

WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

By E. L. Bynum

“Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” (Daniel 5:24-28)

A great celebration was taking place in Babylon, for after all King Belshazzar wanted to celebrate the greatness of his kingdom. Humanly speaking he had every right to feel confident and secure. After all, his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the mighty Assyrian Empire with its capital at Nineveh. He had defeated many other nations including Judah and the holy city of Jerusalem. When they overcame Jerusalem, they plundered the riches that had been obtained by David and Solomon. The brass, silver and gold used in the temple were more than a king's ransom, and all the other riches from the other nations they had conquered. The real wealth of a nation was measured by its silver and gold, for they had no paper money, which history has proven may possess little or no value.

They felt completely confidence and security in the great city of Babylon, which Nebuchadnezzar had built: *“The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”* (Daniel 4:30) The wall that surrounded the city was 32 feet thick and was 180 feet high. It had strong secure gates that were guarded by well trained and disciplined soldiers. It would seemingly be impossible for any army to successfully mount a successful attack upon this city.

JUDGMENT EARNED BY THE SINS OF RULERS AND NATIONS

“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 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. 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. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.” (Daniel 5:1-4)

Celebrations like this were drunken orgies where every evil passion was turned loose. These drunken feasts were not one night affairs, but many times lasted for weeks, wherein every sin was on exhibit, so there was little that was not tolerated. There would be an abundance of food and an endless supply of wine which flowed through their sodden bodies. As we look at this long list of putrid sins, we will enter our attention on five destructive ones.

Their first sin was that of Drunkenness. This feast was no doubt given to honor himself as well

as a thousand of his lords. The flagons of wine flowed freely from the finest vineyards of this great kingdom. Nothing was spared to make this a feast that would satisfy every person who gathered in that great banquet hall. We can only imagine how many people were there since there were a thousand of his lords along with their wives and concubines. Doubtless there were at least three thousand that were present. There were no restraints, since they knew little or nothing of the Bible on strong drink. *“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.”* (Proverbs 23:31-33) *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.”* (Proverbs 31:4-5)

Their second sin was Debauchery. Debauchery means “excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures.” Inflamed by wine and lust there was no act that was too vile or wicked. Their mood was “if it feels good do it.” They knew nothing of the God of the Bible and His command, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”* (Exodus 20:14) An unbelieving world sees nothing as sacred and holy. Without moral restraint there is nothing that wicked men and women will not do.

Their third sin was Defiling. The sacred vessels of gold and silver had been dedicated to the temple worship of the thrice holy God. They depicted the holiness of God and the salvation of the sinner. Nebuchadnezzar had taken these vessels from the temple of God at Jerusalem, when he conquered that city, and placed in the treasure house of his god. (Daniel 1:2) The holy vessels were only to be touched by the Jewish priests, and only to be used in the manner that God prescribed. This within itself was a vile thing to do, but even worse Belshazzar took those vessels dedicated to God, to be used in this drunken banquet hall.

Their fourth sin was Denial. They denied the true God by elevating the false gods of Babylon over the mighty God of Israel. Babylon was not without knowledge of the true and living God. Daniel and his three Hebrew companions had lived there for many years. Their knowledge had been spread abroad by the miracles that had accompanied their encounters with Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had given the dream of the king and had given him the interpretation of that dream, which all of the wise men of Babylon could not do. (Daniel 2) In addition the three Hebrew companions of Daniel refused to bow to the golden image, and they were thrown into the fiery furnace heated seven times hot. A fourth man appeared with them in that furnace and *“the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”* (Daniel 3) This led Nebuchadnezzar to make a decree that recognized the one true God. *“Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.”* (Daniel 3:28-29) These miracles, as well as others, were not secret events, but were well known to the public. In spite of these manifestations of the power of

God, these wicked men had the audacity to deny the one true and living God.

Their fifth sin was the deifying of false gods. *"They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."* (Daniel 5:4) The worship of idols has always been a mystery to me. Man used his skill and his imagination to carve idols from wood and then worship them. He may be more sophisticated and mold a god of silver or gold, and not realizing that he is creating his own gods. Christians realize that God is their creator and of all things. We should not ever forget that God is our maker and that we are to worship Him. *"Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."* (Psalm 100:3)

As we look at Belshazzar and his people, we should notice the way our nation and leaders are going. **Our own nation is steeped in drunkenness** and all manners of illegal habit forming drugs. Alcoholic drink is to be found in liquor stores, drug stores, grocery stores and restaurants. When I moved to Lubbock you could only buy a beer by driving more than 100 miles to get it. This was true of all alcoholic beverages. Elections were held from time to time to try to legalize alcohol sales, but time after time they were defeated. As churches and the public weakened their stand on strong drink, little by little wet territory moved closer to Lubbock. We were told that people will use it, even if they have to make it in their bath tub. Why not legalize it and get all the tax money for schools and other necessities. Alcohol has always been a detriment to society. When you consider the broken homes, the children left un-cared for, and the people that are reduced to poverty and government aid, and all the jails filled with people who committed crimes while under the influence of alcohol it puts a tremendous burden upon society.

Of course they tell us that sales will not increase, even when we legalize the sale of these beverages that just as many will drink whether it is legal or illegal. Only a deluded mind could be deceived into believing this. It makes no sense, because it contradicts the whole science of advertising. Grocery stores make their merchandise easily available and attractive in order to sell more groceries. Car dealerships are placed in the most strategic locations for maximum exposure and made attractive simply to make more sales. Every large wholesale distributor schemes to get their products on the best shelf place in the grocery store. Do not tell me that if all the grocery stores were ten miles out of town that they would sell just as many groceries. The same goes for cars and indeed all merchandise, of course they would sell groceries, but they would not sell as many. The same principle applies to alcoholic drinks.

Perhaps the last two paragraphs should be much shorter, but I felt the need of getting it off my chest. Many of the decisions made by diplomats have been done under the influence of alcohol. Many other important decisions in Washington and our state capitals are also made under the influence of strong drink. I would like to know how much money is spent by our federal government on liquor. I think that we all would be astounded by the wasteful amount. *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."* (Proverbs 20:1)

For over a half century I have witnessed the awful curse of strong drink on individuals, families, and society. You will never convince me that alcohol is any more than evil in a bottle, just waiting to wreck havoc upon souls.

Our nation is rampant with the sin of debauchery. Movies, the Internet, TV, computers, and new cell phones are filled with lust, adultery, and sex of every kind is glorified and promoted. Sacred things such as the Bible, holiness, modesty, and the Lord's churches are defiled with the sins of this world. On every hand we see the denying of the one and only true God. In addition we see the deifying of false gods being celebrated in our society. Almost anything is substituted for God. Pleasures of the vilest kind are substituted for God, and even more innocent activities, such as golf, fishing, and other activities are given first place over God.

JUDGMENT EXPLAINED BY THE PROPHET

While this drunken feast was taking place, a holy God was about to pass judgment, which would break up the party: *"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. 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."* (Daniel 5:5-6)

The King called for the wise men of Babylon to interpret this strange writing on the wall. Little did he know that it was the message of doom for him and his kingdom. When the wise men utterly failed, the queen mother who apparently was not in the banquet hall was informed, but she came and reminded him of an old wise man by the name of Daniel. Daniel was called for and presented with the problem. He had most likely been put on the shelf and branded an old foggy.

Before giving him the writing and the interpretation, he preached a bold sermon which revealed the sin of Belshazzar and his kingdom. Daniel made it strong and to the point, for he did not fear the ruler, but he did fear God. (Read Daniel 5:17-23)

The writing was short, but what an earth shattering message it was: *"And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN."* (Daniel 5:25) Then Daniel gave the interpretation and explained this powerful message of God: *"This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."* (Daniel 5:26-28)

The foolish king kept his word and made Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom. How foolish; he and his kingdom had already been weighed in the balances and been found wanting. Babylon was finished and so was king Belshazzar and his lords. Little did the King know that soon he would see the glittering swords of the Medes and Persians.

JUDGMENT EXECUTED BY GOD

God had already said that Belshazzar and his kingdom would be divided to the Medes and Persians. In the same night this prophecy would be fulfilled.

Josephus the Jewish historian gives us his version of how this was fulfilled. The Euphrates River ran right through the city of Babylon. Along the river banks, the Babylonians had built high and thick walls where gates could be opened and they would have access to the river and the other part of the city. Apparently in their drunken condition the gates of the city were left open. Josephus tells us that the Medes and Persians had diverted the Euphrates River out of its channel so that their army could march into the city through the river channel. Herodotus the ancient writer also supports the story by Josephus.

Others have written that there were spies in the city that secretly opened the gates. There is another version of the story found in one verse of Isaiah. *“Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut.”* (Isaiah 45:1) Isaiah wrote this prophecy at least 200 years before its fulfillment in Daniel 5. How did Isaiah know the name of Cyrus many years before Cyrus’ birth? Let me tell you how, because there is a God in heaven, and Isaiah was his prophet. Many scholars have interpreted Isaiah 45:1 to mean that God opened the gates for the Medes and Persians. However it may have happened we know that God caused it to come to pass.

JUDGMENT EXECUTED BY ALMIGHTY GOD

“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.” (Daniel 5:30-31) The kingdom going to the Medes and Persians is a fulfillment of Daniel chapter two, because the head of Gold would be followed by the chest and arms of silver representing the alliance between the Medes and Persians.

Who knew at the beginning of the great feast, where he was in his glory days, that in a few short hours the Scripture would be fulfilled? *“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.”* (Daniel 9:30) Kingdoms and great civilizations shine in their glory not knowing that their kingdom is going to end in the judgment of Almighty God. Where are the great kingdoms of Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Greece, and Rome today? They are in the dustbin of nations where sin had taken them. They have gone where our own nation is going sooner than we think if we do not turn back to God.

I love the United States of America and treasure its history and amazing progress. However, we may be even now in the scales of God, weighed and found wanting. Our sins are many and growing at blinding speed. If there ever was a time in the history of our when Christians should be reading and obeying II Chronicles 7:14; that time is now. We may not have much time to

repent, but I assure you that God is watching. There is a saying, the mills of God grind slow, but they grind exceedingly fine.

I pray that lost sinners will read this message, and understand that you are also in God's balances and found wanting. The only way you can escape judgment is to turn in repentance and faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation. When you have Christ as Saviour, though you may be small He will tip the scales in your favor. No one can tip the scales of God's judgment unless you have Him as your Savior. Do not wait until, **"thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."**