

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

(Galatians 6:7)

Purpose: To show children that God judges and rules over their lives.

Long ago there was a beautiful city called Babylon. It was the capital of one of the greatest empires of the ancient world. More than a million people lived behind its towering walls and gates of polished brass.

The Babylonians were pagans who worshipped great idols of gold, silver, wood and stone.

And they were a war-like people – during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, his cruel, fierce Babylonian armies conquered the surrounding nations.

They took captive the strong young men and women to be their servants. Some of these were from the land of Israel.

And among them was a young man named Daniel.

In the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel soon became a trusted adviser and was made chief of the wise men. Through Daniel, the King came to know that there is only one God, the Lord of heaven and earth.

But the man-made idols were still worshipped by most of the people, and as the years passed God and His prophet Daniel were forgotten.

Eventually, Belshazzar became king. He was a cruel, selfish man who thought only about **having a good time. Although he was Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, Belshazzar did not** believe in God and under his rule the city of Babylon was full of wickedness and sin.

As Daniel saw the foolishness of the people, his heart was sad and so he prayed and quietly waited for the time when he could again be of special service to the Lord. And that time was soon to come.

For outside the walls of Babylon was the mighty army of Medes and Persians led by Cyrus, King of Persia. But Belshazzar just laughed at them – unafraid. Were not the walls of Babylon 300 feet [92 meters] high and 80 feet [25 meters] thick? Cyrus could never conquer this city.

But **Belshazzar didn't know just how powerful the enemy was, nor how clever their plan** to capture Babylon.

Feeling safe inside the strong walls of the city, a great feast was given to honor the evil idols the people worshipped. A thousand lords and ladies were summoned to attend the great banquet.

Shouts of acclamation arose from the crowd when the king came into the banquet hall. ***"O King, live forever!"*** they cried, certain that the great Babylonian Empire would never end.

As the king took his place at the table, servants brought in huge platters heaped with food. They filled the goblets with wine again and again...and the noise and shouts of revelry increased.

Suddenly Belshazzar had an idea. He remembered the cups made of gold and silver which had been stolen years before from the temple of God at Jerusalem. ***“Bring the golden goblets here!”*** he ordered.

When the temple goblets were brought, the king filled them with wine. He would show **that he didn't believe in the God of Israel, even if his grandfather had worshipped Him.**

He held his cup aloft. ***“Let us drink to our gods of gold, silver, brass, wood and stone!”*** he cried.

But just as Belshazzar lifted the cup to his lips...a strange thing happened.

The goblet dropped from the king's fingers. He stared at the wall before him.

For a strange hand had suddenly appeared above the light of the candlestick. There were shrieks and screams of fear. Then...

The hand began to write words on the palace wall: Mene...Mene...Tekel...Upharsin.

An unearthly silence gripped the banquet hall as the people stared at the mysterious words spelling out a message no one could understand.

The king's face paled. *“Send for the wise men! Find someone who can tell me the meaning of the writing on the wall.”*

But none of the fortune tellers and magicians, the astrologers and soothsayers, could explain the meaning of the strange symbols written on the wall of the palace.

Still shaking, the king sat down at the long table. Surely someone could tell him where the message came from...and what it meant!

Then the queen mother came hurrying into the banquet hall. She reminded the king of Daniel, the man of wisdom and understanding, who years before had been able to **interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dreams.**

When Daniel was hastily brought to the king, he refused the great honor and wealth Belshazzar promised him if he could read the writing.

Instead, he reminded the king of his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, who had come to realize that his great wealth and kingdoms were given to him by God...and who had worshipped the Lord in humility.

“But you, Belshazzar, you are proud and vain. You have not humbled yourself before the God of heaven, but have defied Him!”

“You have taken sacred vessels from God's temple, drinking wine from them and praising your dead idols!” Daniel told the king that the message on the wall came from God.

“And this is what God says to you, Belshazzar. God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it. You are weighed in the balances and found wanting. Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

And outside something was happening. The great enemy army of Cyrus which had been camped outside the city for two years quietly began to move.

Soldiers crept into the city and opened gates. Soon the army swept down the streets. Guards were slain. But no sound of warning reached the banquet hall.

Suddenly a terror-stricken guard appeared on the steps. ***“The enemy! The enemy is in the city!”***

Belshazzar fled in terror before the first wave of soldiers, who were already within the palace looking for him. For they knew that once the king was slain, the city would soon surrender.

As Belshazzar glanced behind him he could see he didn't have a chance. The Medes were gaining on him.

Cruel eyes glittered mercilessly into his own. Harsh hands gripped him. And perhaps then Belshazzar realized that his life was being cut short and his kingdom finished because he had dared to mock God.

Long before that day, Belshazzar had made his choice to live for the pleasures of this world. He had turned away from God to worship idols of wood and stone.

As Daniel reminded him, Belshazzar knew that God ruled over all, but the king had dared to defy the Lord. So the proud and beautiful city of Babylon was destroyed, and the king and people with it, for they had despised God, and His Word says:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” (Galatians 6:7)