

## MARCH OF EMPIRE - LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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### CHAPTER 7

#### **Belshazzar – Weighed and Found Wanting**

#### **LESSON TEXT – – Daniel 5:1-31**

*The Account of the Tree Vision in Chapter Four Was an Historical Account of the Humbling and Restoration of King Nebuchadnezzar -- Belshazzar Miserably Failed Also Because of Great Wickedness -- Why Babylon Fell -- Heathen Idolatry Began at the Tower of Babel Which Was in Shinar or Babylon -- The Handwriting Upon the Wall Which Frightened the King -- Daniel Interpreted the Writing Which Was a Divine Warning to King Belshazzar -- Weighed and Found Wanting -- A Present Day Application of This Truth -- Men Should Heed This Divine Warning*

Our last lesson was based upon chapter four which gave to us an account of the tree vision which Nebuchadnezzar had and the interpretation of the dream as given by Daniel. The chapter was, in fact, an account of the humbling and the restoration of King Nebuchadnezzar. Prophetically, it foreshadows the humbling of all Gentile governments, which will be accomplished during the coming time of tribulation. After the tribulation period has swept over the world the Gentile governments of the earth which remain will have learned that GOD in Heaven ruleth over all, and as with King Nebuchadnezzar, they will praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth and His ways judgment, and they will confess that those who walk in pride He is able to abase.

#### **LESSON TEXT**

We are now ready to advance in our study by considering what is written in the fifth chapter of Daniel.

Due to the nature of the material presented, it will be necessary for us to read the entire chapter before we can analyze and intelligently comment upon the material presented. Be patient with us, therefore, while we read this interesting and important passage of Scripture. In Daniel the fifth chapter it says:

**“Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine**

before the thousand. 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. 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. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. 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. 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. 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. 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. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

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: 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; 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 Beltshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. 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? 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. 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: 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.

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. O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: 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. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: And 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. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; 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: 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. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. 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.

In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old."

### **WHY THIS CHAPTER IS IMPORTANT**

Certainly, my friends, this interesting and important narrative was not given merely for our entertainment but rather for our instruction. Our interest in this story is based, not only upon the historical facts which is present but rather upon the moral issue which it contains.

You will remember that in the vision which Nebuchadnezzar saw of the great image which represented the march of empire during the times of the Gentiles, he was declared to be the head of gold, for he was at that time the ruler of the great Babylonian Empire. Our present chapter has to do with the closing events of the great empire over which Nebuchadnezzar ruled. With the downfall of the Babylonian Empire the march of empire passed from the head of gold into the breast and arms of the image, which were made of silver, which represented the succeeding world empire of Medo-Persia.

### **WHY BABYLON FELL**

It is interesting to note that the downfall of the Babylonian Empire was brought about through the foolish conduct of Belshazzar the king.

The foolishness of King Belshazzar is revealed in the fact that he would undertake to hold such a feast, knowing that the armies of Persia were engaging themselves to take the city of Babylon. As we know, Babylon was a strongly fortified city and its great walls surrounding the

city have been famous in history ever since they were built. Since Belshazzar was not a GOD-fearing man, apparently he was trusting in the protection of those walls and in the power of the fighting men of Babylon, who were set to defend the city. Little did he realize that the walls of the city and the men who were set to defend it, were in no wise, adequate protection against the enemy, especially at a time when the moral foundations of the city and the empire were being destroyed.

### **WALLS ARE NOT ENOUGH**

Indeed, my friends, no walls have ever been built which could protect any city from the judgments of GOD when the moral foundations of that city have been destroyed.

You will remember that Jerusalem itself was a city with walls and the people who inhabited Jerusalem were the Jews, who were under covenant relationship with GOD, as His chosen people. Nevertheless, when the moral foundations of the city had been destroyed and unbelief occupied the minds and hearts of the people, and the worst kinds of sin, became the order of the day, GOD allowed the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar to capture and destroy the city and take His own people into Babylonian captivity. Then, as the appointed period of their captivity of seventy years drew near a close, the armies of Persia were at the gates of Babylon ready to destroy the city. We cannot read our lesson text without realizing the justice of GOD in allowing these things to come to pass, because of the wickedness of the king and the low moral state of the Babylonian kingdom.

We would say, therefore, that the wicked feast of Belshazzar was ill-timed, so far as the circumstances were concerned. He should have been occupied with other things.

### **BELSHAZZAR WAS WICKED AND FOOLISH**

The character of Belshazzar is well described by one writer who said, "He was addicted to the lowest vices of self-indulgence, and felt no restraint whatever in the gratification of his desires. With all this was combined an arrogance of the haughtiest kind, which would brook no interference with his designs, and would submit to no expostulation in the interests of morality. The severe lesson read by JEHOVAH to his grandfather, in that mysterious malady was entirely lost on him, and he went on to greater and greater excesses, as if to show that he had no regard whatever either for GOD or man."

Certainly, my friends, our lesson text confirms all that has been stated concerning Belshazzar the King.

### **IDOLATRY BEGAN IN BABYLON**

Let us not forget that Babylon is commonly known as the "mother of idolatry." It was on the plains of Shinar (or Babylon) that the people rebelled against GOD at the tower of Babel, whereupon they instituted a system of idolatry and began to worship the creature more than the CREATOR.

## **A CASE OF OPEN BLASPHEMY**

The wicked unbelief of the king is manifested in the fact that he "**commanded, to bring the gold 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.**" And when the vessels had been brought, the king and those who were with him committed open blasphemy against the GOD of Heaven by drinking out of those sacred vessels while at the same time they praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, or iron, of wood, and of stone.

## **A SUDDEN SURPRISE**

Certainly, my friends, such an attitude, and such conduct as this deserved the judgments of GOD upon the king and those who were with him, and judgment was not long delayed, for suddenly there appeared a man's hand writing upon the wall, "**And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.**"

Of course, the king was greatly frightened and desired to know the meaning of these strange words.

## **A FEARLESS ACCUSATION**

No one in all his kingdom was able to interpret them for him except Daniel. In speaking before the king Daniel very graciously refused the rewards which the king offered and rehearsed before him the story of Nebuchadnezzar and of how his heart had been humbled by the GOD of Heaven. Then, directing his attention to the king he said in verse 22 and 23 of our lesson text, "**And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though knewest all this; But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and they 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.**"

Thus, my friends, did Daniel chide and rebuke the king for his wicked and unbecoming behavior.

## **THE MEANING OF THE STRANGE WRITING**

He then continued by interpreting the writing for the king by saying in verses 25 to 28, "**And this is the writing that was written MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE: God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.**"

We cannot read these words without being reminded of what is stated in Hannah's prophetic prayer recorded in the second chapter of First Samuel. In the second and third verses of this

chapter Hannah said, **"There is none, holy as the Lord: For there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by his actions are weighed."**

## **WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING**

Certainly, my friends, this is what happened to King Belshazzar. He was weighed in the balances and found wanting.

In this mysterious way, GOD put a stop to his wicked feast and exposed the idolatry and the unbelief of his heart, and announced to him that his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Our lesson text says, **"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about three score and two years old."**

## **A PROPHECTIC APPLICATION**

Certainly, my friends, the moral lessons of this chapter are clearly evident. What happened to Belshazzar and to literal Babylon will happen to all Gentile kings and governments if they lift themselves up in pride and commit sacrilege against the Lord. That is exactly what some of the powerful dictators are doing today, and the Scriptures reveal that the coming Antichrist will do these very things, but the king never lived (or never will live) whom GOD is unable to humble or destroy by His mighty power.

## **INDIVIDUALS SHOULD TAKE WARNING**

What is true of kings and governments is true also individually and the words, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, namely, **"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting"** are the death sentence, written against many an individual who is living today. Therefore, if you are the one to whom GOD is speaking through these words we plead with you to repent of every known sin and to accept the Lord JESUS CHRIST, who is GOD's Son as your Saviour, for He, and He alone, is rich in mercy and full of grace and is able to save you from your sins.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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