



THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

Lesson Number 16



TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version, BBE=Bible in Basic English, DRA=Douay-Rheims KJV=King James Version, NKJV=New King James Version, NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible, NAU=New American Standard Bible 1995, NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version, NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version, RSV=Revised Standard Version, YLT=Young's Literal Translation.

----- Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

BELSHAZZAR IS BROUGHT DOWN BECAUSE HE DID NOT LEARN

^{5:1} Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. ² Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. ³ Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. ⁴ They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. 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. ⁶ Then 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. ⁷ The 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 show 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. ⁸ Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. ⁹ Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished. ¹⁰ Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: ¹¹ There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; ¹² Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. ¹³ Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? ¹⁴ I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. ¹⁵ And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing: ¹⁶ And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. 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. ¹⁸ O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: ¹⁹ And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. ²⁰ 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: ²¹ And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. ²² And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; ²³ But 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: ²⁴ Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. ²⁵ And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. ²⁶ This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. ²⁷ TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. ²⁸ PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. ²⁹ Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. ³⁰ In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. ^{KJV} (Daniel 5:1-30)

INTRODUCTION

OUTLINE

- ▶ THE KING MAKES A FEAST AND REVEALS HIS INSOLENCE (5:1-4)
- ▶ GOD BREAKS INTO THE FEAST (5:5-6)
- ▶ FLESH MAKES A VAIN ATTEMPT (5:7-9)
- ▶ THE QUEEN REMEMBERS, AND DANIEL IS CALLED (5:10-12)
- ▶ THE KING SPEAKS TO DANIEL (5:13-16)
- ▶ DANIEL ANSWERS IN WISDOM AND CONVICTION (5:17-21)
- ▶ KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT HUMILITY (5:22-23)
- ▶ THE MESSAGE FROM GOD (5:24-27)
- ▶ ONE IS EXALTED, THE OTHER SLAIN (5:28-29)

I have mentioned before that accounts of Scripture that are generally familiar to people tend to be glossed. By “generally familiar,” I mean accounts that are commonly known. Unless a person has a love for the truth, and a lives by every Word of God, he will be tempted to regard such accounts with a minimum of interest. One of the effects of sin is the dreadful propensity to fleshly curiosity – like the Athenians and Stoics, delighting to hear “*some new thing*” (Acts 17:21). All too often, an attitude accompanying this frame of mind is the assumption that things already introduced to the intellect have been grasped by the heart. It is imperative that we thrust such an posture from our thinking, for it will rob our souls.

For that very reason, we should not expect that things we have heard from

our youth are clear to our understanding. Also, care must be taken not to regard them as children’s stories, as though they had nothing of value for those who are mature. **The Word of God is to be taught to children, but it was not written for children.**

No word of God is without significance. No record of God’s dealings among the sons of men is incidental. Divine interpositions have always had succeeding generations in prospect, as well as those who experienced the events themselves. Circumstances like that of our text actually **happened** for our instruction, and were written for our learning. Thus it is written, “*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*” (1 Cor 10:11). Again it is written, “*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*” (Rom 15:4).

From the Divine point of view, history is deliberate – orchestrated so as to bring instruction to the sons of men. For this reason, Scripture is not a mere chronological history of the world. Rather, it is **a record of God’s deliberate dealings among men – transactions that paved the way for the introduction of the Savior.**

THE RECORD BEFORE US

The record before us provides the details of the fall of Babylon – the most illustrious of all world empires. This fall was prophesied previously and repeatedly.

▣ **DAVID.** “*O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.*” (Psa 137:8-9)

▣ **ISAIAH.** “*The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. . . . Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate:*

and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it . . . Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it . . . And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah . . . and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.” (Isa 13:1-22; 14:4-26; 21:1-10; 46:1-24; 47:1-15; 48:14-20)

▣ **JEREMIAH.** “*And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.”* (Jer 25:12-13)

“The word that the LORD spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.” (Jer 50:1-16)

“Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about.” (Jer 51:1-64)

▣ **DANIEL.** “*Thou, O king, art a king*

of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.” (Dan 2:37-39)

▣ **HABUKKUK.** *“For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind,*

and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.” (Hab 1:6-11)

Now, the time has come for these prophecies to be fulfilled. The kingdom of Babylon will fall, just as the Lord has said it would.

A POINT TO PONDER

There are some who are persuaded those in the favor of God can never fall out of that favor. The demise of Nebuchadnezzar and the fall of Babylon confirm the folly of such reasoning.

Nebuchadnezzar was the “servant” of God (Jer 27:6). The Lord gave him a kingdom, power, strength, and glory (Dan 2:37). The nations of the world, and even the beasts of the field were given to him (Jer 27:5-7; Dan 2:38). Babylon is called “a golden cup in the Lord’s hand” (Jer 51:7).

Yet, all of this was taken from Nebuchadnezzar. And now, Babylon itself will fall, even though it was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand. It is no wonder that those in Christ are admonished, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). Theologies that cast men into a state of spiritual slumber are all about us. It is our business to see to it we do not in any way embrace them. **The just live by faith, not by privilege and honor.**

THE KING MAKES A FEAST AND REVEALS HIS INSOLENT

“^{5:1} Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. ² Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. ³ Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. ⁴ They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.”

Once again, the Spirit rapidly moves over a significant period of time without commenting on its historical details. **Although chronology and historical thoroughness are important to some, they are not the hallmarks of revelation.** The Spirit has moved holy men to record the workings of the Lord – particularly as they pertain to His “eternal purpose.” In this, iIncidentals are often omitted.

If men are to be edified by the Scriptures, and if they are to live by every word of them, the Scriptures themselves must have focus, for life cannot be maintained by mere randomness. There is a sort of spiritual highway upon which the Word of God is carried. It is narrow in that it is restricted

account of Belshazzar, we should not expect him to be the preeminent consideration. In fact, of all of the days of this man, Scripture records only one segment of the last day of his life – nothing more. That is how significant he was in the purpose of God. **He was a mere period – not an exclamation**

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to Divine intentions and objectives. It is wide in that it reveals the vast scope of the work of the Lord. It is high in that it contains lofty perspectives that make no place for worldly prominence or values. It is deep in that it promotes extended thought and meditation.

Therefore, as we consider the

point – in the sentence of Babylonian supremacy.

CAUSES AND THE DIVINE MANNER

We will also see that nothing God does is without a cause (Ezek 14:23).As the time draws closer for the appointed demise of the Babylonian kingdom, it will be found in a state of degeneracy. This

also is a Divine manner.

- ▶ **As the time drew near for Israel to be delivered from Egypt**, *“it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob”* (Ex 2:24).
- ▶ **As the time approached for the conclusion of the Babylonian captivity**, *“In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes”* (Dan 9:2-3).
- ▶ **When the fulness of time approached, when God would send His Son into the world**, there were those *“that looked for redemption in Jerusalem”* (Luke 2:38)
- ▶ **When the time came for John to give place to the ministry of Jesus, having prepared the way for Him**, *“the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not”* (Luke 3:15).

Now that the time has arrived for the fall of Babylon, unparalleled spiritual debauchery will break out. God will not bring Babylon down while it is in a state of comeliness, or when it is giving advantages to His people, like Daniel and his three friends.

BELSHAZZAR

“ 5:1a Belshazzar the king . . . ”

This chapter is the only place in Scripture that refers to the actions of Belshazzar. Later in this book, Daniel will recall some visions he had during the first and third years of Belshazzar’s reign. *“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the*

THE LAST BABYLONIAN KINGS

In accordance with this view, we arrange the last Chaldaean kings as follows: Nebuchadnezzar, his son Evilmerodach, Neriglissar, Labrosoarchad (his son, a boy, killed in a conspiracy), Nabonnedus or Labynetus, and Belshazzar. Herodotus says that Labynetus was the son of Queen Nitocris; and Megasthenes (Euseb. *Chr. Arm.* p. 60) tells us that he succeeded Labrosoarchad, but was not of his family. In *Daniel* 5:2, Nebuchadnezzar is called the father of Belshazzar. This, of course, need only mean grandfather or ancestor. Now Neriglissar usurped the throne on the murder of Evilmerodach (Beros. ap. Joseph. *Apion*, 1): we may therefore well suppose that on the death of his son Labrosoarchad, Nebuchadnezzar’s family was restored in the person of Nabonnedus or Labynetus, possibly the son of that king and Nitocris, and father of Belshazzar. MCCLEINTOK & STRONGS

dream, and told the sum of the matters.” **“In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first”** (7:1; 8:1) However, Daniel makes no reference to the king himself in chapters seven and eight.

His Name

The name *“Belshazzar”* means “Bel (another name for the idol Marduk) has protected the king.” Our text will show how utterly false that name was. The false god Bel could not protect this king for a single second. Historically, we understand Belshazzar was a joint king with his father Nabonidus, yet was subordinate to him.

Technically, a Grandson

Technically, Nebuchadnezzar was his grandfather, although he is referred to as Belshazzar’s father in this text (5:2,11,13,18). This is not an unusual manner of Scriptural reference, and we certainly should not balk at the language as some critics of Scripture have done. A few examples will serve to confirm this use of the word *“father.”* In fact, the word *“grandfather”* does not even occur in the KJV, and only once in the other major versions (2 Sam 9:7). The KJV translates the word *“father,”* as indicated below, which is a proper translation. This word is more closely paralleled with *“ancestor”* than the ordinary domestic meaning of

the word *“father.”*

A few examples will serve to confirm this use of the word *“father.”*

- ▶ Jacob referred to both Abraham and Isaac as his *“father.”* *“And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, . . . ”* (Gen 32:9).
- ▶ When speaking to Mephibosheth, David referred to Jonathan as his *“father,”* and to Saul (Jonathan’s father) as his *“father”* also (2 Sam 9:7).
- ▶ Jews referred to Abraham as their *“father.”* *“And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham”* (Mat 3:9).
- ▶ Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, is also called the son of Ahab’s house by marriage. *“And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son in law of the house of Ahab”* (2 Kgs 8:27).

Nebuchadnezzar’s Son’s Son

On his prophecy of the fall of Babylon, Jeremiah refers to the duration of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom. The final king is referred to as Nebuchadnezzar’s *“son’s son,”* or, as we would say, grandson (Jer 27:7). Suffice it to say, Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson in the flesh. However, as regarding the dynasty or paternal view, Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar’s father.

From the standpoint of history, the immediate successor of Nebuchadnezzar was not Belshazzar, but Evil-Merodach, as noted in 2 Kings 25:27 and Jeremiah 52:31-33. The duration of this man’s reign is open to question. Some take the view he reigned for only two years, others as long as thirty years. This son is the one who released Jehoiachin after he had been incarcerated for thirty-seven years (2 Kgs 25:27). This was during the first year of his reign after Nebuchadnezzar’s death. Historians generally consider Belshazzar to have reigned for between four to eight years.

What Difference Does It Make?

While all of this may seem quite inconsequential, I do have a point for bringing it to your attention. This is a point of interest, but contains food for serious thought. Using the most conservative figures, at the time of our text, forty-seven years had passed since Daniel was taken into captivity. Using the larger figures, around seventy-two years had passed since he was taken captive.

To get more to the point, the event we will now review took place at least eleven years after Nebuchadnezzar's humbling experience in the field. It could also have been as long as thirty-eight years after that time. At any rate, it was

that this is the ONLY thing we know Belshazzar did. However long he lived, whatever the length of his reign as king of Babylon, this is heaven's commentary on his life: "he made a great feast." The only thing the Holy Spirit tells us about this man occurred at this feast. His name is mentioned eight times in Scripture, and two of them have nothing to do with his works, other than the fact that he reigned. Compare that with the Scriptural references to Abraham, "the father of all them that believe." As "Abram," he is mentioned fifty-four times. As "Abraham," he is referred to two hundred and thirty-one times. "Abram's" is mentioned seven times, and "Abraham's" nineteen times. That is three hundred and

then is a man better than a sheep?" (Mat 12:12), and "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Mat 10:31). Further Divine consideration is also traced to our frailty, not merely our worth. As it is written, "For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep is covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them" (Psa 103:13-18).

THE WORTH OF A PERSON IS MEASURED BY THEIR FAITH – BY THEIR ABILITY AND INCLINATION TO BELIEVE GOD AND LEAN WHOLLY UPON HIM. ALTHOUGH MEN MAY DISPUTE OVER THE INHERENT WORTH OF INDIVIDUALS, THE SCRIPTURES MAKE NO SUCH REPRESENTATION.

long enough for men to forget what had happened. **However, God will not allow men to forget His great works, and will judge them when they do.**

A Brief Thought

Here is a mighty king of Babylon with considerable influence, and a number of subordinates. **Yet, from the heavenly perspective the only consideration given to him was his last evening on earth.** The ONLY reason he is mentioned is because he was a fitting conclusion to the great Babylonian empire. Otherwise, his name would never have occurred in Scripture.

A FEAST, LORDS, AND WINE

^{5:1b} . . . made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand . . . " Other versions read, "for a thousand of nobles."^{NASB/NIV}

The Significance of a Person

The thought has occurred to me

eleven references to Abraham, as compared with eight to Belshazzar. Further, one hundred years of Abraham's life are covered – from seventy-five to one hundred and seventy-five (Gen 12:4; 25:7). Only a few hours of Belshazzar's life is covered.

The worth of a person is measured by their faith – by their ability and inclination to believe God and lean wholly upon Him. Although men may dispute over the inherent worth of individuals, the Scriptures make no such representation. God did "so love the world" (John 3:16), and provided a Propitiation for "the whole world" (1 John 2:2). **That magnanimous display of Divine goodness, however, is consistently traced to His great love and mercy, not the inherent, or constitutional worth of humanity.**

When comparing the value of men, we read such statements as, "How much

This certainly is not intended to produce calloused and insensitive views of people. It is, however, meant to encourage us to obtain godly views of men, and of ourselves as well. There ARE people of whom it is said, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life" (Isa 43:4). Belshazzar was not such a person – but there is no reason why you cannot be one. Your faith in God and belief of the record He has given of His Son will make you precious in His sight also.

A Thousand of His Lords

Nothing in the text suggests the group for which the feast was prepared included all of the Babylonian nobles. It was for one thousand of them. In order to get a grasp of the size of his empire – and Belshazzar was actually a second ruler – the United States Government has approximately one hundred Senators and four hundred and sixty Representatives. That is, in the language of our text, around five hundred and sixty "nobles" – a little over one half of the number attending the great feast prepared by Belshazzar.

He Drank Wine Before Them

Other versions read, "and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand,"^{NASB} and "and drank wine with them."^{NIV} The idea here is that the events that follow occurred while Belshazzar and his host were imbibing wine. As some would consider things, that would make the multitude less accountable, for they would not tend to be in full possession of

their faculties. However, that is not how heaven will view this revelry. We will also see how Belshazzar had enough presence of mind to conduct himself foolishly, making a decision to do something that no one in Babylon had ever done before. In the act that follows, this wicked king stoops to further depths than Nebuchadnezzar did before him – and heaven will take due notice of his deeds.

BRING THE VESSELS

“Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein . . . ”

Somewhere between fifty and seventy years earlier, Nebuchadnezzar took *“part of the vessels of the house of God,”* and brought them *“into the land of Shinar,”* putting them in *“the house of his God.”* The Spirit declares that God *“gave”* these vessels into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand (Dan 1:2). The Chronicles declare, *“Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon”* (2 Chr 36:7). The record of the Kings reads, *“And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king’s house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said”* (2 Kgs 24:13). God did NOT do this, however, for the vessels to be desecrated. **Rather, this was His way of keeping them safe until they would later be returned to His house in Jerusalem by Cyrus, whom God raised up to rebuild His temple** (Ezra 1:7; 5:14).

Now, in an act of obloquy and utter disregard for the name of the Lord, Belshazzar gives *“orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, in order that the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.”*^{NASB} He does this while he was *“drinking his wine.”*

Those who imagine God has no regard for things that have been

consecrated to Him, do well to give heed to this account. **God is showing Himself to us in this text – unveiling an aspect of His Person of which we cannot afford to be ignorant.**

Some have thought Belshazzar was drunk when he gave this order, and that may very well be true. However, his drunkenness will not excuse his behavior before God. He will be held in strict account for his orders. Sin is never excusable or glossed by the Lord. That is involved in the revelation of Himself to Moses: *“and that will by no means clear the guilty”* (Ex 34:7). Nahum also says, *“and will not at all acquit the wicked”* (Nah 1:3). It is true, as David confessed, *“But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared”* (Psa 130:4). But Divine readiness to forgive (Psa 86:5) makes no provision for ignoring sin, or treating iniquity as though it was inconsequential. If a heathen king, without a covenant with God, takes it

them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.”

The text before us is most appropriate in a day when a sense of sacred things has all but been obliterated by an insensitive society. The name of the Lord, His great salvation, His word, and His people are frequently held in disregard. It is not uncommon to hear professed believers jest about holy matters, as though it was superstitious to hold them in high regard. Those who imagine God has no interest in external matters do well to give due heed to this text. In it the “God-loves-you-no-matter-what-you-do” mentality is exposed for the gobbledygook that it is.

They Brought the Vessels

This was a most foolish thing to do, and that will shortly be made quite clear. For the first time since Nebuchadnezzar had placed these holy

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upon himself to disrespect the God of heaven, his action will not be ignored.

A Wretched Group

The Spirit mentions the wretched group that were set to desecrate vessels that had been dedicated to the Lord of glory. They included Belshazzar, his nobles, his wives, and his concubines. It appears as though his wives and concubines came in when the revelry began, for the feast had been made for his nobles, not his wives.

DRINKING AND PRAISING

“... Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in

vessels in the house of his god, they were brought forth. Their original area is specified: *“the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem.”*

The pillage of the house of God by Nebuchadnezzar is detailed in the book of Second Kings. What he took from the temple was most significant.

- ▣ They broke in pieces the pillars of brass in the house of the Lord, their bases, and the brazen sea (laver), carrying the bronze back to Babylon.
- ▣ They confiscated the pots, shovel, snuffers, spoons, and vessels of brass associated with the altar.
- ▣ The fire pans, bowls, and such things as were of gold and silver – everything

made of pure silver and gold – were taken.

☒ We are told that the bronze used in the pillars and laver was “*beyond measure*,”^{”NKJV} or “*more than could be weighed*.”

☒ Each pillar was eighteen cubits high (twenty-seven feet), and the bronze capital on the top of one of the pillars was three cubits (four and a half feet), with elaborate decorations. The

vessels for their night of revelry.

They Drank From Them

Now the vessels that had been dedicated to the Lord were employed for unholy purposes – a drunken feast.

The book of Hebrews refers to these, and other articles, as “*vessels of the ministry*,” which were sanctified by the blood of the covenant (Heb 9:21). Moses also anointed these vessels with oil,

iron, of wood, and of stone.”

By praising their false gods, particularly Bel, in whose house the vessels had been retained, this motley Babylonian crew was giving their gods the glory for their victory. Bel, however, had not given these sacred vessels into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Rather, it is written “*And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God*” (Dan 1:2).

God had also extended the empire of Babylon in the days of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27:6-7). Now Belshazzar insults the God of heaven. In his mind, he thought nothing of giving glory to his own lifeless gods. However, his insolence will not go unnoticed by the God he is refusing to honor.

There is something of significance to be seen in this text. Drinking wine and drunkenness fit well together as a background for praising gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, and of stone. Such behavior is forthrightly rejected by the true God, but is received by false ones.

It is also worthy of note that the Babylonian gods were made of the same materials contained in the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream: gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Other lifeless materials are added: wood and stone. O, the irony of making god’s of such things.

But there is something else to note. The materials of their gods are listed in a degenerative sequence: gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and finally stone. **Just as surely as God’s glory shines brighter and brighter, the glory of false gods grows dimmer and dimmer, until finally they are nothing more than lifeless rocks.**

THERE IS SOMETHING OF SIGNIFICANCE TO BE SEEN IN THIS TEXT. DRINKING WINE AND DRUNKENNESS FIT WELL TOGETHER AS A BACKGROUND FOR PRAISING GODS OF GOLD, SILVER, BRASS, IRON, AND OF STONE. SUCH BEHAVIOR IS FORTHRIGHTLY REJECTED BY THE TRUE GOD, BUT IS RECEIVED BY FALSE ONES.

other pillar was similar to it (2 Kings 25:13-17).

To give an idea of the number of vessels that were taken from Jerusalem, Ezra provides an inventory of them when they were returned to their rightful place. “*Now this was their number: 30 gold dishes, 1,000 silver dishes, 29 duplicates; 30 gold bowls, 410 silver bowls of a second kind, and 1,000 other articles. All the articles of gold and silver numbered 5,400. Sheshbazzar brought them all up with the exiles who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem*”^{”NASB} (Ezra 1:9-11).

It was quite possible every person at the feast was provided one of these holy

setting them apart for Divine service (Ex 40:9-11; Lev 8:11). These vessels were handled only by the Levites, who had the charge of them (Num 1:50).

But now the king, his nobles, his wives, and his concubines “*drank wine*” from them. The seriousness of this offense will be seen in God’s judgment against it.

They Praised Their Gods

The sin of Belshazzar is now compounded. It was wicked enough to take the vessels dedicated to the God of heaven, and dare to indulge their fleshly appetites with them. However, while they did so, “*They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of*

GOD BREAKS INTO THE FEAST

“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.*”⁶ *Then*

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.”

Are all things known to God? Does the Lord have interest in isolated events in the earth – events that are private in nature? Indeed, this record confirms “*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight Everything is uncovered and*

laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account"^{NIV} (Heb 4:13).

The scene takes place in the king's royal palace, a structure renowned for its immensity and excellence. It is a night of revelry – wine-drinking and loud praise to gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Into this drunken revelry the holy vessels from the house of God Almighty have been brought, and now the heathen crowd is drinking wine from them as they praise their idols. **Such blatant mockery will not go unnoticed by heaven.**

It is quite true that God does not react to all mockery in this manner. However, this record is designed to teach us the truth about how He regards such profanity. It may appear that man's disdain for the things of God is not duly noted. But that is not the case. Those who desecrate the things of God, or conduct themselves in disdainful ways, "*are storing up wrath against themselves for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done*" (Rom 2:5-6). In the case before us, the judgment comes immediately.

THE SAME HOUR

"^{5a} In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand . . . " Other versions they this occurred "*suddenly*"^{NASB/NIV} "*immediately.*"^{NRSV} "*in that very hour,*"^{BBE} and "*at that very moment.*"^{NLT} The idea is that as soon as they began to drink wine from the Lord's golden vessels, a Divine intrusion occurred. While their contemptuous hands held vessels dedicated to the Lord, a hand appears, bringing a message.

A whole man does not appear, nor the upper torso of a man, or even the arm of one. Rather, only the fingers of a human hand appeared. Just as surely as "*the finger of God*" wrote the tables of the Law (Ex 31:18; Deut 9:10), so a Divine message was now delivered to the thoughtless and insolent king of Babylon.

WRITING IN THE KING'S PALACE

"^{5b} . . . 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."

The king had dared to desecrate the vessels of the Lord, now the Lord will desecrate the walls of his palace. On the walls that were filled with splendid images of Chaldaean and idolatrous representations, a supernatural hand began to write. Among all the Babylonian paraphernalia space was found for a special message from God Almighty. It wrote "*opposite the lampstand,*"^{NASB} so the king could more readily see it. Some feel the hand extended from the lampstand itself. **It is as though the light intended to illuminate the banquet hall was now focused on the writing on the wall.** God has drawn the attention to His message!

Pharisee down to the ground as He did Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3). Do not doubt for a moment that God can make Himself known in unquestionable and attention-getting ways.

THE KING SAW, AND WAS CHANGED

"⁶ Then 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."

It took no time at all for sobriety to grip the heart and mind of the king. He was instantly alert, fully aware of what was

IT IS QUITE TRUE THAT GOD DOES NOT REACT TO ALL MOCKERY IN THIS MANNER. HOWEVER, THIS RECORD IS DESIGNED TO TEACH US THE TRUTH ABOUT HOW HE REGARDS SUCH PROFANITY. IT MAY APPEAR THAT MAN'S DISDAIN FOR THE THINGS OF GOD IS NOT DULY NOTED. BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE.

What is more, "*the king watched the hand as it wrote.*"^{NIV} It was an arresting sight, indeed, and would have a most sobering effect upon him. The king did not spot the writing later, for then it might have been supposed that some mortal had inscribed it on the wall. **Rather, Belshazzar saw the fingers of the hand as they wrote words upon the wall.**

Make no mistake about this! God is fully capable of getting an individual's attention. He can break through the monotony and routines of life, and cause the individual to focus his attention upon the Lord. He may do it by smiting the firstborn in all of Egypt (Ex 12:29), or driving Nebuchadnezzar into a field, deprived of his mind, and with a beast's heart (Dan 4:33). He can send venomous serpents among a crowd of murmurers (Num 21:6), or a destructive storm where a runaway prophet is asleep in a ship (Jonah 1:4). He may block the wayward path of a person as He did with Balaam (Num 22:27), or strike a persecuting

happening, even though he was indulgently drinking wine. There is no record of anyone else being aware of this sign from heaven. It was a message tailored for him, and it appears as though he alone was captured by this vision, though others might well have seen it also.

His Countenance Was Changed

Other versions read, "*his face turned pale,*"^{NIB} "*the color went from the king's face,*"^{BBE} and "*his face blanched.*"^{NAB} The king was not bold now. There was not the faintest presence of humor or satisfaction seen in his countenance. **He was now dominated by fear and confusion,** having no choice in the matter at all. The God of heaven, whose vessels he was presently desecrating, had his full attention.

His Thoughts Troubled Him

Thinking can be an asset or a liability, a source of encouragement or a cause for deep concern. Suddenly, the king could think of nothing comforting, nothing joyful, nothing that included the

bright prospect of hope. The sight of the writing hand pushed all pleasant thoughts from him. Now his mind became his foe, pummeling him with thoughts that only brought trouble, agitation, and turmoil to him. Now his thoughts were alarming, sending ripples of fear throughout his entire person. A sanctified mind can be like a refreshing well to the believer. However, a troubled mind is like a poisoned spring that will not allow the entrance of anything pleasant or that brings relief. Keep in mind, God has caused this with a single arresting sight.

The Joints of His Loins Were Loosed

Other versions read, *“the joints of his hips were loosened,”* ^{NKJV} *“his hip joints were slack,”* ^{NASB} *“his legs gave way,”* ^{NIV} *“his hip joints shook,”* ^{NAB} and *“his limbs gave way.”* ^{NRSV}

The idea is that his legs no longer supported him. He can no longer stand as a monarch, or rise to his feet demanding respect and honor. God has brought him down, and done so quickly and decisively. At this level of Divine working, there is no difference in natural men. All distinction is superficial.

One short vision of the working of the Lord, and all his strength was gone! We learn from this that men are insolent and disrespectful of the Lord because of what they do NOT, or even CANNOT, see.

His Knees knocked Together

I prefer the strength of the KJV here: *“his knees smote one against the other.”* It is as though his own body began striking itself, unable to maintain

any semblance or dignity or control.

As though in the grip of an overpowering seizure, *“his knees began knocking together.”* ^{NASB} Terror has so gripped him that he has lost all control over his body. He is literally shaking with fear. **There is not an ounce of pride in this king now!**

In the Lord’s most abbreviated and limited appearances, He is able to completely dissipate all human pride, and cause terror to grip the heart. It is well for us to remember this. It will assist to keep us from being foolish ourselves. It will also bring comfort to us concerning those who despitely use or persecute us. There is no need for us to be vindictive against our enemies. The Lord can bring them down suddenly and thoroughly. We never need to take matters in our own hands.

FLESH MAKES A VAIN ATTEMPT

“⁷ The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise

We will first see that the supernatural hand did not write in the Chaldaean language. The message was therefore not discernible. Someone with

was rather the eruption of fear. It is what the prophet’s of Baal did when they were trying to illicit an answer from their dumb god (1 Kgs 18:28).

THE LORD DOES NOT HAVE TO BRING MEN ALONG GRADUALLY UNTIL THEIR ATTITUDES ARE CHANGED. HE CAN DO SO INSTANTLY — WITH SOMETHING THAT TRANSCENDS NATURE, AND SOMETHING THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND.

To cry *“aloud”* means to lift up the voice mightily, or with power. He shouted out the order, not willing to allow for any delay. His entire personality had been altered! He no longer had drinking on his mind, much less drinking out of the vessels taken from the house of God.

The Lord does not have to bring men along gradually until their attitudes are changed. He can do so instantly – with something that transcends nature, and something they do not understand.

men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show 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. ⁸ Then came in all the king’s wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. ⁹ Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonied.”

greater expertise will have to decipher the writing for the king. It will do him no good to lean to his own understanding on this matter.

BRING IN THE ASTROLOGERS

“^{7a} The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers . . . ”

Cried Aloud

Other versions read, *“called out,”* ^{NIB} *“called aloud,”* ^{NAU} *“cried out aloud,”* ^{DOUAY} *“call mightily,”* ^{YLT} and *“shouted out.”* ^{NAB} **This was no casual call, but**

Bring Them In!

As with Nebuchadnezzar, his first recourse is to the Babylonian wise men. Even at that, he does not simply call for scholars, or experts in language. Rather he seeks to take hold of a supernatural realm: *“the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers.”* These are the same classes of men Nebuchadnezzar called in when he had a dream he could not remember (2:2). He called for them again when he had the dream of the mighty tree, that he could remember (4:6-7).

Now, Belshazzar calls for this group of dabblers in the dark arts.

This feast started with Belshazzar and his lords, or nobles. Then his wives and concubines were added. Now a host of heathen wise men will be called in. **It is as though God was setting the stage for His word to be heard, that all might know the penalty for desecrating what has been dedicated to His service.**

An Application

I cannot leave this section without noting the distinction of faith. Faith moves the individual to seek FIRST from God, while the flesh has no capacity to think in this way. If there is a single thing that reveals the spiritual depravity of our times, it is the inclination of professed *Christians* to seek help first from the flesh. God once chided Israel because they sought help from everyone but Him. *“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?”* (Isa 8:19). The latter phrase means, *“Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?”*^{NASB}

The church of the Living God should not be anywhere near the position of Belshazzar! The trend of seeking counsel from worldly motivators, financial experts, and the likes, is not innocent. It is a manifestation of the meager diet upon which believers have been fed. Just as surely as Belshazzar was not God-conscious, so we have a modern church on our hands that is largely in the same position. It is not unusual to find churches that put their confidence in board meetings, with little or no thought being given to the Lord and those He has endowed with knowledge. This is a sad condition. While it is ordinarily not perceived as a serious matter, heaven views is in a most critical way.

READ THIS AND SHOW ME

“^{7b} . . . And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show 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 . . .”

In a sense, this writing was much like Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream. The message itself was not known, and thus its interpretation was beyond reach. Before a Word of God can be understood, it must first be known what has been said.

Some surmised the writing was in Hebrew, because Daniel was able to read it. I doubt this was the case, however, for if that is true, any Hebrew, or one with knowledge of the Hebrew language could have been called in to read the words.

A Magnificent Reward Is Offered

To be “clothed in scarlet” was to wear the robes of royalty – to be recognized as having unique privileges. When they mocked Jesus, you will recall, they *“put a scarlet robe on Him”* (Matt

explanation is that Belshazzar was a ruler with his immediate father, himself being the second ruler, and leaving only the third position as one he could give. While the second appears the most plausible, the matter is of no great consequence.

THEY COULD NOT DO IT

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

One can only imagine the effect of such an offer in our day. There would doubtless be a great eagerness to provide what the king demanded. However, great incentives can bring nothing from the flesh. Nature cannot uncover what has been revealed supernaturally! That ought

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE FLESH TO COMPREHEND WHAT THE LORD HAS SAID. TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, NATURAL MEANS CANNOT BE EMPLOYED TO UNCOVER THE MEANING OF A SUPERNATURAL MESSAGE.

27:28). The blasphemous church, which usurps the Lord Jesus, is depicted as woman sitting upon a *“scarlet beast,”* and *“arrayed in purple and scarlet color”* (Rev 17:3-4).

Having “a chain of gold about his neck,” was also indicative of rank and authority. When Pharaoh exalted Joseph, he *“put a gold chain about his neck”* (Gen 41:42), which was a symbol of his greatness.

To be made *“the third ruler in the kingdom”* means the one deciphering the writing would be made the third highest official in the kingdom. Some have questioned why such a person would not be made *“second”* in the kingdom, as Joseph was (Gen 41:40-44). A number of explanations have been put forward. One is that Belshazzar himself was the first ruler and the queen the next, leaving the next position as a reward. Another

to be apparent, but to this day, many remain unable to receive it. The flesh profits nothing, and no amount of reward can make it yield what it does not have.

Thus, for the third time in this book, the Babylonian wise men fail the test. They could not tell Nebuchadnezzar his first dream or its interpretation (2:10-11). They could not tell him the meaning of his second dream (4:7). Now, they fail once again, for *“they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant.”*^{NIV}

Once More

While it may appear redundant, allow me to once again affirm this. **It is not possible for the flesh to comprehend what the Lord has said. To put it another way, natural means cannot be employed to uncover the meaning of a supernatural message.** This is fundamental to sound spiritual thought.

If this postulate is correct, and I believe it to be beyond all controversy, several things necessarily follow.

- ▶ There is no such thing as a **hermeneutic**, or science of interpretation, that can clarify Scripture.
- ▶ It is not possible for spiritual meanings to be rooted in the soil of “the original **language**,” or linguistics, philology, or etymology.
- ▶ Human **logic**, however revered, is not capable of unraveling what God has

to obscure what He Himself has had written in a book. As it is written, “*For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers. And the entire vision shall be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, ‘Please read this,’ he will say, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed’*” (Isa 29:9-11).

One of the chief reasons for the inordinate popularity of the worldly wise within the church is the near-total absence of a quest to know “*the deep things of God*” (1 Cor 2;10). **Where men**

rather for hearing the words of the LORD. And people will stagger from sea to sea, And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it” ^{NASB} (Amos 8:12).

If God would not allow Belshazzar to forget the truth to which he was exposed, and do so with impunity, what form of reasoning would lead men to conclude He would allow the church to do so?

TROUBLE, CHANGE, AND ASTONISHMENT

“⁹ Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.” Other versions read, “*Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed,*” ^{NASB} and “*So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled.*” ^{NIV}

The first thing you must see here is that God was working in a particular way, and would not allow His message to be overlooked or placed to the side. There are times when God allows people to ignore His Word, as with Felix and Agrippa (Acts 24:25; 26:28-31). But there are other times when God will not allow His Word to be buried in neglect, or placed upon the shelf of procrastination. This was such a time.

Thus, the already unsettled king became even more unsettled. He sensed the gravity of the message, even though it had not yet been interpreted to him. He became even more frightened, for he knew this must be a portent of things that were not good. His nobles were also “*perplexed*,” totally incapable of giving so much as a single word of comfort.

The writing of four words upon the wall had completely dried up the well of human wisdom. A dominating sense of futility swept over the entire court of the king. Within that palace there was not a solitary person who could give a single word to alleviate the fear and astonishment that suddenly fell upon that reveling crowd.

The God of the Hebrews had invaded the great palace of Babylon.

PERHAPS ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THE SPIRITUAL DECLINE OF OUR TIMES IS THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. IT MAY VERY WELL BE THAT HE HAS Poured OUT THE SPIRIT OF SLEEP UPON THE PROFESSED CHURCH, JUST AS HE DID UPON ISRAEL. MAYBE THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND BECAUSE THE LORD WILL NOT LET THEM UNDERSTAND.

declared.

If this is not true, the following must be concluded.

- ▶ None of Christ’s parables would have required interpretation (Matt 13:36; 15:15).
- ▶ The prophets would have understood the message they were inspired to declare (1 Pet 1:10-11).
- ▶ There would be no need for holy angels, who are wiser than men, to desire to look into the glories of the Gospel (1 Pet 1:12).
- ▶ It would not be possible for God to hide His truth from the wise and prudent (Matt 11:25).
- ▶ There would be no need to ask for understanding concerning the Scriptures (Psa 119:34,73,125,144, 169).

The God of heaven can so work as

are satisfied with surface views of Scripture they will leave room for those who are wise in this world. But when they sense the importance of a word from God, and that their eternal destiny can hinge on a proper understanding of it, the greater significance will be given to the Spirit of God and those in whom He is evidently at work.

I say this with great caution, yet it does need to be said. **Perhaps one of the reasons for the spiritual decline of our times is the judgment of God.** It may very well be that He has poured out the spirit of sleep upon the professed church, just as He did upon Israel. Maybe they do not understand because the Lord will not let them understand. Possibly their love for and alliance to the world has brought this condition upon them. It may be that He has sent a spiritual famine upon the land because of the disregard and lack of love for His Word. As it is written, “*Behold, days are coming,*” *declares the Lord GOD, “When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But*

Without an army or sound, he had caused their pride to melt, their fear to rise, and a sense of utter helplessness take hold of

them. One minute they were drinking and praising their gods. The next minute, they were sitting fearful and dumbfounded. We

do well to exercise ourselves to avoid such an experience! It is possible to effectively learn from this very record.

THE QUEEN REMEMBERS, AND DANIEL IS CALLED

“¹⁰ Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: ¹¹ There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; ¹² Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

God is at work in the heathen palace, fulfilling His good pleasure amidst a group of reveling heathen. In the midst of their drinking and praising gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, He will so orchestrate the affairs, that His own man will be summoned to the feast. It is a man who has apparently been forgotten by many, yet the memory of one will be stirred up about that man. The queen will speak to the king like Pilate’s wife spoke to him. God will give her words that will be appropriate for the occasion. She will be moved to speak truthfully about Daniel, and in a way that will constrain the king to call for him.

Do not think for a moment that God has ceased to work in this manner. He still can work in the midst of unlikely situations to make His will known.

BY REASON OF THE WORDS

“Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into

the banquet house . . . ” Other versions read, *“The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles,”* ^{NASB} *“The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall,”* ^{NIV} *“The queen, when she heard the discussion of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall,”* ^{NRSV} *“But when the queen mother heard what was happening, she hurried to the banquet hall,”* ^{NLT} and *“When the queen, attracted by the noise made by the king and his noblemen, came into the banqueting hall.”* ^{NJB}

You get the impression that things had fallen apart at the feast. Confusion,

the most illustrious worldly empires, confirming that it is *“The Most High”* that rules amidst the sons of men.

THERE IS A MAN

“ . . . and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed . . . ”

The queen suggests this is not the time to be troubled or to tremble, but to listen. A message has been delivered to the king, and it is vital that he hear what it has to say. All of his nobles must hear it also, as well as his wives and concubines. Her words also suggest the king should not think the words cannot be interpreted

IT IS THE NATURE OF THE UNREGENERATE TO FORGET THE PEOPLE OF GOD UNTIL THE HOUR OF CRISIS. DURING THE NORMALITIES OF LIFE, THEY ARE PUSHED BACK INTO THE RECESSES OF THE MIND, WITH NO THOUGHT OF THEM BEING HELPFUL. HOWEVER, GODLY PEOPLE ARE TO BE CONSIDERED A RESOURCE WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL.

mingled with fear, had erupted in cries of perplexity, and the queen heard about it. Behold how God is bringing things together. First, the king has his nobles come to the feast. Then his wives and concubines join the gala affair. Next all of the wise men are brought to the palace. And now, the queen also makes an entrance. The Lord is orchestrating events for the appearance of His man, Daniel, who will declare words that will be passed to succeeding generations. These will be words that will bring comfort to those who are afflicted, and sobriety to those who dare to tamper with the things of God. They will unveil the temporality of

to him. Although the most significant of all of Babylon’s wise men had not the remotest notion of their meaning, all was not hopeless. She had been sitting, so to speak, on a choice bit of knowledge that had suddenly become relevant.

There Is A Man In The Kingdom

“There is a man in thy kingdom . . . ” Right there, in his own kingdom, and under his nose, so to speak, there was a man suited for the hour. The king had not thought of him. His nobles had apparently forgotten all about him. His wives and concubines had no thoughts of him. But the queen knew about him, and the events

of the evening brought him to her attention.

It is the nature of the unregenerate to forget the people of God until the hour of crisis. **During the normalities of life, they are pushed back into the recesses of the mind, with no thought of them being helpful.** However, godly people are to be considered a resource when things are going well. In fact, honest consultation with them will help men avoid many crises and trying times.

Light, Understanding, and Wisdom

“ . . . in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light

she **did** know, is that the man of whom she spoke was associated with holiness, uprightness, and moral rectitude.

The expression of the queen (i.e., “*the spirit of the holy gods*”) is a pagan way of referring to holy things. Although it was the common way in Babylon of referring to a spiritual reality, it was a wholly inappropriate way for spiritually informed people to speak. **Those who insist on reducing the Word of God to the language of the street must tell us why it would not be appropriate to use this kind of language to refer to the Spirit of God.** And, if this kind of language is unacceptable, what could possibly make

(2:31-46).

- ▣ Third, when Nebuchadnezzar had his second dream of the great tree that was hewn down (4:10-27).

Now, a circumstance has arisen that has moved the queen to recall this most unique man.

It has been conjectured that Daniel was retired when Nebuchadnezzar died, which may very well be true. If so, he had been inactive in the affairs of state for about eight years, during the succeeding reigns of Evil-Merodach and Belshazzar.

Made Master

“ . . . whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers . . . ”

This exaltation was declared in the second chapter. “*Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon*” (2:48). In the fourth chapter, Nebuchadnezzar referred to Daniel in his exalted capacity as “*master of the magicians*” (4:9). But, alas, this was all in the past, and Daniel had, for the most part, been forgotten – **for eight years!**

It is apparent that at the time of Belshazzar, Daniel was not occupying this position, for he was not brought in when the king called for all of the Babylonian astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. But now, God has stirred the memory of the queen, and will bring Daniel back into prominence.

A QUALIFIED MAN

“ . . . Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

The queen points out how well suited Daniel is for the occasion. He possesses abilities that are most

IN OUR TIME, A PERSON GIFTED IN MIND MUST STAND BEHIND THOSE WITH GOOD LOOKS, FINE PERSONALITIES, AND PHYSICAL ABILITIES. BUT IT WILL NOT DO FOR BELSHAZZAR TO CALL SUCH PEOPLE BEFORE HIM NOW. THE CHALLENGING HANDWRITING ON THE WALL CANNOT BE MET BY AN ACTOR, ATHLETE, HUMORIST, OR MOTIVATOR. THIS REQUIRES SOMEONE WITH A MIND THAT HAS BEEN TOUCHED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him . . . ”

Thus the queen informs the flushed and fearful king there is a man in his very kingdom who has access to supernatural knowledge. He is not a mere scholar, as ordinarily conceived. His true expertise is not found in his knowledge of the language and literature of the Chaldeans, although he did have such knowledge (1:4). This is not a noted linguist, or a specialist in foreign writing. The task of interpreting the message on the wall had already been given to such men, and they could offer no help.

This man, like Caleb of old, had “*another spirit*” (Num 14:24). The “*spirit*” he possess was not simply related to the gods, but to “*the holy gods.*” At this point the language of the queen is not precise, because her understanding was very rudimentary. Being a polytheist, she thought there were many gods. But what

worldly expressions proper containers for the truth of God under any circumstances?

This man was discovered several years before, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, father of the dynasty in which Belshazzar was involved. He was ignored at that time also, until times arose when someone with unusual wisdom and insight was required. The qualities found in him were “*light,*” “*understanding,*” and “*wisdom.*” There were at least three notable occasions when these characteristics were displayed.

- ▣ First, when, as a young man, he displayed wisdom that was “*ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in the realm*” (1:20).

- ▣ Second, when Nebuchadnezzar had the dream of the great image that was destroyed by a supernatural stone

appropriate for this very time.

Excellent Spirit

Other versions read “extraordinary spirit,”^{NASB} “keen mind,”^{NIV} “greater spirit,”^{DOUAY} “a most special spirit,”^{BEB} “a sharp mind,”^{NLT} and “a marvelous spirit.”^{NJB}

Daniel had an excellent mind, and excelled in the qualities of discernment and perception. He was not referred to as “brainy,” a “nerd,” or “real intellectual” – terms that tend to be derogatory in our society. In our time, a person gifted in mind must stand behind those with good looks, fine personalities, and physical abilities. But it will not do for Belshazzar to call such people before him now. The challenging handwriting on the wall cannot be met by an actor, athlete, humorist, or motivator. This requires someone with a mind that has been touched by the Spirit of God.

Knowledge and Understanding

One with “knowledge and understanding” can profitably process information. In the context of Scripture, “knowledge and understanding” involves clarifying and applying what God has revealed, or made known.

This is more than mere intellectual acumen, or possessing a trained and disciplined mind. While these qualities were doubtless possessed by Daniel, the “knowledge and understanding” he possessed were given to him by the Living God. It is said of Daniel that God gave him “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams” (1:17). Confirming this knowledge and understanding to be an addition to mere human capabilities, Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar that God “gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding”^{NKJV} (2:21). Natural aptitude and human disciplines are not sufficient to unravel messages from the Living God.

Interpreting Dreams and Showing Hard Sentences

Other versions read, “interpreting dreams, solving riddles,”^{NKJV} “explaining enigmas,”^{NASB} and “explanation of enigmas.”^{DOUAY} An enigma is an obscure speech or writing, or something hard to understand or explain – like the handwriting on the wall. It is something that has to be unraveled.

In addition to interpreting God-

in the past, he was duly recognized by king Nebuchadnezzar, and will be no stranger to the environment of a king’s court. The stage is now set for the message of the Lord to be given.

APPLICATION ONE

We must learn from this event to call upon the Lord FIRST. He is to be our first recourse, not the last. It is the tendency of man to look to the Lord only after all other resources have proved

IN ADDITION TO INTERPRETING GOD-SENT DREAMS, DANIEL COULD ALSO UNRAVEL DIFFICULT PROBLEMS – AND ONE CERTAINLY WAS CONFRONTING BELSHAZZAR. I WANT TO AGAIN EMPHASIZE THAT THIS REMARKABLE ABILITY WAS A SPECIAL GIFT FROM GOD. IT WAS NOT THE RESULT OF HUMAN ANALYSIS, NATURAL ENDOWMENTS, OR DISCIPLINED LEARNING.

sent dreams, Daniel could also unravel difficult problems – and one certainly was confronting Belshazzar. I want to again emphasize that this remarkable ability was a special gift from God. It was not the result of human analysis, natural endowments, or disciplined learning.

Dissolving of Doubts

Other versions read, “solving riddles,”^{NKJV} “solving difficult problems,”^{NASB} and “unfolding dark sayings.”^{BEB}

The idea is that some sayings are like a tight knot that must be loosened, or undone, before they can be understood. Daniel, according to the gift of God, was able to take things that were in the realm of mystery, and make them clear to the understanding.

Thus the queen has introduced Belshazzar to a person within his realm who is noted for his accomplishments as well as his supernatural ability. Further,

futile. While this is common, it is completely wrong, and can in no way be justified. This is particularly true for the people of God – those in Christ Jesus. When they seek help from other sources first, they have betrayed an intolerable level of unbelief.

APPLICATION TWO

It will become apparent that Daniel kept his mind and heart in tune with the Lord. This was not a time for a backslidden or forgetful prophet to come into view. During a possible eight-year period of political inactivity, his heart and mind were maintained by faith. In him we find a confirmation that **spiritual aptitudes can be kept in a state of maturity and growth, even when there is no public requirement for them.** Those who are capable of handling and expounding the truth of God may go through periods of time when they are not asked to use their kingdom skills. But they must keep them in good order.

THE KING SPEAKS TO DANIEL

“¹³ Then was Daniel brought | in before the king. And the king | spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou

A Heathen King Who Did Not Learn from God’s Works, Is Brought Down in Infamy and Shame, by Given O. Blakely

that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?¹⁴ I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.¹⁵ And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing.¹⁶ And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

It appears that Daniel lived in

which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?”

From this we see that Belshazzar was not personally acquainted with Daniel – even though that opportunity had been available to him. Notice that he makes no reference to Daniel’s former exalted position in the kingdom of Babylon, but condescendingly refers to him one of the “children of the captivity of Judah.” He seems to have no sense at all of the inadvisability of speaking down to Daniel as though he was one of his vassals.

Even though the queen had introduced Daniel as in every way a superior man, Belshazzar does not address him as a man of distinction. Not only does he refer to him as a captive of Judah, but as one whom Nebuchadnezzar brought to Babylon out of Jewry, or Judah. In my judgment, he is displaying a haughty and arrogant spirit, as though he

talk from your peers. But it is all short lived, just as surely as that of Belshazzar toward Daniel.

I HAVE HEARD OF YOU

“I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.¹⁵ And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing.¹⁶ And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts . . . ”

I Have Heard

How often and when he had heard of Daniel, we do not know. It appears, however, that the word of the queen has suddenly stirred his memory. If that is the case, he had not called for him until this very hour, which shows what little regard he had for this man of God.

There is something noticeable about how he describes Daniel – doubtless referring to what the queen has just told him. The queen had said the “*spirit of the holy gods*” was in Daniel. Belshazzar eliminated the word “*holy*,” saying only that “*the spirit of the gods*” was in him.

In my judgment, the king should have availed himself of the acquaintance of the prophet long before this time. Daniel was readily accessible to him, being within his kingdom, and apparently in the city of Babylon itself. How unlike the queen of Sheba he was! Jesus said of her, “*The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here*” (Mat 12:42). Surely that queen will do the same toward Belshazzar, who also was exposed to one, who though inferior to Jesus, had wisdom that surpassed that of Solomon.

Those who have access to men and women of God are responsible for taking advantage of that benefit.

It will not do to simply say they did not have the time, or were unacquainted with the nature of the benefits they could have obtained. The Lord has never taken the

IF YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE FOR THE LORD, YOU WILL ENCOUNTER MUCH OF THIS ARROGANT TALK FROM YOUR PEERS. BUT IT IS ALL SHORT LIVED, JUST AS SURELY AS THAT OF BELSHAZZAR TOWARD DANIEL.

Babylon, although he was in relative obscurity. Some have suggested the queen may have maintained an acquaintance with the prophet. At any rate, it was known where he could be found, for he came to the palace that very night. A lengthy and exhaustive search for him was not required. Of course, after all of the surmising of men, it is the Lord who is arranging this entire sequence of events. He will use the knowledge of men, their acquaintances, etc., but it is Him that is doing the work.

ARE YOU THE ONE?

“Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel,

was superior to Daniel and the people of Judah. However, before the might is over, he will find how wrong he was to speak in such a disdainful manner.

Not a few of God’s people have experienced such treatment from the world – both the secular and the religious segments. Upon hearing Paul’s defense, wicked Felix cried out in a loud voice, “*Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!*” (Acts 26:24). Indeed, it is ever true, even as the songwriter Isaac Watts put it: “*Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God?*” Indeed, it is not!

If you choose to live for the Lord, you will encounter much of this arrogant

neglect of His prophets lightly – and He has not changed.

They Could Not

As Nebuchadnezzar did, Belshazzar admits that those whom he had trusted, and who were prominent in his kingdom, could not decipher the message he so sorely wanted to understand.

Although he did not know why, we do well to consider it. **A message that comes from God cannot be understood with worldly wisdom.** Today, we are faced with a flood of theologians who prattle about the things of God as though they were mere novelties. They spout personal opinions, and the most foolish of notions, because they only possess worldly knowledge. They are like Belshazzar’s wise men and astrologers. They cannot open for us he one thing we sorely need – God’s Word.

The time has come for them to be cast out of the church, and men brought in who possess “*spiritual understanding*” (Col 1:9), and “*speak in words that the Holy Spirit teaches*” (1 Cor 2:13).

I Have Heard You Can

Still speaking to Daniel in an arrogant manner, Belshazzar repeats that he has heard of Daniel that he can “*make interpretations and dissolve doubts.*” However, he makes no claim to believe these reports. Instead he says, “***IF you can read this writing and tell me what it means.***”^{NIV} In this he had fallen beneath Nebuchadnezzar, who, when he had dreamed of the great tree, simply told Daniel, “***declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee***” (Dan 4:18). But this night, the king cannot think in this manner.

Belshazzar, however, still puts a question mark upon Daniel. His unbelief still has a grip upon his heart. “***IF you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation.***”^{NASB}

REWARDS ARE OFFERED

“*. . . now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.*”

Now the king offers a reward to the prophet Daniel. But it is exactly the same reward he offered this impotent astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers (5:7). Even though he had heard of Daniel’s greater ability, he does not offer him anything more than those of his own court who had failed so miserably. Thus, the disdain that the world has for the people of God is once again confirmed.

DANIEL ANSWERS IN WISDOM AND CONVICTION

“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. 18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor: 19 And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. 20 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: 21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He

will.”

As you might expect, Daniel answers with spiritual insight. He also accents the glory of God and minimizes

authority in his words.

- Keep your gifts for yourself.
- I will read the writing.
- I will make known the interpretation.

HIS ANSWER HAS PERSPECTIVE, POWER, AND CONVICTION IN IT. HE SPEAKS FORTHRIGHTLY AND WITH NO AMBIGUITY. HE IS OBVIOUSLY CONFIDENT – FULL OF FAITH AND INSIGHT. HE IS NOT “RUSTY” BECAUSE OF ANY FORMAL INACTIVITY. HIS SPIRITUAL ABILITIES ARE HONED TO A FINE EDGE.

the glories and advantages of this present evil world. His answer has perspective, power, and conviction in it. He speaks forthrightly and with no ambiguity. He is obviously confident – full of faith and insight. He is not “rusty” because of any formal inactivity. His spiritual abilities are honed to a fine edge. Notice the

- God gave Nebuchadnezzar what he had.
- Because, and only because, of what God gave him. Nebuchadnezzar could do whatever he wanted.
- Nebuchadnezzar was lifted in pride.
- He was removed from his throne.
- His glory was taken from him.

A Heathen King Who Did Not Learn from God’s Works, Is Brought Down in Infamy and Shame, by Given O. Blakely

- ▶ He was driven from among men.
- ▶ His heart was made like the beasts.
- ▶ His dwelling was with wild beasts.
- ▶ They fed him with grass.
- ▶ His body was wet with dew.
- ▶ He learned God ruled in the kingdoms of men, appointing over them whomever He willed.

That was not a dissertation, developed over a few weeks, but an instant answer. It brought the past to bear upon the present, and was administered in wisdom and precision.

KEEP YOUR GIFTS

“¹⁷ Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself,

Nebuchadnezzar.

Here again we see that all sin is not alike. There are transgressions that are more serious, and thus more weighty punishments are reaped because of them.

Like Abraham

Daniel’s response was much like that of Abraham to the king of Sodom. After a conspiracy of kings had come up against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, and captured Lot, Abraham’s nephew, word got back to Abraham (then “Abram”). He armed three hundred and eighteen of his servants, and pursued those kings. After smiting them all, “he brought back all the goods, and also

blessing,” Elisha replied, “But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused” (2 Kgs 5:16).

Like Peter

When Simon the sorcerer sought to purchase with money the ability to confer the Holy Spirit upon others, Peter replied with convicting power. “*Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God*” (Acts 8:20-21).

One of the sure marks of a man or woman of God is their preference for the praise of God rather than the praise of men. Thus, in his response to Belshazzar, Daniel has shown his faith in God, who alone can exalt and reward with true benefit.

I WILL READ THE WRITING

“ . . . yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.”

Daniel will read the message because God has given him the understanding, and it must be said. He will read it out of a formal respect for the king’s office. He will read it because of his reputation as a man of God who delivers the word of God.

He does not need to go home and pray, as he did with Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream (2:17-18). He does not sit astonished for an hour as he did with his second dream (4:19). He gets to the work immediately, because what he says is to be fulfilled that very night.

REMEMBER NEBUCHADNEZZAR

“O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor . . . ” This is precisely the message that Daniel had given Nebuchadnezzar some years earlier. “*Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory*” (2:37). But the message bears repeating, for its truth had been forgotten, first by Nebuchadnezzar himself, and now by Belshazzar.

The Extent Of Nebuchadnezzar’s

BECAUSE THAT VERY NIGHT THIS KING HAD DESECRATED THE HOLY VESSELS OF THE HOUSE OF GOD. HE HAD DRANK WINE FROM THOSE VESSELS WHILE PRAISING GODS OF GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE, IRON, AND WOOD. HIS SIN WAS EVEN WORSE THAN THAT OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR. GOD’S WORD TO HIM WOULD NOT ALLOW FOR ANY RECOVERY, AS WAS GIVEN TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

and give thy rewards to another . . . ”

Unlike wicked Balaam, Daniel will not prophesy “*for wages*” (2 Pet 2:15). He has no regard for earthly incentives. In this way, he was responding appropriately to the arrogance of king Belshazzar. Daniel did not speak in this way to Nebuchadnezzar (4:19). He had even evidenced some regard for Nebuchadnezzar, declaring he wished the grievous message he had to give was for the king’s enemies, and not for the king himself. But this is not the way he speaks to Belshazzar. Why?

Because that very night this king had desecrated the holy vessels of the house of God. He had drank wine from those vessels while praising gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and wood. His sin was even worse than that of Nebuchadnezzar. God’s word to him would not allow for any recovery, as was given to

brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people” (Gen 14:16).

The king of Sodom went out to meet Abram, saying to him, “*Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.*” The booty was significant, but did not attract the heart of the great patriarch. He responded, “*And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich*” (Gen 14:22-23).

Like Elisha

The mighty prophet Elisha responded in a like manner to Naaman the Syrian, who he healed of leprosy. When Naaman offered the prophet “a

Power

“And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.”

Here Daniel elaborates on Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, showing what absolute dominion had been given to him by the God of heaven. Just as surely as Pilate received his power from God – even power to have Jesus crucified (John 19:11) – so the Babylonian monarch had received his authority from God also. Note the extent of that power.

- ▣ All people were under him.
- ▣ All nations were responsible to him.
- ▣ All languages served him.
- ▣ The whole world trembled before him.
- ▣ Whoever he desired, he killed.
- ▣ Whoever he wanted to live, did so.
- ▣ He elevated whoever he wanted.
- ▣ He deposed whoever he desired.

This is some of the detail included in Daniel’s word to Nebuchadnezzar: *“O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth”* (Dan 4:22). It fulfilled what God told Jeremiah He would do with Nebuchadnezzar. *“I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come”* (Jer 27:5-7).

That is the kind of power God can give a single individual while he is a heathen! To this very day, this remains an exceedingly difficult thing for men to learn, even as it was for Belshazzar.

His Heart Was Lifted Up

“But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride . . .” Even though God did not tell Nebuchadnezzar this until he was well established in his reign, he was nevertheless held responsible for remaining humble.

Note how precisely Daniel describes the self-exaltation of Nebuchadnezzar.

- ▣ **His heart was lifted up in pride.** In this way, man begins to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Self is viewed as though there were no God, and the seeming successes of life were the product of human ingenuity alone. This is the way God frequently describes human vanity. When Israel forgot God, it was because their heart was lifted up (Deut 8:14). After a sterling reign, Uzziah’s heart was *“lifted up to his destruction”* (2 Chron 26:16). The same thing happened to Hezekiah, bringing the wrath of God upon him (2 Chron 32:25). This is the very

man alone. The words “all men are created equal” may have a pleasant enough ring to the political ear, but they are not altogether true. Some men have been *“raised up”* like Pharaoh (Ex 9:16). Others are given dominion for no apparent reason, like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:37). Others are elevated to places of prominence in a strange land, like Joseph, Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Gen 41:41; Dan 2:48,49).

When, however, men are *“lifted up”* in pride, whether they be heathen or Jew, unbeliever or believer, they immediately become answerable to the God who alone can exalt. It must be remembered that one of the seven things God is said to hate is a *“proud look”* (Prov 6:17).

PRIDE CANNOT COEXIST WITH HUMILITY. AS SOON AS IT RISES WITHIN A PERSON, THE MIND BECOMES LIKE AN IMPENETRABLE STONE. SOON PURE THOUGHTS CAN NO LONGER ENTER THE MIND. THE THOUGHT PROCESSES BECOME CORRUPT, AND THE INDIVIDUAL BECOMES CALLOUSED AND UNREASONABLE.

transgression that caused the demise of the devil (Ezek 28:17). Thus, the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar is also traced to the very moment he was *“lifted up”* (4:30).

- ▣ **His mind was hardened in pride.** Pride cannot coexist with humility. As soon as it rises within a person, the mind becomes like an impenetrable stone. Soon pure thoughts can no longer enter the mind. The thought processes become corrupt, and the individual becomes calloused and unreasonable. **A society in which pride is cultured and rewarded eventually becomes one in which God cannot work.** For Nebuchadnezzar, a chastening came upon him that was without parallel in all of history.

Any individual, regardless of the advantages of direct or declared revelation, should conclude that prosperity cannot be induced by

He Was Deposed

*“. . . he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:”*²¹ *And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven . . .”*

Again, Daniel speaks with remarkable precision, accenting all of the right things, and drawing attention to mighty work of God. Notice the emphasis on what was **MADE** to happen to him – what was forced upon him.

- ▣ He was **deposed** from his throne.
- ▣ They **took** his glory from him.
- ▣ He was **driven** from the sons of men.
- ▣ His heart was **made** like a beasts heart.

It is a fearful thing, indeed, *“to fall into the hands of a living God!”* (Heb 10:31). Woe to the person who adopts a theology so insipid that he imagines he

can tamper with God, provoke Him, or tempt Him! With all of the talk these days about God's love of everyone, someone needs to raise their voice and declare how God regards the pride of man.

Until He Knew

“ . . . till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will.”

This reality is referred to a number of times in the book of Daniel. It constitutes one of the primary proclamations of this book.

▣ *“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:*

and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan 2:20-21).

▣ *“ . . . to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men”* (Dan 4:17).

▣ *“ . . . till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will”* (Dan 4:25).

▣ *“ . . . until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men,*

and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan 4:32).

It is well to keep this thought uppermost in our minds as we go through the book of Daniel. I have given you four places where it is specifically stated. It will be declared countless times in other ways, confirming that this world is being governed by God Almighty, not by man, *“whose breath is in his nostrils”* (Isa 2:22). Just as surely as Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were responsible to learn this reality, so are we. I will go so far as to say faith more firmly establishes this to our hearts than any dream or judgment could possibly do. **In fact, it is only such an all powerful God that can be fully trusted.**

KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT HUMILITY

“²² And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; ²³ But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house

glorifying God and being thankful. Even before there was any extensive revelation from God – when only the natural order lisped to men of His *“eternal power and Godhead”* – men were held accountable for their response to God.

because they *“changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever”* (Rom 1:25).

▣ Men were given over to reprobate minds, to do things that were not proper, because *“they did not like to retain God in their knowledge”* (Rom 1:28).

IT IS APPARENT THAT THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORKINGS WERE AT SOME TIME GENERALLY KNOWN WITHIN THE ROYAL FAMILY. THAT KNOWLEDGE SHOULD HAVE IMPACTED THE UNDERSTANDING AND BEHAVIOR OF BELSHAZZAR. HE WAS INEXCUSABLE.

No one should marvel at the Lord's reaction to Belshazzar's brazen insolence. He had a greater advantage than those prior to the flood. He had access to greater revelation than anyone from the flood until Moses. Coupled with that, God had worked among the very people over whom he presided. The knowledge of that working was a matter of public record.

YOU KNEW THIS!

“And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this . . . ”

See, all people are responsible for the truth that has been both declared and demonstrated in their presence. Until this point, God had not directed a specific word to Belshazzar. He had sent him no prophet with a message

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.”

In a most powerful way, we will see that all men are responsible for

▣ Although the knowledge of God was rudimentary and wholly without details, God darkened the hearts of men *“because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations”* (Rom 1:21).

▣ The living God gave men over to *“vile affections,”* thus causing them to degenerate into unnatural behavior,

tailored for him. The king might very well have said, "God did not send **me** a dream. He did not send **me** a prophet, or make **me** eat grass in a field. How was I to know what he wanted of **me**?"

There is no validity to that kind of reasoning. Men are held accountable for what they CAN know as well as what is particularly addressed to them. God had worked in Babylon, and it was Belshazzar's responsibility to inquire into His workings – to ask about why the father of his dynasty was driven into the field. He should have sought out the proclamation Nebuchadnezzar had sent throughout the whole world, and looked into it with intense interest and humility.

It is apparent that the knowledge of God's workings were at some time generally known within the royal family. That knowledge should have impacted the understanding and behavior of Belshazzar. He was inexcusable.

An Application

When considering the condition of our own country in general, and the church in particular, this passage is unusually instructive. Think of the great men of God that have lived in our country – the great awakenings, consciousness of God, and spreading of the Word that has occurred in history. This is to say nothing of God's historical working among Israel – both His blessing and chastening of them. Detailed records of the church of the Lord Jesus have been with us, recounting how Jesus has reacted to both faithfulness and unfaithfulness, to pride and humility. The abundance of knowledge available to us vastly surpasses that which was available to Belshazzar.

Do not think for a single moment that God will not hold this generation in strict account for how it has handled this knowledge. He will be more exacting about it than He was with Belshazzar, because it is more abundant, and is characterized by greater light. Those who remain abysmally ignorant of God and His reactions to men are more guilty than Belshazzar. They have ignored mountains of truth, and pushed warehouses of available knowledge away from them.

Truly, *"the times of this*

ignorance" are no longer tolerable. "Now," God *"commands all men everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30), and they must be about doing it. It is the church's business to call men into accountability, and then proclaim repentance and remission of sins (Lk 24:47).

LIFTED UP AGAINST GOD

"But 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

YOU HAVE NOT GLORIFIED GOD!

"... and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

Are people really responsible for glorifying God? Indeed they are, even if they are a Babylonian! Keep in mind, Belshazzar had not been sent to a special theological school to learn these things. He was responsible for what he **could** have known. He could have inquired of the Jews that were in his city. He could have read the proclamation

IF A BABYLONIAN HEATHEN WAS JUDGED FOR NOT GIVING GOD HONOR AND GLORY, WHAT OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST? WHAT OF THOSE WHO ARE WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF A FULLER KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, YET HAVE CHOSEN TO FRITTER THEIR TIME AWAY WITH ENTERTAINMENT AND VARIOUS FORMS OF FLESHLY GRATIFICATION?

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 . . ."

Now Daniel gets to the matter at hand – the single thing that has brought the judgment of God upon Belshazzar. For Nebuchadnezzar, this happened when he boasted of his own achievements while surveying the great city of Babylon. **For Belshazzar, it occurred when he dared to bring God's holy vessels into his palace and drink wine from them.** Then he compounded his transgression by praising *"the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know,"* while he yet held the dedicated vessels of God's house in his hand. He did not do this privately, but publically, before *"thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines."*

His deed will not be excused because he may have been drunk. He was sobered by the sight of a hand writing on the wall. A holy remembrance of what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar would have sobered him as well. He has no excuse for being obtuse.

Nebuchadnezzar sent into all the world. He could have asked the queen about the matter, or even called for Daniel. But whether he did or not, he was responsible for knowing his breath was in the hand of God. By God's word he could either live or die – but neither could happen independently of Him.

All of Belshazzar's ways were in the hand of God, so that he could not even rule unless the God of heaven had given him to do so. He was totally responsible for recognizing that! Other versions of this passage read, *"But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways,"*^{NIB} *"But the God in whose hand is your life breath and the whole course of your life, you did not glorify,"*^{NAB} *"But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny!"*^{NLT}

And what may be said of this generation? **If a Babylonian heathen was judged for not giving God honor and glory, what of those who have been subjected to the Gospel of Christ?** What of those who are within walking distance of a fuller knowledge of

God, yet have chosen to fritter their time away with entertainment and various forms of fleshly gratification? Are we to imagine that they are innocent? Indeed, they are no more innocent than this Babylonian king!

☐ This was the curse of the whole Gentile world – they did not give God glory (Rom 1:21-23).

☐ It was the curse of many generations of the Israelites (Judges 3:7; 1 Sam 12:9; Psa 78:11; 106:13,21; Hos 2:13).

☐ It was the cause of rebuke and possible judgment against the churches (Rev 2:5,16,21-22; 3:3,19).

Remember, the name of the Lord is “Jealous” (Ex 34:14). The more He

gives, the less tolerant He is of those who do not give Him glory. After lavishing His love upon men, He will not overlook those who ignore Him. It is no wonder that the Apostle wrote to a recalcitrant Corinthian church, “Are we trying to arouse the Lord’s jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” ^{NIV} (1 Cor 10:22). We are not to tempt the Lord our God, putting Him to the test, and trying His forbearance!

THE MESSAGE FROM GOD

“²⁴ Then was the part of the hand sent from Him; and this writing was written.²⁵ And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.²⁶ This is the interpretation of the thing:

SENT FROM HIM

“Then was the part of the hand sent from him ; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

writing – visible writing: *“this writing was written . . . the writing that was written.”*



YOUR KINGDOM NUMBERED AND FINISHED

“This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it . . . ” Other versions read, “God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it,” ^{NASB} “God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end,” ^{NIV} and “God has measured your sovereignty and put an end to it.” ^{NJB}

Note, this first word, or message, is repeated twice. It is similar to Christ’s “Verily, verily” (John 1:51). It is given, as I understand it, as a confirmation. This is an irreversible judgment from heaven. It is not possible for it to be called back, and it will happen shortly.

Your Kingdom Is Numbered

That is, the full days allotted to his kingdom had been completed. This was to Belshazzar what “the fulness of the Gentiles” will be to the Jews (Rom 11:25). This perfectly accords with Job’s assessment of life in general. “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (Job 14:5). The Kingdom of Belshazzar had reached its appointed conclusion. To be more particular, the kingdom of Babylon itself had reached its conclusion, and would pass to the Medes that very night. That is how precisely God is



MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.²⁷ TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.²⁸ PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Now, after an appropriate introduction, Daniel comes to the matter of the writing on the wall. First, he had to set the stage for the word. We should not expect this message to be one of blessing or hope. This is, as will be confirmed in the following verses, a circumstance of great importance.

God has sent this message through “the part of the hand.” That “part” was identified as “fingers of a man’s hand” in verse five. Other versions read, “the fingers of **the** hand.” ^{NKJV} This most unusual thing was sent from God: i.e., “So from His presence the hand was sent and this writing was inscribed.” ^{NRSV} It was not, therefore, a vision, but a visible and tangible occurrence. The handwriting remained on the wall for all to see. It only consisted of four words, but it had mystified the wisest men in the empire. Four times Daniel alludes to it was

governing this world.

Your Kingdom Is Finished

Technically, this is not the meaning of the word MENE. That means, "Your kingdom is numbered." This is Daniels inspired interpretation of the word. The kingdom of Babylon in general, and the kingdom of Belshazzar in particular, would be brought to a grinding conclusion that very evening.

I want to keep before you that this was not a linguistic interpretation of the writing. This is an inspired message with a meaning that only one to whom God had revealed it could translate.

This word is the fulfillment of the

Him actions are weighed"(1 Sam 2:3). Again it is written, "The way of the just is uprightness: Thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just"(Isa 26:7).

In this case Belshazzar himself was placed in the Divine scales, as well as his kingdom in general, and the blasphemous deed he had committed that evening. The Lord does, indeed, weigh the "actions" of men as well as their persons. The solemn consideration of this reality is calculated to have a sobering effect on us.

The interpretation of this message is then given. Belshazzar was "found wanting." Other versions read "found deficient," ^{NASB} "found lacking," ^{YLT} and "have failed the test." ^{NLT} In other words, in the eyes of God, Belshazzar had no

such a manner.



THE KINGDOM IS DIVIDED AND GIVEN TO OTHERS

"PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

The word "peres" means divided – something that is forcibly split up or divided up. It is a different form of the word "upharsin," which is used in verse twenty-five. "Upharsin" is the plural form of "peres," which accented a single kingdom being divided to two other kingdoms. Thus "peres" emphasizes a single judgment, while "upharsin" accents the result of that judgment.

Even though the kingdom of Babylon appeared stable, and even invincible, it was toppling on the precipice of disaster. Its marvelous unity was about to end, and that by Divine mandate. Not only would the kingdom be taken from Belshazzar, it would be divided among others. In this case, one kingdom would be replaced by two.

In interpreting this division, Daniel is very specific. The kingdom would be "GIVEN to the Medes and the Persians." **God would give it to them!** He is, after all, a God who sets kings up and takes them down He gives kingdoms to whomever He desires.

In the first dream of Nebuchadnezzar, this very division was prophesied. Nebuchadnezzar was the "head of gold," and the inferior kingdom that would replace him was represented by two arms of silver. Later, in the eighth chapter, this division is viewed from the standpoint of its rulers. They are depicted as two horns of a single ram. "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia" (Dan 8:20). In particular, they were "Darius the Mede" (5:31; 11:1) and "Cyrus the Persian" (6:28).

Thus the writing has been read and interpreted. The actions of Belshazzar have been duly noticed in heaven, and have provoked a judgment against him and his entire kingdom. The seriousness of his foolish deed will be confirmed by the immediacy of its judgment.

I WANT TO KEEP BEFORE YOU THAT THIS WAS NOT A LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE WRITING. THIS IS AN INSPIRED MESSAGE WITH A MEANING THAT ONLY ONE TO WHOM GOD HAD REVEALED IT COULD TRANSLATE.

prophecy of Jeremiah. "And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations" (Jer 25:12). However, to show that God does nothing without a cause, this demise is also said to have resulted from the insolence of king Belshazzar, who dared to defile something that had been dedicated to God.



WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

"TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting . . ." Here God is pictured as carrying a balance in his hand – one in which men and their actions are weighed. Thus it is written, "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by

genuine worth. There was no further reason for his kingdom to continue. In fact, there was no reason for him to remain alive. He was, in fact, worthless. He had proved himself to be hardhearted, foolish, and insolent – even though marvelous advantages were given to him.

From this we learn there are certain Divine expectations – things He expects to find within and from men. No person is exempt from being "weighed" in the Divine balances in this world. Eventually, all men will be weighed in them at the day of judgment.

Whatever you may think of the Lord and your responsibility to Him, I urge you to live with your "weighing" in mind. Eventually, you will be put in the Lord's balance. Your peers may be tolerate of foolish behavior from you, and you may appear for a while to be free from all assessment. But that is not the case, and only a fool would dare to think in

ONE IS EXALTED, THE OTHER IS SLAIN

“²⁹ Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.³⁰ In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.”

The response of Belshazzar is not what one would expect. Some form of extreme response would be thought appropriate – like crying out in repentance, or lashing out in condemnation against Daniel like Herod did against John the Baptist. **However, we must take care not to take what has been placed in Divine balances, and put it in the scales of men!**

We are witnessing the result of a Divine mandate – something God is causing to happen. It should not surprise us, therefore, that the king reacts as he does. Is it not written, *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever he will”* (Prov 21:1). I take it that the Lord is turning the king’s heart toward Daniel. It is true, the king had made a sort of commitment to Daniel, but it is better to view the fulfillment of that commitment as the work of God, not the kindness or faithfulness of the man God has judged.

DANIEL IS EXALTED

“Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the

kingdom.”

After a season of relative inactivity, Daniel is suddenly vaulted into prominence once again. He is given the appropriate attire, a recognized symbol of

was enough that his reign had been concluded by heaven’s decree. As a matter of interest, history records the following.

In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain. Not by a servant of his own,

AFTER A SEASON OF RELATIVE INACTIVITY, DANIEL IS SUDDENLY VAULTED INTO PROMINENCE ONCE AGAIN. HE IS GIVEN THE APPROPRIATE ATTIRE, A RECOGNIZED SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY, AND A POSITION THAT WILL BE HONORED.

authority, and a position that will be honored.

Perhaps Belshazzar in his wickedness imagined this might secure his kingdom a little longer. If so, that had no real bearing on the case. God was actually preparing Daniel to extend his prominence to another dynasty.

BELSHAZZAR IS SLAIN

“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.” Other versions read, *“that very night,”*^{NKJV} and *“that same night.”*^{NASB}

Daniel does not describe the particulars of how Belshazzar was slain. It

as Jacchiades; or by an eunuch, one of his guards, as Saadiah and Joseph ben Gorion; but by Gadales and Gobryas, who led Cyrus’s army up the river Euphrates into the city of Babylon, its course being turned; the inhabitants of which being revelling and rioting, and the gates open, these men went up to the king’s palace; the doors of which being opened by the king’s orders to know what was the matter, they rushed in, and finding him standing up with his sword drawn in his own defence, they fell upon him, and slew him, and all about him, as Xenophon relates; and this was the same night the feast was, and the handwriting was seen, read, and interpreted.^{XENOPHON, Cyropaedia, 1.7 sect 22,23}

Thus ended the night of Belshazzar’s blasphemous deed. Daniel was exalted, and he was slain.

CONCLUSION

The event we have reviewed fulfills the first part of Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream. The Babylonian empire falls in order that it might be replaced with the inferior Medio-Persian empire.

It is very rare that two kingdoms

join in a single rule. This is, of course, the Lord’s doing, *“and it is marvelous in our eyes”* (Psa 118:23). The prophesy of Isaiah was also fulfilled. *“Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall*

dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” (Isa 13:19).

We should learn from this that the world is precisely ordered by the Lord, with no aspect of it being out of control. There are at least two things we should conclude from this.

- ▣ That nothing is out of control, and hence we should not allow worry or anxiety to take hold of our hearts and

minds.

- ▣ That having faith in God is the wisest thing a mortal can do. A God who governs the whole world is worthy of our trust. However, when we add to that the consideration that His government has been placed upon Jesus, and that He is ruling the world

for His people, it becomes a sin of the greatest magnitude to fail to believe and trust Him.

Do not hesitate to place your faith in God, refusing to lean to your own understanding. Just as surely as the Lord considered Daniel, so will He consider all who believe on His Son.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 8/23/2002. We will continue in our overview of Daniel, reviewing the thirty-first verse of the fifth chapter through the fifteenth verse of the sixth chapter. The lesson is titled, **"DARIUS AND THE THIRD TESTING OF DANIEL'S FAITH."** This is another well known account – Daniel and the lion's den. However, we must allow our familiarity with this account to rob us of the rich morsels of truth couched within it. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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