

10-2018

A Biographical Study of Belshazzar

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "A Biographical Study of Belshazzar" (2018). *Old Testament Biographies*. 12.
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Belshazzar

CHRONOLOGICAL SYMMARY

- I. The ball hosted by Belshazzar
 - A. The who of the matter
 1. Belshazzar was probably the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.
 2. He was the last king of the Neo-Babylonian empire.
 - B. The what of the matter—The king had staged a huge state dinner and drinking party for 1,000 of his top officials (Dan. 5:1).
 - C. The why of the matter—At this exact time Babylon was surrounded by its enemy, Persia. Thus the banquet was probably given for two reasons:
 1. To boost his officials' courage
 2. To show contempt for his enemies
- II. The gall shown by Belshazzar—He ordered the gold and silver cups taken by his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar from the Jerusalem temple to be brought to this feast, that the king might drink wine from them and praise the Babylonian gods (Dan. 5:2-4).
- III. The wall above Belshazzar—Suddenly he saw the fingers of a man's hand writing a mysterious message on the wall above his table (Dan. 5:5-6).
- IV. The call by Belshazzar
 - A. Belshazzar and the wise men—A terrified king quickly turned to his astrologers and soothsayers for help, but they could not interpret the writing (Dan. 5:7-9).
 - B. Belshazzar and the queen—At the suggestion of the queen (probably his mother) he called for the prophet Daniel (Dan. 5:10-12).
 - C. Belshazzar and Daniel (Dan. 5:13-29)—The king offered to make Daniel third ruler in the kingdom if he could but interpret the writing. Daniel quickly delivered a twofold message:
 1. Concerning Belshazzar's sin
 - a. His sin of pride—"O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom and majesty, and glory, and honour . . . But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him . . . And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this" (Dan. 5:18, 20, 22).
 - b. His sin of perversion—"But has lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" (Dan. 5:23).

2. Concerning Balshazzar's sentence—Refusing his offer to become third ruler in the kingdom Daniel interpreted the writing for Belshazzar. It was a message from God to the king (Dan. 5:24-28).
 - a. *Mene*: "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it" (5:26).
 - b. *Tekel*: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (5:27).
 - c. *Peres*: "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (5:28).
- V. The fall of Belshazzar—That same night the Medes and Persians took the city and killed Belshazzar. Darius, the Mede, at age 62, became the new ruler (Dan. 5:30-31).

STATISTICS

First mention: Daniel 5:1

Final mention: Daniel 8:1

Meaning of his name: "The lord's leader"

Frequency of her name: Referred to eight times

Biblical books mentioning him: One book (Daniel)

Place of death: In the palace at Babylon

Circumstances of death: He was killed by order of Darius.

Important fact about her life: He received a written message from God on a wall during a banquet (Dan. 5:5, 22-28)