

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

Daniel 5:1-31

LESSON 422 Senior course

MEMORY VERSE: ``Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Daniel 5:27).

I The Sacred Vessels of the Lord Profaned

1. Belshazzar, under the influence of liquor, orders the sacred vessels to be used, Daniel 5:1-3; II Chronicles 36:7
2. The vessels are desecrated in drunken worship to false gods, Daniel 5:4

II The Handwriting upon the Wall

1. The king is troubled by the handwriting, Daniel 5:5, 6
2. The wise men of Babylon fail, Daniel 5:7-9; Isaiah 44:25

III Daniel's Interpretation and Belshazzar's Death

1. The queen remembers Daniel, Daniel 5:10-12
2. Daniel is brought before the king, Daniel 5:13-16
3. Daniel reproves the king, Daniel 5:17-24
4. The handwriting is interpreted by Daniel, Daniel 5:25-28
5. Daniel honored, Belshazzar slain, Darius reigns, Daniel 5:29-31

NOTES

The Books

As each day closes it can never be lived again. Its records have gone into eternity. John tells us in the Book of Revelation that God permitted him to see the hour when God shall take the throne of judgment. Before Him were gathered all the nations. Death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them that they might appear before the great Tribunal to receive their just judgment. John said that the books were opened. In them were the records of men's lives. And those are the records by which all will be judged.

In the fifth chapter of Daniel is a story of the man who lifted his heart against the infinite God—God who always was and always shall be, who knows the end from the beginning, who knows our secret thoughts afar off, and all things are naked and open before Him with whom we have to do. The Psalmist writes: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" There is an Eye that watches over us and in Heaven the record is kept.

Babylon

Belshazzar's was a universal kingdom. History tells us the scepter of the Chaldean empire swayed the entire known world at that time. And when Belshazzar came to the throne, Babylon was at the pinnacle of highest glory. But from the great height as a kingdom, God said, mighty Babylon should fall.

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

Belshazzar's Security

Belshazzar the king was holding a sumptuous feast in that magnificent capital of the Babylonian empire. He invited a thousand of his lords and drank wine before the thousand. He knew that the Medes and Persians were outside. He derided and ridiculed the idea that their armies could break through the walls that surrounded the capital.

Belshazzar and his lords no doubt felt that they were very secure that night. They were at the head of a world power, Babylon, that great and glorious city of old that reached fame and renown such as no other city in history ever gained. Babylon was surrounded, according to ancient historians, by a wall 300 feet in height and 80 feet thick, well guarded, and with a sound government, apparently; but there are no walls so high, nor so thick, nor any government so sound but that when God rises up He can shake down the walls and overthrow the government.

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

God-rejectors

Belshazzar was not satisfied with his licentious feast, and the display of his prestige and power. He wanted to show the people that he did not believe in the God of Israel. That is what many people are doing today. They are trying to be "smart," and are rejecting God and the old-fashioned religion. Today even preachers in the pulpit are denying that Jesus is the Son of God.

Belshazzar that night wanted to lift himself up against the holy God, and he did it to his own destruction and damnation. This was a hilarious feast; but God let him go until he went one step too far in the wrong direction.

He remembered the gold and silver, holy, consecrated vessels that his father Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the Temple at Jerusalem. He sent for them and then he poured them full to the brim with wine for his lords and their wives; and they all drank wine out of God's holy vessels. They praised the gods of gold and silver and stone and wood—every god but the real God.

The Handwriting

The same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared on the plaster of the wall over against the candlesticks. The hand was writing. The king's countenance changed; his knees began to knock one against the other. He called for his soothsayers and astrologers, the wise men of the Chaldeans, to read the writing; but there was not one of them who could decipher the writing of God's hand upon the wall.

If just the handwriting of a man's doom upon the wall could so much affect Belshazzar what would it mean to stand before that final Tribunal itself and to have our lives delineated there? One of the Biblical writers reminds us of that: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart." He will condemn us even more than our own heart condemns us for wrong doing. It would be a terrible thing to have to face a life of sin before that Tribunal!

At last, by reason of the noise and confusion and consternation that reigned, the queen came into the banquet hall. She said that there was one man in the kingdom in whom was the Spirit of God, and that in the days of Nebuchadnezzar he had interpreted hard sentences. If Daniel were called, he would be able to interpret the writing on the wall. Daniel came into the banquet hall and told the king: "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: . . . But 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: . . . And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this" (Daniel 5:18-22). How slow men are to learn the lessons of God's dealing with them or to profit by the experience of others! It seems every man has to learn that lesson for himself. He is not content to learn from that which God has meted out to somebody else.

"Son, remember" were the words that Abraham spoke to the rich man in hell. If men would only learn from the pages of history, how different their fate would be!

Weighed and Wanting

Daniel read the writing and interpreted it. He told them the kingdom would be taken, and would fall to the Medes and Persians. To Belshazzar he said, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." It is said by historians that the Medes turned the Euphrates River out of its course and came in on the river bed under the walls. Surprising the guards they took the garrison on watch and went in and destroyed that great city. Belshazzar had scarcely heard his doom from the lips of Daniel when the cry went forth that the Medes and Persians had entered the city. That night the soul of that wicked heathen monarch went out to meet the wrath of the God whom he had defied.

The Bible tells us, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The records of our lives are being kept. When the Ancient of Days, clothed in the robes of eternal vengeance, will take His throne men will face the eyes of fire and give an account for the way they have lived down here.

What became of the city of Babylon? Today it is only a habitation for moles and bats. A few mounds there are all that is left of that great city. The Chaldean kingdom passed away. It does not matter how strong a kingdom may be; it may have a navy in both oceans, a standing army; but when God decrees its end, it will go down.

Eternity

We are moving to our eternal destiny—either prepared or unprepared, either right or wrong. If you are unsaved, or a backslider from God, if something has robbed you of victory, you will face God condemned. If something has come into your heart, and you nourish a root of bitterness remember it will meet you in eternity. You may have carried that "root of bitterness" to church with you and have carried it home again, but all the forms of worship you can go through will not bring peace to your heart until that is removed by the power in the Blood of Calvary, with the operation of God's holy Spirit.

"Weighed in the balances, and found wanting"—going out into eternity where there are no calendars, no time clocks hanging on the wall. How horrible the fate of those who go into the dark corridors of the lost! Ten million years will bring them no nearer to the end of their awful fate. `Prepare to meet thy God."

QUESTIONS

- 1 Recount some of the times when Daniel was called to interpret dreams.
- 2 Describe Belshazzar's feast.
- 3 What happened to the king when he saw the hand on the wall?
- 4 Who told the king of Daniel?
- 5 Of what did Daniel remind the king?
- 6 What did Daniel tell the king he was guilty of?
- 7 What did God write on the wall?
- 8 When was Belshazzar slain?
- 9 Who took over the kingdom?
- 10 What lesson do you learn from this account?