

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

The Writing on the Wall

THE BIG YEAR SEASON 3 WEEK 5

1

WHAT YOU NEED

- Blank piece of paper
- Lemon juice
- Ear bud
- Heat source

LET'S READ THE BIBLE

Take turns reading the following passages:

- Daniel 5:1-8
- Daniel 5:9-16
- Daniel 5:17-24
- Daniel 5:25-31

2

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Daniel had lived in Babylon for many years after he was taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel became an old man. All of his life Daniel tried to do what God said. King Nebuchadnezzar really liked Daniel. Daniel was one of the best servants that Nebuchadnezzar had.

One time, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that upset him. He stayed up at night worrying about the dream. The king called all of the magicians in his court to come and tell him what the dream meant. "Tell us the dream," the magicians said, "and we will tell you what it means." But the king would not tell anyone what he dreamed. He wanted to see if the magicians could tell him what the dream was. If the magicians could tell him then their power would be proved real. When the king saw that none of the magicians could tell him about his dream, he ordered that all of the wise men in Babylon be put to death.

Daniel was one of the king's wise men! He told the king that he could tell him the dream. He would not tell the dream through magic, he would tell it through God's power. Daniel told the king that the dream was about a statue. The statue's head was of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. "While you were watching, a huge stone rolled down and crushed the feet and the statue crumbled and fell," Daniel said. "Yes, that's it exactly!" said the king.

Daniel told the king what the dream meant. The parts of the statue's body represent the kingdom of Babylon and the kingdoms that will come after it. Someday there will be another kingdom (the Kingdom of God) that will be stronger than all of the other kingdoms. The kingdoms of this earth will come to an end, but the Kingdom of God will last forever. The king knew that what Daniel said was true.

Another time, King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about a tree that was as tall as the sky. It was so big it could be seen from every place on the earth. All kinds of animals lived under it. In the dream he was told to cut it down. Daniel told the meaning of that dream. The tree represented King Nebuchadnezzar. King Nebuchadnezzar would be cut down like the tree and be made humble. He would eat grass in the fields like animals "until seven times passed over him" (probably meaning for seven years), until he admitted that the Lord was the only God. The dream came true and after seven years, King Nebuchadnezzar admitted that the Lord was the only God.

3

3

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Many years passed. King Nebuchadnezzar died, and now there was a new king. Belshazzar was the one who was acting as King of Babylon. King Belshazzar gave a big banquet for a thousand of his nobles. Everyone at the banquet drank a lot of alcohol and got drunk. King Belshazzar wanted to impress all of his guests. He knew that there were some gold and silver cups that were in storage. They were the cups that had been stolen from the now destroyed temple of God in Jerusalem. Belshazzar did not care that these were special cups that were only to be used in God's temple. He ordered the servants to bring the cups so his guests could use them to drink more alcohol.

When everyone began drinking out of God's special cups, a giant hand appeared out of nowhere. It wrote words on the wall of the room. The words were "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin." None of the kings' wise men knew what the words meant.

The king was frightened. He really wanted to know what the words meant. Finally, the queen said that they should ask Daniel what it meant. Daniel was an old man now, but he used to interpret dreams for King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was brought before the king. Daniel probably saw God's special cups being used to drink from. These people didn't even love God. They certainly did not respect God.

The king offered him a lot of money, but Daniel said he did not want any money. He told the king what the writing meant. "Mene means that your days are numbered. You will not be king long. Tekel means that you have been weighed on God's scales and you are not good enough. Parsin means that your kingdom is divided and another country will take away your kingdom." The king knew that what Daniel said was true. That very night, an army came and took over the kingdom of Babylon. Now the Medes and Persians were rulers of the land.

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LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- Name two dreams that Daniel interpreted for King Nebuchadnezzar.
- What special things did King Belshazzar use in his banquet?
- What wrote the words on the wall?
- What did King Belshazzar offer Daniel for reading the message?
- What did the words on the wall mean?
- What happened later on the night of King Belshazzar's banquet?

5

LET'S GO A BIT DEEPER

- Why do you think what King Belshazzar did was wrong? (*Talk about pride*)
- What is the main difference between King Belshazzar and Daniel's hearts and attitudes? (*King Belshazzar was very proud and didn't love and respect God; Daniel was humble, loved and respected God*)
- What is your heart and attitude like? Are you proud? Do you only do good things so that people would think you are amazing or to get something out of it?
- How can we make sure that our hearts and attitudes are the same as Daniel's?

LET'S PRAY TOGETHER

6

Pray together:

- Thank God that He is amazing and always good.
- Ask God to help you make sure your heart and attitude is the same as Daniel's was.
- Ask God to help you show others who He is by being humbel.

LET'S HAVE SOME FUN

7

Try to practice this activity beforehand so you feel confident with it.

- Say: "In today's story something really amazing happened. A hand wrote on a wall and words just appeared! Now, we're going to write out our own message that will just appear."
- Take an earbud, dip it in some lemon juice and then write "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin" on a piece of blank paper.
- Wait for the lemon juice to dry out. The words should be invisible or barely visible.
- Say, "Now, we're going to see something really amazing."
- Hold the piece of paper over a heat source like a toaster or candle (PLEASE DO THIS AS CAREFULLY AS POSSIBLE AND DON'T ALLOW KIDS TO TRY THIS UNSUPERVISED)
- As the dried lemon juice heats up, it will turn brown, and the message will appear.
- OPTIONAL: Allow family members to write or draw messages on a piece of paper with lemon juice and then hold them over a heat source to reveal what the message says.