and your mother."

"You shall not murder."

"You shall not commit adultery."

"You shall not steal."

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house."

So, can you think of one more example where God wrote something for us with His own finger? Remember when the Pharisees brought a woman before Jesus with the accusation that she was caught in adultery? John 8:1-11. Instead of responding, Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. We don't know what He wrote, but He stood up and then said, *"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."* One by one, the oldest ones first, they walked away. After all had left, Jesus looks at the woman and says,

"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 'No one, sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'"

Some scholars believe Jesus was writing the 10 Commandments in the dirt, holding the Pharisees accountable to the law as he asked them which one of them has kept all of the commandments. When we come face to face with God's Holiness and His commands, we immediately realize how unworthy we are in His presence. It is impossible for us to live up to the 10 Commandments 100%. We will fail at some point in our attempt. Even the rich, young man who questioned Jesus with the path to eternal life was told by Jesus to "***obey the commandments.***" The man tried to justify himself, saying he had done this. Jesus, however, knew the man had an "idol" in his life...money. So, he challenged him to sell everything. The man walked away sad. Matthew 19:16-24

Jesus is God. He was with God in the beginning. He was with God when He wrote those 10 Commandments. He was with God when He wrote on the wall of Belshazzar's palace. Then, Jesus came to us and walked with us. He didn't come to abolish the commandments. He came to fulfill them. He still expects Holiness out of us, but He made a way for us to achieve that Holiness by dying for us as a sacrifice for our sins. He sent His Spirit to dwell in us so that He could live out Holiness through us, even in these earthly bodies. He could tell the woman caught in adultery to leave her life of sin, because He knew it was possible through Him.

Let us humble ourselves before our Holy King, recognize our sin, ask for forgiveness and become the kind of servants he desires...those that are fully dependent upon His holiness. After God had inscribed the stone tablets, He said these words to Moses. Let His words sink into your spirit today. He is a loving, forgiving God, but He expects Holiness:

"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." Exodus 34:6-7