

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Yahweh's Law

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Belshazzar's Banquet

Reading:
Daniel Chapter 5

1. Babylon

In Scripture the empire of **Babylon** symbolizes pride, rebellion against the Most High and the seat of everything evil. The city of Babylon was founded by a man called **Nimrod**, the great grandson of Noah.

Genesis 10: 8: *"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.*

9: He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.

10: And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar."

The historian Herodotus states that the city was approximately 200 square miles in size: (14x14 miles) The city was surrounded by a wall and a deep mote: beyond which was another wall 200 royal cubits (344 feet) high: and 50 royal cubits (86 feet) thick. On top of this rampart was room enough for a 4 horse chariot to pass, and even to turn, in addition to space for chambers facing each other.... The city had 100 gates of bronze, 25 gates on each side... The Euphrates flowed through the midst of the city dividing it into 2 portions.

2. King Nebuchadnezzar

King Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon in the days of the prophet Daniel. Initially this king was a cruel idol-worshipper who cared nothing for the God of Israel or his laws. But the Almighty humbled him and after a seven year ordeal Nebuchadnezzar became a true believer. After his conversion he wrote to the citizens of his great empire as follows:

Daniel 4: *34: "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:*

35: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

36: At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was

established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37: Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

3. Belshazzar's Banquet

Sad to say Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar, quite unimpressed by his father's conversion, greatly sinned against **Yahweh the Almighty God of Israel**. At a banquet, attended by a thousand of his lords, their wives and concubines, Belshazzar, king of Babylon, desecrated the sacred vessels of Israel's God. Moreover he blasphemed the name of the Creator by praising the idols of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and stone that the Babylonians had made and worshipped. Here is the record of his blasphemous banquet.

Daniel 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 **plaister 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."

4. The Handwriting on the Wall

Israel's God was not pleased with Belshazzar's sacrilege. He decided that Belshazzar's days on earth were to end: so He wrote a coded message on the wall of the banquet hall. The message was:

"Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin"

When king Belshazzar saw the writing, he was terrified beyond words. What made matters worse was that none of the celebrated wise men of Babylon were able to even read the coded message, let alone explain its meaning. In haste the prophet **Daniel** was called and here are his words of explanation:

Daniel 5: 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."

What, dear reader, does this ancient story have to do with us living at the beginning of the 21st century? The answer is - **very much!** Because every one of us will some day, like king Belshazzar of old, be **weighed in the balances**. Indeed, in the courts above our motives, words and actions are being weighed **every day!** Sooner or later will come the time when the Almighty decides to draw the curtain on our lives.

1 Samuel 2: 3: *"Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, **and by him actions are weighed.**"*

The patriarch Job was well aware of this fact and how that even his **grief** and **integrity** could be weighed by the Almighty God.

Job 6: 2: “Oh that my **grief** were throughly weighed, and my **calamity** laid in the balances together!”

Job 31: 6: “**Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity.**”

5. The Coming Judgment

The Bible plainly states that there is coming a **Day of Judgment**. Ignoring this fact will not make it go away. It behoves every man and woman, therefore, to bear this in mind as they go through life. Belshazzar's day of judgment - the **first phase** - came on the night when his blasphemy overshot itself. He was struck down that very night. Belshazzar's **final judgment**, however, will come on the **Great Day of Judgment** when all mankind will assemble before God and receive according to their works, eternal life or eternal damnation. Do not ignore these truths.

Ecclesiastes 12: 13: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

14: **For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”**

Matthew 12: 36: “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the **day of judgment**.

37: For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Revelation 20: 12: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: **and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.**

13: And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: **and they were judged every man according to their works.”**

6. Spiritual Parallels

What spiritual parallels can we draw from this story from ancient Babylon?

Kings:

- **Nebuchadnezzar:**

Proud, boastful, cruel and a worshipper of idols. But when he was humbled, he had the courage to confess his sins and seek pardon of the Almighty. His prize will be eternal life! Nebuchadnezzar's story could well be yours. But are you, like him, willing to confess your sins and seek pardon of the Almighty?

- **Belshazzar:**

Proud, boastful, cruel and a worshipper of idols. But, unlike Nebuchadnezzar his father, he continued to blaspheme the God of Israel. Belshazzar's end was tragic; and so will be the end of all who treat with contempt the God of Israel. They face eternal damnation!

PROPHET / PRIEST

Even in the midst of the evil Babylonian empire, the God of Heaven had His faithful followers; men who would not be defiled by the blasphemy and sin all around them. Two such examples are as follows:

- **Daniel:**

Daniel 2: 47: “The king answered unto Daniel, and said, **Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods**, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. 48: 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.”

Daniel 5: 12: “Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing 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 shew the interpretation.”

- **Ezra:**

Ezra 7: 6: *“This Ezra went up from Babylon; and **he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given:** and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him...*

*10: **For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”***

7. Come out of Babylon

In Scripture, **fallen society** is often figuratively described as **Babylon**; and millions of believers, like Daniel and Ezra, found themselves living in this evil metropolis. Yahweh's call to us is to **separate ourselves from sin**; a seemingly impossible task, but one that must be done if we want to live forever.

Revelation 18: 1: *“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.*

*2: And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, **Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils,** and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

3: For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

*4: And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”***

It may well be that the Almighty's call to **‘come out of Babylon’** - to forsake sin - will reach you this day. If it does, then do not delay, but repent, forsake your sins and accept the **Gospel of Salvation**. Only then can you be sure of everlasting life.

AMEN!

In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.

Elder: Max W. Mader

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