

## Weighed and Found Wanting

**Text:** Daniel 5:5-31

### **Introduction:**

1. Daniel chapter 5 is an important fulfillment of prophecy as it marks the transition from the head of gold to the breast and arms of silver as foretold in Dan. 2 (See Vs. 32).
2. The prophecies recorded in Daniel 7 and 8 had already been received by Daniel at this point so Daniel knew of the impending end of the Babylonian Empire at the hands of Persia and even beyond that to the Grecian Empire.
3. Jeremiah 51, written about 70 years prior, describes the fall of Babylon in perfect detail. Daniel was a student of the prophet Jeremiah (See Dan. 9:2) and undoubtedly this aided his interpretation of the handwriting on the wall. Jeremiah 51:11 *“Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up **the spirit of the kings of the Medes:** for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.”*
4. Not only was the fall of Babylon foretold in Scripture but even the name of its chapter, Cyrus, is mentioned in Isaiah 45:1-4, 175 years before the event took place. God’s Word is true!
5. In our last lesson we looked at the ungodly feast of Belshazzar. In this lesson we will study the rest of the chapter as God’s judgment on Belshazzar and Babylon unfolds. It sounds a powerful warning concerning the danger rejecting the light God has given.

### **I. The Rebellion of Belshazzar (Vs. 1-5)**

Note: Refer previous message for more detail on these verses but for the sake of review please observe:

#### **A. The Intoxication of the Feast (Vs. 1-2)**

#### **B. The Impiety of the Feast (Vs. 3-4)**

#### **C. The Interruption of the Feast (Vs. 5)**

1. The timing – “in the same hour”. As they were profaning the sacred vessels by praising their false gods, the fingers appeared. Belshazzar and his guests would know that there was a connection between what they had done and the Divine intervention.
2. The instrument of writing – “fingers of a man’s hand”. This was the hand of God again demonstrating that the most High Rules in the affairs of men.
3. The place of writing – “against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king’s palace”
  - a. This would have been the most visible place. It also took place in a significant place, the king’s throne room in his palace.

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Though Belshazzar was puffed up in pride on account of his high position, God was reminding him of His sovereign power.

- b. The plastered wall of the throne room has been unearthed by archaeologists. A huge chamber 170 x 56 feet (51 x 17 meters) plastered with white gypsum (a common mineral used to make plaster). (Cloud)

### II. The Reaction of Belshazzar (Vs. 6-9)

#### A. Panic (Vs. 6)

Belshazzar's terror affected the king in three ways:

1. His face – “the king's countenance was changed”
2. His mind – “and his thoughts troubled him”
3. His body – “joints of his loins were loosed...his knees smote”

#### B. Petition (Vs. 7-9)

Belshazzar sought help from his so called “wise men” but once again, the foolishness of the wisdom of this world is manifest.

1. His Petition – he summoned the wise men (Vs. 7a) This is the third time these men have been summoned for help but only a man in touch with heaven could help with truth from heaven.
2. His Promise – he offered a reward (Vs. 7b)
3. His Panic – the wise men failed and he was even more distressed (Vs. 8-9)

### III. The Recommendation to Belshazzar (Vs. 10-16)

#### A. The Recommendation Heard (Vs. 10-12)

1. The queen's identity (Vs. 10)
  - a. This is not Belshazzar's wife but the queen-mother. Likely the wife of Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father, believed by many scholars to be the famous Nitocris.
  - b. Her ability to interrupt the feast and approach the king reveals the high respect afforded her.
2. The queen's testimony (Vs. 11-12)

Her words concerning Daniel are significant and reveal the godly testimony he had in that heathen kingdom.

  - a. Daniel was a man with the Presence of God
  - b. Daniel was a man with the Precepts of God (wisdom)
  - c. Challenge: When the lost are confronted with a crisis, is your testimony such that they will turn to you for help in that time of need? Daniel was such a man.

#### B. The Recommendation Heeded (Vs. 13-16)

1. The king's introduction to Daniel (Vs. 13-16a)

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- a. Belshazzar’s arrogance and pride can be detected in his words to Daniel – e.g. “of the children of the captivity of Judah”; “out of Jewry”
- b. Belshazzar acknowledges the failure of the wise men to interpret the writing.
2. The kings offer to Daniel (Vs. 16b)
  - a. Belshazzar offers Daniel fame and fortune if he will interpret the writing.
  - b. Note: The accuracy of the Biblical record is highlighted in his offer to Daniel to be “third ruler in the kingdom”. This was because his father Nabonidus was first, he was second and therefore Daniel would be third.

### IV. The Reproof of Belshazzar (Vs. 17-24)

Daniel’s interpretation of the dream is preceded by a strong word of reproof to Belshazzar.

#### A. Daniel’s Refusal (Vs. 17)

1. Daniel was a man of boldness even though he was speaking to the most powerful man in the kingdom.
2. Daniel was a man motivated by eternal things. He had no interest in the trinkets of the king (promised fame and fortune).

#### B. Daniel’s Retelling (Vs. 18-21)

1. Daniel recounts what took place in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. He is reminding Belshazzar of these truths he already knew as they will form the basis of the sharp rebuke he is about to give.
2. Daniel reminds him of Nebuchadnezzar’s
  - a. Promotion (Vs. 18-19). His kingdom was given to him by “the most high God”
  - b. Nebuchadnezzar’s humiliation (Vs. 20-21). He was humbled by God when his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride.

#### C. Daniel’s Rebuke (Vs. 22-23)

1. This is the where Daniel draws the application from the example.
2. Belshazzar had sinned by:
  - a. Not humbling himself despite his knowledge - “though thou knewest all this” Belshazzar had willfully and wickedly sinned against God despite the light he had been exposed to through the example of Nebuchadnezzar his grandfather.
  - b. Lifting himself up against the LORD of heaven
  - c. Profaning the temple vessels with strong drink
  - d. Praising false gods which cannot see, hear or know
  - e. Failing to glorify the one true God - “the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways” Daniel reminded

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Belshazzar that he owes his very breath to Almighty God. Paul said similar words to the pagans on Mars Hill in Acts 17:22-34.

3. Challenge: If God held a heathen king so strongly to account for the light he had, how much more those who in the face of the full light of God's revelation, rebel against Him. (See Matthew 11:20-24)  
"The greater the light we walk in the greater the judgment that will come for our sin if we ignore that light." (Butler)

### V. The Revelation to Belshazzar (Vs. 25-31)

#### A. Daniel's Interpretation (Vs. 25-28)

1. MENE = numbered. Word repeated twice for emphasis. This word contains more than the idea of "to count" but "to fix the limit of" (e.g. a man's days are numbered). God determines the rise and fall of nations.
2. TEKEL = Weighed. The king had been weighed against God's standard and found lacking. He was light weight spiritually. These are the scales of God's justice
  - a. This is a picture of every sinner without Christ. We all fall short of God's standard, we are "weighed and found wanting". When our righteousness is weighed against His righteousness the scales will not balance.
  - b. All the righteousness of man put together will never equal the weight of God's righteousness; in fact, they weigh nothing compared to God's righteousness. We must have his righteousness on our side and the only way to have his righteousness is to receive Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. Then His righteousness becomes our righteousness before God. (Butler)
3. PERES = divided. The kingdom was rent from Belshazzar and given to the Medes and Persians. God is sovereign over men and nations. God reigns!
4. So, the words were literally "numbered, numbered, weighed, divided"!

#### B. Belshazzar's Indifference (Vs. 29)

1. His respond shows no sign of repentance. He had hardened his heart against the truth to the point where he was fixed in his unrepentant state. It almost seems that Belshazzar feels that the judgment Daniel has pronounced will be delayed.
2. What a picture of the hardness of man's heart that in the face of such a sobering intervention and revelation of God, can remain unrepentant and unmoved.

#### C. Belshazzar's Elimination (Vs. 30-31)

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1. God's judgment came swiftly and certainly upon the unrepentant king. You cannot trifle with Almighty God!
2. Powerful Quote by Strauss

There is a last night for every nation and there is a last night for every individual person. Every nation and every man is held accountable to God, and the Almighty holds an indictment against any and all who defy divine light and desecrate holy things. Babylonian pride and confusion are seen on every hand today. There is a handwriting against every man. But our Lord Jesus Christ has made salvation possible for every man. And now all who put their trust in him are saved from the awful night of eternal banishment from the presence of God. But for the proud in heart who refuse to recognize the Most High God, there 'is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.' (Jude 1:13)."

**Conclusion:** How are you responding to the light God has given you? Are you submitting to the light or rebelling against it? Repent and turn to Christ now before it is too late.