

#8 - Standing Up in a Smackdown World

10/12/2008 - Jim Johnson/Daniel 5:1-31

Daniel 4 ended with Nebuchadnezzar coming to faith in God. His kingdom of Babylon then reached her zenith because she finally had a man of God on the throne. He died in 562 BC. Daniel 5 is focused on Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar who was made co-regent of Babylon in 553 BC.

A. Belshazzar blew it. 1-17

Even though the hostile Medes and Persians had surrounded the city, the king was having a drunken party. He felt secure within the unbreachable walls of Babylon. (1) In his drunkenness he called for the sacred vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem. They had been captured and were in storage. He used them in idol worship and as common drinking vessels. (2-4) The party was interrupted by the fingers of a disembodied hand that wrote a message on the wall. His advisors could not discern it and the King became deathly afraid. (7-9)

Belshazzar blew it, but then so did his grandpa Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was the one that had captured the sacred vessels of Israel. However, he knew that they were sacred and treated them as such

Belshazzar had sinned a _____ sin. He took those temple vessels & poured out sacrifices to his gods. He then filled one with wine and brought it to his own lips. He treated those sacred vessels with great disrespect.

B. Belshazzar was held _____ 10-24

The queen appeared. She was the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, mother of Belshazzar. She knew of Daniel and described him exactly as Nebuchadnezzar had. (4:8) She recommended that he be summoned to solve the problem. (10-15) The king solicited Daniel's help (16) Daniel offered a sermon instead. He retold the story of Nebuchadnezzar the powerful and arrogant King who did whatever he wanted. (17-19) He told how God stole his glory from him, left him a deluded shell of a human being and he also included the climax of when he humbled himself before God and was restored. (20-22)

Daniel then pointed his finger at Belshazzar and said, "Yet you *have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this...*"(23) The king indeed had grown up in the palace of his grandfather. He had watched as the story unfolded and yet he repeated the mistake. He exalted himself against the Lord. (23)

Belshazzar's responsibility was even _____ than his grandfather's. He had the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of his grandfather. Nebuchadnezzar had been ignorant, but Belshazzar was not. He repeated the mistake.

C. Belshazzar suffered the _____ 24-31

Daniel finally rendered his interpretation. "Mene" means numbered. The days of Belshazzar's Kingdom were numbered. "Tekel" means "weighed." He was weighed on a scale and found deficient. "Upharsin" means divided or broken. The Kingdom of Babylon has been divided and broken. The message was clear to him. God would place the Kingdom into the hands of the enemy that stood outside the city walls. Within hours it had taken place (30-31) Ancient historian Herodotus told us that the Medo Persians diverted the waters of the Euphrates (which flowed right through the town) walked through the thigh high water and through unguarded gates. The city fell so fast that they were still partying in the palace while the palace guard was failing. This took place on the night of Oct. 12 in 539 BC

Belshazzar's consequences were much _____ than his grand father's
Nebuchadnezzar received a private rebuke – Belshazzar's was public. Nebuchadnezzar had a long prosperous life, Belshazzar – a short one. Nebuchadnezzar lost 7 years of his rule. Belshazzar lost the Kingdom.

APPLICATION

The moral to this story goes something like this: **If we _____ to learn from the sins of the past – we suffer their consequences in the future**

Daniel 1-5 gives us a picture of how God is involved in world events. It helps us understand why God gives success to one gentile nation and takes it away from another. He expected that nation and its leaders to acknowledge Him; to recognize and honor him in their national life.

God wanted to spare and bless that nation. He pursued her greatest leader and finally caught him. The King then submitted to the Lord and became a worshipper of Yahweh. But the lessons were forgotten by Belshazzar. God was mocked. And God therefore closed the curtain on the greatest nation that had ever been.

Is it possible that God holds nations today to that same standard? If so, we may be in trouble, for our forefathers have learned many lessons about government and God, which have been clearly forgotten by our generation.

A day may come when his hand begins to write again on a wall in Washington D.C. Either way - there are 2 things we ought to do. The first is to pray for our nation and her leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-4) and the second is to be ready to explain the holiness of God to the Belshazzars of our nation.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. What lessons have your parents learned in the past that serve you well today? Are there any that you have ignored? If so what would they be?
2. What handwriting may be on the walls of our nation today?
3. What are you able to do to help redirect the course of things? What would you be willing to do?