

# Belshazzar

by Welcome Detweiler

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*The sermon on Belshazzar serves as a stark warning about the consequences of pride and the urgent need for salvation.*

**Duration:** 10:47

**Scripture:** Daniel 5:5-6, Daniel 5:17, Daniel 5:30-31, John 3:16, Romans 6:23

**Topics:** "Belshazzar"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher uses the story of Belshazzar from the book of Daniel to illustrate the consequences of ignoring God's offer of salvation. Belshazzar, a pleasure-loving king, dismisses all fear and indulges in revelry, but God brings his party to a sudden end by displaying a mysterious handwriting on the wall. Belshazzar's fear grows as his wise men fail to interpret the writing, but the queen mother reminds him of a wise man, Daniel, who had served his father Nebuchadnezzar. The sermon emphasizes the love of God, who offers salvation and redemption through the sacrifice of his son Jesus Christ, and urges the listeners to accept this offer and avoid the fate of Belshazzar.

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## Transcript

I am thinking today of an incident that occurred in Babylon some 2,500 years ago. It's concerning the great feast of Belshazzar in the palace of Babylon. A thousand princes and nobles plus his many wives were invited to celebrate a heathen festival.

Belshazzar was one of those self-made men who ignored God and actually showed his defiance by using the golden silver vessels which were taken from the temple by his ungodly grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. As the festivities continued, they praised the gods of gold and silver and so on. Perhaps I should read a portion of this interesting yet tragic story as it's recorded in Daniel chapter 5. 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 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 and his wives and his concubines drank in them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and of silver and 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 shall have a chain of gold about his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

As a rule, when the lives of great people are recorded, the births and the leading events throughout the life are mentioned, but God in his word is very brief when he gives the life story of a foolish man. In the case of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, the record is confined to one night, Belshazzar's last night on earth. For two years the Persians besieged Babylon, but Belshazzar tried to convince himself that no enemy could reach him.

The walls of the city were 300 feet high and wide enough for six chariots to be driven abreast upon its top, perhaps 75 feet wide. Huge towers guarded the 100 massive bronze gates of the city. Behind such fortifications, the pleasure-loving king dismissed all fear and indulged in every form of revelry.

He is dressed in gorgeous robes with a wine cup in his hand. He is the master of ceremonies and the center of all eyes at a great feast in the banquet hall. One thousand lords and nobles and many ladies form that gay party.

The motto of that party was, eat, drink, and be merry. Bring in the sacred cups of the temple. We have no superstitions, we have no God but pleasure.

Just then the God of heaven looked down and seemed to say, it is enough, and God brought that gay party to a sudden end. Suddenly the noise of revelry ended. There's an awesome hush.

Fingers of a man's hand are seen writing on the wall. It can be clearly seen in the light of the candlestick. The king's face changes, his knees not together.

Forgetting his dignity, he calls aloud for his wise men. They are promised gifts and promotion if they can interpret the four strange words on the wall. Belshazzar fears that he is now in difficulty, and his fears are multiplied when he learns that all of his aides are simply baffled at the handwriting on the wall.

News of a strange handwriting spreads rapidly through the palace, and soon the queen mother heard about it. She came to the banqueting hall where Belshazzar sat trembling, and she said, O king, there is in this city a very wise man whom you have quite forgotten. In the days of Nebuchadnezzar the king, this man was master of all the king's wise men, for the spirit of the dwelt in him.

Now send for him, and he will tell you the meaning of the strange handwriting. Belshazzar sent in haste for Daniel, the man whom the queen suggested. Daniel was now an old man, and did not care for the gifts and the honors that were offered.

First he reminded Belshazzar of the great punishment that God had sent upon Nebuchadnezzar because of his wickedness and pride. Belshazzar knew all this, but he ignored all the warnings, thinking that somehow he would get by. Daniel told him the meaning of the words on the wall.

God has numbered your kingdom and finished it. You are weighed into balances and found wanting. Your kingdom is divided and is given to the Medes and the Persians, and that very night Belshazzar was slain and Babylon was destroyed.

A gay party at the beginning of the evening with no thoughts of God or eternity, but the party ended with the weird shrieks of the dying passing out into an eternal hell. Every foolish man and woman has his or her fateful night, and I fear that I may have a few foolish Belshazzars in my listening audience tonight who are saying, who cares about God? Let's have a good time. It may be before the sunrise you will be hurled into eternity.

God may say to you, as he did to Belshazzar, that's enough. I'm told that there are species of eagles who are bold enough to attack seals. They swoop down and suddenly fix their claws into the flesh and pull their dinner ashore.

Sometimes the seal is too strong for the eagle, and not being able to let go, the eagle is dragged down into the water and drowned. Belshazzar, like the eagle, laid hold of revelry and pleasure, and they dragged him beneath the waves of an awful and sudden death. It may be that you have your claws in something that will drag you down to hell.

The things of God may mean nothing to you now. You may be very bold and proud about the fact that God means nothing to you. You are too busy to think about eternity.

Your companions think you are smart because you have no fear of God. Your name ought to be Belshazzar, for his history fits you exactly, and the important part of his history is found in Daniel chapter 5 and verse 30. In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain.

His history can be summed up in a few words. From a palace of pleasure to hell, all in one night. He is not the only man, nor is he the last man who then came unexpectedly.

It doesn't take God very long to finish a man who thinks he can flirt with sin and get by. Belshazzar began his evening of gaiety strutting around like a peacock, but he couldn't keep those knees from hitting each other when he came face to face with eternity. The history of Belshazzar is given to us to illustrate what happens to a man who ignores God's offer of salvation and goes on in his own willful way.

I trust that none of my hearers will ever be so foolish. I ask you to read the details of Daniel chapter 5, and I trust that as you read these details you'll be awakened and you'll be made to realize that I cannot beat God. I cannot play with sin.

There must come a day when I shall meet God. It would be wonderful if you could see the wisdom of meeting him in grace right now while he is offering salvation to you. Isn't it marvelous and wonderful of God that even though you don't care for him, he still cares for you.

He loves you. He proved that love by sending his son into the world. His son went to Calvary's cross and stretched out his arms on that cross and died for your sins in order that he might procure your redemption.

That's love. That's real love. That's divine love.

And because the son of God hung in your place as your substitute on Calvary's cross, God is offering salvation, forgiveness, justification to every person who wants it. I wonder if you want it. Would you like to

be saved so that when you come to the end of your life you will have heaven's gate open to you and you'll have a welcome there knowing that you're in God's family, that you have received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

That's wonderful. But how horrible, how dreadful the prospect that one of these days I must meet God and I must meet him in my sins. Oh my friend, be wise and learn from this foolish man a lesson that will bring you to your knees and make you to realize I don't want to be like Belshazzar.

I want to be a wise man. I don't want to play with sin. I want to think seriously of my soul's deep need.

And if God is offering me salvation, I'm ready right now to receive it. If in simple faith you will open your heart's door, acknowledge your sinnership, receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, we have this guarantee from God's precious word. Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

May God bless you as you consider this all-important matter this very moment.

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