

And drained to the dregs the sacred cup,  
 And foaming he cried, as he drank it up,  
 "Jehovah, eternal scorn I own  
 To thee. I am monarch of Babylon."  
 Scarce had the terrible blasphemy rolled  
 From his lips, ere the monarch at heart was cold.  
 The yelling laughter was hushed, and all  
 Was still as death in the royal hall.  
 And see! and see! on the white wall high  
 The form of a hand went slowly by,  
 And write—and wrote, on the broad wall white,  
 Letters of fire, and vanished in night.  
 Pale as death, with a steady stars,  
 And with trembling knees, the king sat there;  
 The horde of slaves sat huddering chill;  
 No word they spoke, but were deathlike still.  
 The Magicians came, but of them all,  
 None could read the flame-script on the wall.  
 But that same night, in all his pride,  
 By the hands of his servants Belshazzar died.

—*Heinrich Heine* (1820)

## CHAPTER FIVE

### I. DEGENERATE DESPOT'S DEMISE—5:1-31

#### a. TERROR

TEXT: 5:1-7

- 1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.
- 2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines, might drink therefrom.
- 3 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 lords, his wives and his concubines, drank from them.

- 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.
- 5 In the same hour came forth the 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.
- 6 Then the king's countenance was changed in him, and his thoughts troubled him; and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.
- 7 The king cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. 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 purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is "Belshazzar" and what happened between his reign and that of Nebuchadnezzar?
- b. Why insist upon drinking wine from the "vessels of the temple which was in Jerusalem?"
- c. Where did the "fingers of a man's hand" come from?

### PARAPHRASE

Belshazzar the king of the district of Babylon put on a great feast for a thousand of his army officers and they all got drunk. As Belshazzar was getting drunk, he ordered his servants to bring the gold and silver vessels which his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, had carried off from the temple of the Jews in Jerusalem. When the servants arrived with these vessels he and his army officers, his wives and his concubines in insolent defiance of the god of the Jews drank toasts to their pagan gods of metal and wood. Suddenly, in the midst of their drunken revelry, they saw the fingers of a man's hand writing on the plaster of the wall opposite the lampstand. The king himself saw the fingers as they wrote. His face grew pale with terror,

and such fear gripped him his hips began to tremble violently and his knees knocked together. He began screaming that the diviners, wise-men and astrologers be brought with haste. As they began coming into the banquet hall the king shouted loudly, Whoever reads that writing on the wall, and tells me what it means, I will dress in purple robes of royal honor and put a golden chain of regal authority around his neck, and I will place him in very high authority in my kingdom.

### COMMENT

v. 1 BELSHAZZAR THE KING . . . Hostile critics of the Bible have seen their "beautiful theories murdered by the brutal facts" of history as it is now available in the case of Belshazzar. For a hundred years these critics attempted to use the absence of historical reference to Belshazzar as a weapon to destroy the historical trustworthiness of the record of Daniel. Recently, however, archeological and historical data has been discovered which thoroughly substantiates the historicity of Daniel's account concerning belshazzar.

Berosus lists the succession of kings of Babylon, beginning with Nabopolassar who came to the throne upon the overthrow of the Assyrian power, as follows:

- 625 B.C.—Nabopolassar (died)
- 604 B.C.—Nebuchadnezzar (died)
- 562 B.C.—Amel-Marduk (Evil-merodach) (assassinated by Neriglissar)
- 560 B.C.—Nergal-shar-usur (Neriglissar) (died— throne to infant Labashi-Marduk)
- 556 B.C.—Labashi-Marduk (deposed by priestly party —replaced by Nabonidus)
- 555 B.C.—Nabunadi (Nabonidus) (exiled and pensioned by Persian conquerors)
- 538 B.C.—Capture of Babylon by Cyrus (Belshazzar was killed)

Berosus has also been validated as a reliable historian by the archaeological data published for all the monuments and inscriptions amply confirm his sequence of the Babylonian

kings. The critics, prior to the discovery of these amazing documents, argued from silence. At the same time the defenders of the Bible were forced to argue from silence. Now, however, every bit of evidence is on the side of those who accept the historical accuracy of the Bible and the critics, still arguing from silence, do so squarely in the face of empirical, scientific testimony!

We quote in full from *Archaeology And Bible History*, by Joseph P. Free, pages 231-235, pub. Scripture Press:

EVENTS IN BABYLON, c. 562-560 B.C.;  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIGHT ON JEHOIACHIN  
AND EVIL-MERODACH (II KINGS 25:27-30)

Nebuchadnezzar died about 562 B.C. He was succeeded by his son, Evil-merodach, who allowed Jehoiachin to come out of prison (II Kings 25:27-30), and gave him an allowance of provisions (25:30). We have already noted the discovery of clay tablets at Babylon listing the payment of rations of oil, barley and other food to workmen and political prisoners. Among those listed as recipients of these provisions was Jehoiachin of Judah (See last part of Ch. 19, section on "Archaeological Confirmation of Jehoiachin's Exile . . .").

Archaeological evidence of Evil-merodach (Amil-Marduk in Babylonian) was found on a vase at Susa in Persia, reported by the French archaeological expedition there. This vase bore an inscription which read, "Palace of Amil-Marduk, King of Babylon, son of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon." The people of Persia (called Elam in ancient times) had apparently carried this vase from Babylonia to Persia at the time of one of their military invasions of the Mesopotamian area.

LAST EVENTS IN THE NEO-BABYLONIAN  
EMPIRE, c. 560-539 B.C.; NABONIDUS  
AND BELSHAZZAR (DANIEL 5).

Evil-merodach ruled for only two or three years (c. 562-560 B.C.) and was then assassinated by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar (Nergalshar-

ezer), who is identical with the Nergalshaerezer of Jeremiah 39:3. After a rather successful administration of four years (c. 560-556 B.C.), Neriglissar died, leaving the throne to his infant son, Labashi-Marduk, who was deposed by the priestly party in nine months, and replaced by Nabonidus (Nabuna'id), a Babylonian of the priestly group.

Nabonidus (556-539 B.C.) tells us in his inscriptions that he had been a trusted general in the army of his predecessors. As king, Nabonidus maintained the stability of the empire, and spent much time in directing the building and strengthening of the fortifications on the Euphrates River. One of his great joys came in the rebuilding of temples which lay in ruins. His record telling of the rebuilding of the temple of Shamash at Sippar, and the finding of the foundation record of Naram-Sin has already been cited (See this book, Ch. 19, section on "The Finding of the book of the Law . . .").

Whereas the secular sources indicated Nabonidus as the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, the Bible indicates Belshazzar as the last ruler (Dan. 5). This apparent contradiction and difficulty has been resolved by the archaeological discoveries of recent years. It will be dealt with in the following section.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONFIRMATION CONCERNING NABONIDUS AND BELSHAZZAR (DANIEL 5)

The author of this book received the following letter from a college student:

"I am a history major at the university. This semester I am taking a course in Ancient History.

"As my religious beliefs are orthodox and some Dr.—'s are not, there are naturally quite a few points where we do not agree. The particular point which she and I are discussing at the present time concerns the book of Daniel. Dr.— believes that Daniel errs in his book when he speaks of Belshazzar as king of the Chaldeans in Daniel 5:1. She

says that Nabonidus was king of Babylon at the time of its fall and not Belshazzar. She takes the position that Belshazzar was never king, and, from the way she has spoken, I believe she even doubts his actual existence. She also has taught that Daniel errs when he says that Babylon was taken by siege. According to other accounts there was not a siege of Babylon. It was just handed over to Cyrus.

"I feel as though I should have proof for my beliefs whenever it is possible to obtain it. I am writing to you to ask you if you would be willing to give me your point of view on the matter or refer me to some source which, in your opinion, states the facts correctly."

The author of this book replied to the above letter as follows:

The Biblical statements concerning Belshazzar have been used for a long time by liberals to demonstrate that the Bible is not accurate. It is quite true that up to one hundred years ago our historical sources (outside of the Bible) showed that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon and was not killed when the city was taken by the Persians, but was given a pension by his conquerors. Ancient historians such as Berossus (c. 250 B.C.) and Alexander Polyhistor give us this information that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon. On the other hand, the Bible indicates that Belshazzar was the last ruler of Babylon and that he was killed when the city was taken (Dan. 5:30). Modern liberal commentators, such as Hitzig, have taken the view that the name Belshazzar was a pure invention on the part of the writer of Daniel.

Archaeological discoveries, however, show that the Bible is accurate in regard to its indications concerning Belshazzar. About the middle of the nineteenth century a great number of clay tablets were excavated in the region which was ancient Babylonia, and were sent to the British Museum. During the last half of the nineteenth century many

of these tablets were examined by Dr. Theophilus G. Pinches, prominent Assyriologist of London. One of these clay tablets contained the name Belshazzar, which showed that such a man actually existed. Another tablet was found to bear the names of Belshazzar and Nabonidus, showing that there was some connection between these two people, and another tablet referred to Belshazzar as the king's son. Another tablet was examined which proved to be a contract, containing an oath taken in the name of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. In ancient Babylonia oaths were taken in the name of the reigning king. This tablet, then, gave indication that Belshazzar was actually co-ruler with his father, Nabonidus.

In subsequent years, the work of Raymond P. Dougherty, late professor of Assyriology at Yale University, furnished further illumination on the situation concerning Belshazzar. Dougherty showed that during the later part of his reign Nabonidus spent a great deal of his time in Arabia, probably for the purpose of consolidating that part of his empire, although some scholars have suggested that he was doing what we would call archaeological work, and others have suggested that he stayed in Arabia because he liked the climate. In any event the clay tablets show us the reason for the raising of Belshazzar to the position of ruling monarch—namely, because of the absence of his father from Babylon. The English scholar, Sidney Smith, has published an inscription which evidently refers to Nabonidus and which says, "He entrusted the kingship to him," indicating the bestowal of royal authority upon Belshazzar.<sup>20</sup>

There is no first-rate liberal today, as far as the writer knows, who urges this old objection concerning Belshazzar. An example of the way in which liberals recognize the facts in the case may

19. R. P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929) (DNB)

20. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

be taken from the book, *What Mean These Stones*, by Millar Burrows, where he points out that "the solution of this apparent discrepancy was apparent when evidence was found that during the last part of his reign Nabunaid (Nabonidus) lived in Arabia and left the administration of the government to his son Belshazzar."

The detailed facts are that Nabonidus, in one sense the last king of Babylon, was not killed by the invading Persians, but was given a pension by his conquerors. On the other hand, Belshazzar, elevated to the position of ruler of Babylon by his father, was killed when the city of Babylon was taken, as indicated in Daniel 5:30. The matter concerning Belshazzar, far from being an error in the Scriptures, is one of the many striking confirmations of the Word of God which have been demonstrated by archaeology.

For more detail on this data see Boutflower (IABD, pgs. 114-141). There is no doubt now that Belshazzar was a historical personage. That Daniel calls him "king" in no way implies that Daniel understood him to be emperor of all the Babylonian empire. The Hebrew and Aramaic languages do not have a word for "emperor" who is over kings. One word, "king," covers all such and similar relationships. Belshazzar was the "king" of the city of Babylon and its district—and perhaps a few adjoining districts.

Since the question of the relationship of Nabonidus and Belshazzar to Nebuchadnezzar comes here first it may be well to bring in the subject of the "queen" in v. 10. Some have supposed her to be the queen-mother of Belshazzar. Nabonidus was not related to Nebuchadnezzar and came to the throne by means other than royal family succession. However, since only seven years had elapsed between Nebuchadnezzar's death and the accession of Nabonidus to the throne, it could have easily been possible that a young widowed wife of Nebuchadnezzar was available for Nabonidus to marry. Such a marriage would give the "usurper" Nabonidus social or royal standing (Herod the Great had this in mind, no doubt, when he married the Hasmonean



princess, Mariamne). Thus the queen would be the queen-mother to Belshazzar. There is also the possibility that Belshazzar, might have been a real "son" of Nebuchadnezzar and not Nabonidus, living at the same time Nabonidus was living. When Nabonidus married the widowed queen he may have adopted the son, Belshazzar, and thus secured an heir for himself, a scion of the illustrious family of Nebuchadnezzar.

Robert Dick Wilson in (SBD, pg. 117ff) has shown among the Arabs and the Babylonians the word "son" lent itself to no less than twelve separate uses, including "grandson" and "adopted son"; and the word for "father" has seven separate and distinct uses.

V. 2-4 BELSHAZZAR, WHILE HE TASTED THE WINE, COMMANDED TO BRING THE GOLDEN AND SILVER VESSELS . . . THEY DRANK WINE AND PRAISED THE GODS OF GOLD . . . Leupold remarks that "the Oriental . . . king and his most renowned men of state sat on an elevated dias in the banquet hall. The drinking of wine followed after the meal had been eaten; it signifies the procedure that might be termed a 'drinking bout.'"

When the wine was beginning to have its inebriating effect, supplying that pseudo-boldness and courage which is characteristic of its intoxicating ingredients, this debauched monarch commanded the holy vessels of the Jewish Temple be brought that they might be used in their revelry. This was plainly an act of open defiance, calculated to insult the God whose Temple stood in Jerusalem. Using the vessels of the Jewish Temple, Belshazzar and his drunken court drank toasts to their idols. Leupold points out that this is "a deed unparalleled in the records of antiquity." The heathen were noted for destroying and ransacking the temples of their victims but they always erected new temples for the deities of the conquered nations or placed their sacred things in their own pantheons. The gods of all peoples were venerated; a man respected his own gods as well as the gods of others.

As is plainly shown in verses 22ff., Belshazzar had ample opportunity to know better than this. His action then was plainly one of insolence brought on by drunken



The Handwriting On the Wall

debauchery. His predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, was guilty of *pride*. Belshazzar was guilty of *insolence*. There has been a marked degeneracy in the moral and rational fibre of the Babylonian leadership.

Belshazzar is the typical profligate and frivolous monarch of paganism. The presence of the king's "wives" and "concubines" was usually not tolerated at banquets. It was, however, permitted when debauchery began to run rampant. added insult to the holy God of heaven.

How many people were at this banquet? Royal feasts in antiquity were often huge. Athenaeus relates that the Persian king daily fed 15,000 men from his table. One marriage festival given by Alexander the Great was attended by 10,000 guests.

All the data we have thus far gathered on Belshazzar indicates that he occupied a position of co-regency with Nabonidus; yet while Belshazzar occupied a position, technically, subordinate to that of Nabonidus, actually, he seems to have had nearly all the prerogatives of a monarch. He was actually entrusted with the kingship over Babylon, and he managed it like a king. Now it is important to remember the book of Daniel is not an official document of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. It was written for the Jews, the people of God, who had to deal with the man who ruled in Babylon. This man was Belshazzar—not Nabonidus. The man whose royal word could affect the Jews was Belshazzar. Very properly, therefore, he is called "king" and "king of Babylon."

v. 5-7 . . . CAME FORTH THE FINGERS OF A MAN'S HAND, AND WROTE . . . UPON THE PLASTER . . . Just as the feast "began to swing," a human hand appeared and with the fingers began to inscribe some words upon the white plaster of the king's banquet hall. The royal table sat on the dais and close to a back wall. That portion of the great hall (about 50' x 160') was lit with a great candelabrum, the light of which reflected on the plastered wall behind the royal seat. Another interesting testimony of archaeology is that the walls of the palace at Babylon were covered with white plaster. This mention of white plaster is interesting

because the Aramaic word translated plaster literally means chalk.

The sight of this hand was clearly seen by the king. It had a rapid, sobering effect on the king! Seeing only a hand, the king's imagination would have free reign to think of all manner of terrible beings who might be the owner of that hand. The color drained from his face leaving it ghostly white and he began to shake violently so that his hips seemed to go clear out of their sockets and his knees knocked together so the knocking could be heard by those standing near him! The arrogant, insolent king of a few moments ago, defying the Almighty, now stands transfixed with terror!

Unable to sit down because of his shaking, hardly able to stand because of his overpowering fear, the king screams (literally, with excessive loudness), to hide his trembling voice, Summon my wise-men immediately! "His thoughts troubled him . . ." may indicate that his conscience began to bother him. We have commented earlier on the categories of seers in the Babylonian court.

Belshazzar hastily promises anyone of them elevation to a place of preeminence in the kingdom if one of them can decipher the writing on the wall for him. Just what the position "third in the kingdom" means is debated by the commentators. Young thinks it means "a thirdling or triumvir, 'one of three'." The Triumvirate would then include, in order of authority, Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and whoever deciphered the writing (as the sequence of events shows would be Daniel). Leupold maintains it reads literally *talti* which is not the ordinal numeral "third," which would have to be *telithi*. It therefore probably means "adjutant or officer." It no doubt involves a very high dignity, but no man is able to determine exactly what dignity.

## QUIZ

1. Prove that Belshazzar was a real, historic personage.
2. How may Nebuchadnezzar be designated the "father" of Belshazzar?
3. Who was the "queen"?

4. How many people might be in attendance at this banquet?
5. What was Belshazzar's purpose in drinking wine from the temple vessels?
6. Describe Belshazzar's condition upon seeing the hand writing on the wall.
7. Should Belshazzar have known better than to act this way with the Jews sacred vessels? Why?

## b. TURMOIL

TEXT: 5:8-16

- 8 Then came in all the king's wise men; but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation.
- 9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were perplexed.
- 10 Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever; let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:
- 11 there is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made him master of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers;
- 12 forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of dark sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.
- 13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. The king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, who art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Judah?

- 14 I have heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in thee.
- 15 And now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof; but they could not show the interpretation of the thing.
- 16 But I have heard of thee, that thou canst give interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

### QUERIES

- a. Is this "change" in the king's countenance a second change?
- b. Who is the "queen" and why was she not in the banquet at the start?
- c. What was "third ruler in the kingdom?"

### PARAPHRASE

And as the wise men kept coming in and were finally all assembled, it was found that none of them could interpret the writing inscribed on the wall or tell the king what it meant. The king grew more and more hysterical; his face reflected the terror he felt, and his officers, too, were shaken. But when the queen-mother heard what was happening, she rushed to the banquet hall and said to Belshazzar, Pull yourself together and try to be calm, your Majesty; don't be so pale and frightened over this. There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods within him. In the days of your forefather, king Nebuchadnezzar, this man was found to be as full of wisdom, insight and understanding as if he had the very spirit of the gods in him. And in the reign of your forefather Nebuchadnezzar he was made chief of all the magicians, astrologers, wise-men and soothsayers of Babylon. Call for this man, Daniel—or Belteshazzar, as the king called him—for his mind is

filled with superhuman knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, solve riddles and solve knotty problems. He will tell you what the writing means. So Daniel was rushed in to see the king. The king said, So you are Daniel! You are the Daniel that my forefather, king Nebuchadnezzar, brought from Judah as a captive of war! Well, I have been reminded that you manifest the spirit of the holy gods within you by the insight, enlightenment and extraordinary wisdom you displayed during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. These wisemen, soothsayers and enchanters of mine were assembled to interpret for me this handwriting on the wall, but they are not able to do so. I have been informed that you are able to give interpretations and solve knotty problems. If you are able to make the interpretation of this handwriting known to me, I will clothe you in a robe of purple and put a golden chain of authority about your neck and elevate you to the position of talti in the kingdom.

### COMMENT

v. 8-9 THEN CAME IN ALL THE KING'S WISE MEN . . . The original language indicates that the wise men did not all come in at once in one body but kept coming in until finally, when they were all assembled, it was found that not one could offer the least bit of help. Why the wisemen could not interpret these characters on the wall we shall deal with in verses 24-28. Suffice it now to say the king was filled with consternation at not knowing their meaning.

It became evident to Belshazzar that the terrifying frustration of not being able to know what was written would not be solved by the mighty "brain-trust" of Babylon (all its wise men together). He grew very nearly hysterical and his countenance reflected his terror. Staring into the face of this august body of wise men he recognized that they, too, were as much at a loss as he was to calm his fears for they were seized with perplexity also.

v. 10-12 NOW THE QUEEN . . . CAME . . . AND SAID . . . THERE IS A MAN . . . Undoubtedly the queen mother was the

widow of Nebuchadnezzar, because she was so familiar with past events concerning the relationship of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar. Queen mothers held a very significant position in ancient oriental courts—even more authoritative than that of the reigning queen. She entered the banquet hall of her own accord and without pausing to obtain permission of the monarch. Leupold suggests she had absented herself from this banquet in moral protest against the profligacy and indifference to duties of defense by Belshazzar. Whatever her reason for being absent it is evident that the reason for her coming to the banquet hall is to bring some calm reason and valuable information to this “play-boy” despot who was “coming unglued.” The queen mother had probably received a report from someone at court that the situation was critical, and, in view of the fact that the Medes and Persians were camped outside the great city, someone was going to have to take the hysterical king in hand and bring the head of the government to his senses.

Boutflower says of the queen, “She was not the mother of Nabonidus. That lady, as we learn from the Annalistic Tablet, died in the camp at Sippara in the ninth year of Nabonidus. But since she appears in Daniel 5, in the character of queen-mother, and speaks with remarkable dignity and self-possession, it is reasonable to suppose that she was the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, whom Nabonidus had married, and who—now that her husband was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy—had assumed the post of queen-mother.”

The queen speaks to Belshazzar of Daniel as if Belshazzar should have remembered this prophet. She informs the emperor that Daniel had had a very close and significant relationship to Nebuchadnezzar. She informs the king of the belief that the “spirit of the gods” resided in Daniel, and that the king’s grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, had promoted Daniel to “chief of the magicians.” In other words, the queen is informing Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar had put this wise man Daniel thoroughly to the test and he had demonstrated supernatural knowledge, discernment and ability to solve “knotty matters,” which is the literal mean-



ing of "dissolving of doubts." The queen's advice is that Daniel be called to "solve this knotty problem."

V. 13-16 . . . ART THOU THAT DANIEL . . . I HAVE HEARD OF THEE . . . THAT THOU CANST GIVE INTERPRETATIONS . . . There is no indication in the original language that the statement of the king is interrogative. Even if it is a question, it is only rhetorical, for the king apparently did not expect an answer, since he proceeds with his request immediately. The king may have made a simple declaration with a tone of surprise, "So you are that Daniel about whom I have heard." Belshazzar may even have heard of Daniel long before this but indulging himself in profligacy and frivolity, had never taken the trouble to consult him. It is noteworthy that Belshazzar, in spite of all his indifference to administration of the city and his indulgence in riotous living, did not forget all the details of his grandfather's military history.

The remainder of Belshazzar's speech is verbatim quotation of the queen's speech, except the promise of reward. Since all his own wisemen had failed, the king was now willing to reward this Hebrew if he could tell him the interpretation of the words on the wall.

Thanks to the excavations of Koldewey, not only has the throne-room of the Neo-Babylonian kings been discovered, but the doubly-recessed niche opposite the central entrance, which marks the spot where the throne must have stood, and precisely where the conscience-stricken Belshazzar must have sat!

## QUIZ

1. Describe the confusion and consternation of Belshazzar and his wise men.
2. Who was the queen, and why was she not at the banquet?
3. Why did the queen come to the feast at this particular time?
4. What was her advice to Belshazzar and why?
5. What sort of archaeological evidence do we have concerning this event?

## c. TRANSGRESSION

TEXT: 5:17-23

- 17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.
- 18 O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty:
- 19 and because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down.
- 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:
- 21 and he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will.
- 22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this,
- 23 but hast 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 from 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:

## QUERIES

- a. Why did Daniel refuse the gifts promised by the king?
- b. How much of God's part in Nebuchadnezzar's insanity did Daniel believe Belshazzar knew?

c. To what extent did Daniel expect Belshazzar to “glorify” God?

### PARAPHRASE

Daniel answered, Keep your gifts yourself, or give them to someone else. Your generosity is appreciated. However, I will tell you the true writing upon the wall and its interpretation regardless of remuneration. Your Majesty—the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar, your ancestral predecessor, the kingdom of Babylon and elevated him to greatness, glory and majesty. This God gave Nebuchadnezzar such greatness that all the nations of the world surrendered in fear to his sovereignty. He killed any who offended or opposed him and offered mercy to everyone who did not offend him. At the decree of Nebuchadnezzar lesser kings rose or fell. But when he allowed pride to make his heart callous so that he dealt with people haughtily, God removed him from his royal throne and his majesty was stripped from him. God caused him to be shut off from association with men and his nature became like that of a wild animal and he actually lived among the wild donkeys; he ate grass like the oxen; he stayed out in the open often enough at night to sometimes have his body covered with the dew of heaven. Eventually he recognized that the Most High God rules in the political affairs of men, nations and kingdoms, and that the Most High God elevates and deposes whomsoever He will over kingdoms and nations. And you, his ancestral successor, O Belshazzar—you knew all this, yet you have reigned in a proud and haughty manner as if you did not know it. You have exalted yourself and defied the God of Heaven, and brought to this profane feast the vessels from God’s temple; and you and your officers and wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while worshipping gods of silver, gold, brass, iron, wood, and stone—gods that neither see nor hear, nor know anything at all. You have defied the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny!

## COMMENT

v. 17-19 . . . LET THY GIFTS BE TO THYSELF . . . THE MOST HIGH GOD GAVE NEBUCHADNEZZAR THY FATHER THE KINGDOM . . . Some have assumed that Daniel was being insolent in this address to the king. Daniel, in v. 17, is merely stating that he will gladly read the writing for the king but he desires no remuneration. Reading the handwriting on the wall is a service rendered both for his God, for God's people, and for the king. Daniel does not think of reward first in such service. He is not at all like the mercenary wise men of Babylon. They will say what the king wants to hear for the right price. Daniel will tell the truth without reward.

Daniel's next step is preparation of the ground-work to reach the haughty heart of Belshazzar. The purpose of the prophet is to convict the proud potentate of his moral failure, in the hope that Belshazzar will repent. Daniel prepares the king's heart by reminding him that his predecessor (Nebuchadnezzar) came to the throne and its subsequent greatness by the sovereign power of the Most High God. It is Daniel's God who raises up and puts down (cf. Psa. 115:15-16; Acts 17:26; Ezek. 29:18-20; Jer. 25:9; Isa. 10:5ff). God gave Nebuchadnezzar such greatness that he exercised unhampered, unrestrained power. No one told him what to do. The whole world was under his power.

v. 20-21 BUT . . . HIS HEART WAS LIFTED UP . . . With such power and glory as Nebuchadnezzar had one would think he was justified in being proud. But when he lifted up his heart and did not give glory to the Most High God, divine correction was needed and instigated, (see chapter 4 for comments on Nebuchadnezzar's chastening). Now the point is this—how much more does the proud and haughty Belshazzar deserve the chastening of the Most High God for he has hardly turned his hand in order to be in the position he holds. He has not even the slightest reason to boast—he has come to the throne by circumstances of birth and not by effort.

v. 22-23 . . . THOU KNEWEST ALL THIS . . . BUT HAST LIFTED UP THYSELF AGAINST THE LORD OF HEAVEN . . . There is no questioning the theology of these verses. Even pagan kings are held morally responsible by God. All men are accountable to learn moral and religious lessons from history. By means of events in nature and history God reveals His existence and His character (in a limited way, of course) (cf. Acts 14:15-18; 17:22-31; Rom. 1:18-23; Psa. 19:1ff., etc.) and all men everywhere are expected to learn what God approves and what He disapproves. If there is one lesson the prophets teach it is the sovereignty of God in politics, private and public morals, over all men, saint and sinner, pagan and patriarch alike. And if there is one thing history teaches it is that, generally speaking, kings and potentates (and mankind at large) have followed the course of Belshazzar—arrogance, materialism, pride and indifference to the lessons of history! History teaches that civilization commits spiritual, moral, and intellectual suicide when it makes for itself and worships impotent, false gods. Yet men of every generation insist on remaining blind to this lesson from history. Every generation makes and worships its own gods and each generation destroys itself spiritually, morally and intellectually all over again. Barnes says: "Nothing is more absolute than the power which God holds over the breath of men, yet there is nothing which is less recognized than that power, and nothing which men are less disposed to acknowledge than their dependence on him for it."

### QUIZ

1. Was Daniel insolent in his answer to the king in v. 17?
2. How does Daniel prepare the king's mind for the moral lesson he wants to teach?
3. What is the point of relating Nebuchadnezzar's downfall?
4. Was Belshazzar not responsible since he was not a Jew?
5. How many people usually learn moral lessons from history?

## d. TRAGEDY

TEXT: 5:24-31

- 24 then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed.
- 25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.
- 26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end.
- 27 TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.
- 28 PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.
- 29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with purple, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.
- 30 In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.
- 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

## QUERIES

- a. In what language were the words written?
- b. Why would the king reward Daniel for such a terrible message?
- c. What is the significance of mentioning the age of Darius?

## PARAPHRASE

And then God sent the fingers to write the message upon the wall: *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin!* This is what it means: *Mene* means "numbered"; thus God has fixed the limit the days of your reign, and they are ended. *Tekel* means "weighed"; thus you have been weighed in the balances of God and have failed the test. *Peres* means "divided, and thus your kingdom will be divided up between the Medes and the Persians. Somewhat grateful that the suspense was ended, and determined to keep his promise, Belshazzar made royal decree that Daniel was to be robed in

purple, and that a golden chain of authority was to be placed around his neck. The king then announced that Daniel was elevated to third ruler in the kingdom. But, lo, that very same tragic night Belshazzar, the Chaldean monarch, was slain; and Gubaru (Darius the Mede) entered the city and began reigning at the age of sixty-two.

### COMMENT

v. 24-28 . . . THIS IS THE WRITING THAT WAS INSCRIBED: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. The phrase "sent from before him," indicates the supernatural nature of the apparition—that is, the portion of the hand (fingers) which appeared and did the inscribing upon the wall were very plainly from some supernatural origin.

The language of the supernatural message was probably Aramaic and in the ancient alphabetic characters which we find in the oldest Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions such as the Moabite Stone, the Siloam Inscription, and the Aramaic inscriptions from Zenjerli.

1. *Mene* is the passive participle of *menah*, "to number" and means not only "to count," but also "to fix the limit of" speaking of end or finish or expiration. According to the divine principle that when men sow to the flesh they shall reap corruption, this king and his kingdom's number is up!
2. *Tekel* is a passive participle, the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew root *shaqal*, and means "to weigh." The idea is that Belshazzar has been put in the balances of God and weighed or tested to see if he balances to God's standards. (cf. I Sam. 2:3; Job 31:6; Psa. 62:9; Prov. 16:2). He does not!
3. *Peres*: *Pharsin* is the plural form of *peres*; *u* is the customary form of the conjunction "and." It means to "break or divide." There may be in the word *peres* an allusion to the word *paras* which means "Persian." So it is revealed to Daniel that this kingdom is to be divided up and given to the Medes and the Persians.

Leupold notes, "This sequence: "Medes' first, then 'Persians,' indicates a point of historical accuracy that fits in beautifully with the idea of Daniel's authorship of the book. The supremacy in this dual kingdom remained but a short time with the Medes and that while Daniel was still on the scene, and then passed permanently to the Persians, a fine point that a writer who lived in the Maccabean age would hardly have thought of recording. Yet the form *upharsin*, 'Persians,' gives the emphasis to the much longer Persian supremacy."

v. 29-30 . . . IN THAT NIGHT BELSHAZZAR THE CHALDEAN KING WAS SLAIN . . . Daniel refused the rewards of the king before he made his revelation of the words upon the wall because he wanted to make it abundantly clear that, come what may, he was determined to declare the truth. It now being clear that he had no mercenary motives, there is no reason why the gifts should at this time be refused.

How did Belshazzar die? He was slain! But by whom? Daniel does not say. Verses 30 and 31 may or may not be separated by an extended time, so far as we know. Actually, verse 31 should be verse 1 of the sixth chapter, and Edward J. Young so treats it. However, Boutflower believes that Jeremiah (in Jer. chapters 50-51) foretells Babylon's demise by "strategem" (Jer. 50:24); that this strategem is "connected with her water-defences" (51-36); that the city will be taken with such surprise "the reeds will be burned with fire" (51:32); that this stratagem will be executed "when a great feast is going on, at which all the principal men of the land are gathered together . . . and they will be drunken" (51:39, 57). Now it is evident that Daniel does not give any details about the seizure of the city of Babylon by the Medes and the Persians. But Daniel's silence does not necessarily contradict the trustworthy accounts of other ancient historians!

When we investigate the ancient historians (Herodotus who is believed to have visited Babylon only some 80 years after its downfall; Xenophon who wrote his history about 100 years after Herodotus visited Babylon; Berossus, a Chaldean priest who wrote a history about 300 B.C.; The



Nabonidus Chronicle; and the Cyrus Cylinder) here is what we find:

- a. According to Herodotus, Cyrus (the Persian king) was a long time in preparing for the siege of Babylon, and the Babylonians advanced to meet him. Being defeated, they retreated and barricaded themselves inside their city walls. Eventually, Cyrus diverted the waters of the Euphrates so that his troops could march into the city by the bed of the stream when the water was shallow. The city fell when a festival was being celebrated.
- b. Xenophon mentions the diverting of a stream which flowed through Babylon. Then, one night when the Babylonians were observing a festival with drinking and revelry, Cyrus turned aside the course of the river and entered the city. The entrance was actually made by Gobryas (or Ugbaru), one of Cyrus' generals. Gobryas entered the royal palace and slew the wicked king Belshazzar. Xenophon represents the Babylonians as being extremely hostile to Cyrus.
- c. Berossus writes that Nabonidus (father of Belshazzar and co-regent) met the approaching Cyrus and being defeated, fled to Borsippa. Cyrus then captured Babylon and tore down its walls. Nabonidus surrendered and was sent to Carmania where he lived in exile, supported by a small pension from the Persians, until he died.
- d. The Nabonidus Chronicle mentions that in the month Tishri (October) Cyrus fought and destroyed the people of Akkad at Ophis on the Tigris river; on the 14th day he captured Sippar without fighting. Nabonidus fled; on the 16th day Gobryas (Ugbaru), the governor of Gutium, and the troops of Cyrus without fighting entered Babylon. This chronicle is one of the multitudinous clay tablets found in Assurbanipal's library by Rassam and Layard and is sometimes called the Annalistic Tablet. The tablet measures 4 inches by 3½, in four columns, two on the obverse and two on the reverse. The

tablet is of sun-dried clay and it is no wonder that considerable portions of it are illegible. The record breaks off at a point of deep interest—the burial of Belshazzar and the installation of Gabaru as his successor (whom Whitcomb suggests was the mysterious Darius the Mede of Daniel 5:31ff.). A translation of a portion of this chronicle may be read in *Boutflower*, pages 126-127.

- e. The Cyrus Cylinder, written evidently by a priest of Merodach, who must have come into contact with some of the Hebrew captives at Babylon, since his style and tone of thought are Hebraistic (one of the most Hebraistic which have come from Babylonia to Assyria), also states that Cyrus entered Babylon without encounter or battle. The great theme of the Cylinder is that Cyrus is the chosen of Merodach, and that Merodach has given him the empire of Babylon.

Note now the points of agreement: (1) A preliminary battle between the Medo-Persian coalition and the Babylonians fought, according to the Chronicle at Opis; according to Herodotus fought at a short distance from the city; (2) The statement as to the death of the king's son (Belshazzar) on the night of the capture of Babylon in the Nabonidus Chronicle would seem to agree with Daniel 5:30; (3) The statement that the attack on the palace was led by Ugbaru (Gobryas), who, according to Xenophon, was one of the two leaders of the attacking party. Xenophon speaks of Gobryas as the Babylonian governor of a wide district (Gutim), who had been very badly treated by the Babylonian king and had gone over to the side of Cyrus; (4) According to the Cylinder, Cyrus held a great reception after the capture of Babylon—this agrees with the statement of Xenophon that very soon after the taking of the city Cyrus admitted to his presence the Babylonians, who flocked around him in overwhelming numbers.

Here then is a summary of the fall of perhaps the richest, most magnificent empire of antiquity. As far as we know from the Greek historians, the siege was not a bloody one. After the preliminary battle fought near Opis,

the Babylonians retreated within their walls, and continued their busy commercial life, scoffing at the efforts of their besiegers, who, under pretense of raising up an earthen wall of siege encircling the city, were steadily and thoroughly preparing the strategem of diverting the river which enabled them to gain an entrance into the part of the city still unconquered. There was thus no fighting till the last fatal night, when all was sudden, sharp, and soon over. As the sequel shows, whether told by Xenophon or recorded on the Cylinder, Cyrus did his best to conciliate the inhabitants, and they for their part responded heartily to his efforts. Hence it was possible for the official documents to emphasize these facts and to represent the entry of Cyrus into Babylon as a peaceful one. And indeed it was, except for that single night of carnage, when the impious Belshazzar was slain. Cyrus then evidently crowned Cambyses, his son as co-ruler of all the Persian domain and gave him the honor of burying the slain Belshazzar while he appointed Gubaru (Darius the Mede) (see notes on 5:31) as governor of Babylon. Having set this part of his vast empire in order, Cyrus took his generals and his army off to other worlds to conquer.

v. 31 AND DARIUS THE MEDE RECEIVED THE KINGDOM . . . Who is "Darius the Mede?" John C. Whitcomb, Jr., in his very important book entitled *Darius, The Mede*, published by Eerdmans, contends that mistakes were made in translation of the Nabonidus Chronicle when two different names in this Chronicle were both translated Gobryas. One name (on line 15) was *Ugbaru*, the governor of Gutium, who entered Babylon with the army of Cyrus and conquered the city. On lines 19-20 of the same Chronicle is the name *Gubaru*, who appointed satraps. In line 22 *Ngbaru* is said to have died. It is Mr. Whitcomb's suggestion that *Ugbaru* was indeed *Gobryas* who conquered the city in the name of Cyrus, but it was *Gubaru* who had been appointed governor of Babylon and beyond the River, and who is one and the same person as Daniel's Darius of 5:31. *Gubaru* (Darius) was governor of Babylon and the River beyond on the very day that Cyrus first set foot in the conquered

city, which was on October 29 (seventeen days after its conquest by Ugbaru or Gobryas), and he continued in that position throughout the reign of Cyrus and through more than half the subsequent reign of Cambyses the son of Cyrus. The great prominence given to Darius the Mede (Gubaru) in the book of Daniel is more readily explained if we assume his identification with a person by the name of Gubaru whose reign extended not only over a period of three weeks (the time within which Ugbaru was dead after capturing Babylon) or even a year, but of fourteen years (539-525 B.C.)!

The cuneiform signs for "Ug" and "Gu" are quite different, and could not possibly have been confused by the Persian scribe whose text (the Nabonidus Chronicle) we now possess.

Thus it is Mr. Whitcomb's conclusion "that there is one person in history, and only one, who fits all the Biblical data concerning Darius the Mede. He is never mentioned by the Greek historians, but appears in various sixth century B.C. cuneiform texts under the name of Gubaru."

Listed below are the various cuneiform references to Gubaru, the Governor of Babylon and the Region beyond the River, in chronological order:

- 539 B.C., October 29 (3rd day of Marcheswan, Accession Year of Cyrus)—Nabonidus Chronicle, Col. III, Line 20.
- 535/534 B.C. (4th Year of Cyrus)—Pohl 43, 45, 46.
- 533/532 B.C. (6th Year of Cyrus)—Tremayne 56:5, 92.4.
- 532/531 B.C. (7th Year of Cyrus)—Contenau 142.
- 531/530 B.C. (8th Year of Cyrus)—Tremayne 70:5, Phol 61.
- 530/529 B.C. (Accession Year of Cambyses)—Dougherty 103:11; Keiser 169:22; Niles & Keiser 114:15.
- 529/528 B.C. (1st Year of Cambyses)—Strassmaier 96:3, 4, 8; Clay 20:13, 14, 15.
- 528/527 B.C. (2nd Year of Cambyses)—Contenau 150, 152; Dougherty 120:3, 14; Tremayne 127:12, 128:19.

527/526 B.C. (3rd Year of Cambyses)—Tremayne  
137:22, 160:12.

526/525 B.C. (4th Year of Cambyses—Tremayne 168:8,  
172:13; Pinches Text.

525/524 B.C. (5th Year of Cambyses)—Tremayne  
177:9, 178:16; Contenau 168.

### QUIZ

1. In what language were the words probably written upon the wall of the king's banquet hall?
2. What is the meaning of *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*?
3. Describe the final conquest of the city of Babylon.
4. Who is Darius the Mede?

## SERMON NUMBER FIVE

### BELSHAZZAR, THE PLAYBOY OF BABYLON

Text: Daniel 5

#### INTRODUCTION

##### I. BELSHAZZAR REALLY LIVED?

- A. For many years unbelieving critics of the Bible insisted that since there were no historical records (discounting the Bible as historically accurate, of course) that such a person as Belshazzar ever lived, the Bible is filled with myths
- B. But archaeological discoveries made about 1850 uncovered clay tablets in the region that was formerly Babylon and on these clay tablets was the name Belshazzar; both the names of Nabonidus and Belshazzar on another; one in which oaths were taken in the name of Belshazzar and Nabonidus indicating that they were co-rulers; subsequent work in this information showed that Nabonidus spent a great deal of his time in Arabia, which shows the reason for the raising of Belshazzar to the position of ruling monarch

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### II. BELSHAZZAR HAD EVERYTHING THE WORLD COUNTS VALUABLE

- A. He had riches; Babylon was probably the richest of the four great world empires
- B. He had power; he had at his command the power and wealth of the capital city
- C. He had opportunity to indulge himself in every sensual pleasure

### III. BUT WHAT DID BELSHAZZAR CONTRIBUTE TO THE BETTERMENT OF MAN?

- A. He would not even be remembered if it were not for this account in the Bible
- B. None of the playboys of this world have ever contributed. They are too busy getting, thinking of self

## DISCUSSION

### I. THE PLAYBOY AT WORK

#### A. Feasting, and Fornicating

1. The text does not describe his sexual escapades, however, it speaks of his wives and concubines engaged in drunken revelry.
2. Anyone who knows about drinking parties that involve people knows what goes on as a consequence of drinking.
3. Alcohol lowers the moral resistance of anyone

#### B. Blaspheming

1. When the wine was beginning to have its inebriating effect and supplying that pseudo-boldness and courage which is characteristic of its intoxicating ingredients, this debauched monarch commanded that the holy vessels of the Jewish Temple be brought so they might be used in their drunken feast to toast their idols.
2. Leupold points out that this was a "deed unparalleled in the records of antiquity."
3. This was plainly an act of open defiance, calculated to insult the God whose Temple stood in Jerusalem.

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- C. There is another playboy like Belshazzar (perhaps many millions)
1. Hugh Hefner: started Playboy in 1953 with \$600 of his own money, \$60,000 in borrowed funds, and a photo of Marilyn Monroe in the nude.
  2. Parlayed his editorial mixture of sex and the "good life" into a \$70,000,000 empire whose magazine is second in reading only to Reader's Digest in Western Europe
  3. Playboy is far more than a girlie book . . . it is a point of view.
  4. That point of view is hedonism, which teaches that pleasure is the sole good in life and that moral duty is fulfilled in the gratification of pleasure-seeking instincts.
  5. This is not new; it is as old as the Greeks at least, and even goes back to Belshazzar.
  6. But pleasure-seeking is a treadmill never-ending. Someone has aid pleasure sought is pleasure lost. Hedonists are left with only themselves—their frustrations, their weaknesses, their greed, their desires.
  7. Playboy magazine makes it clear through its photographs of nude women, its articles and its cartoons and party jokes that females are to be exploited, used whenever and wherever possible, as long as it's all in "good clean fun" and the girl goes along with the gag. That it is a gag, and that the joke is usually on the girl and ultimately on all mankind, is certain! Whether you want to be the one who uses a woman as a thing, or whether you want to be the woman who is willing to be used as a thing, it is all the same. This might be adequate for animals, but it falls a bit short for human beings.

THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY IS, "I'M FOR ME, AND EVERYONE ELSE IS A POTENTIAL ITEM ON MY MENU . . . THE BASIC LAW IN THIS KIND OF JUNGLE IS SELF-FULFILLMENT. AND WHO WOULD ARGUE THAT THERE IS ANYTHING MORE SELF-FULFILLED THAN A TIGER, CROCODILE, OR PYTHON THAT HAS JUST FEASTED ON ITS PREY?"

## II. THE PLAYBOY AWAKE

- A. It is all very well to live it up, scoff at God, indulge self, exploit other people, as long as there is no God.
1. This is what Belshazzar thought.
  2. All this talk about a Jewish God who has powers supernatural, foey!
  3. Belshazzar was god! He would do as he pleased!
  4. But, lo, God thought it expedient to openly and dramatically reveal His supernatural character to this arrogant hedonist.
  5. Belshazzar began to tremble until his hips went out of socket and his knees knocked together and those at the feast could see his face grow ashen gray with the pallor of death.
- B. Such an awakening has come to many a playboy or playgirl:
1. Very often it is not connected with any miraculous manifestation of God such as Belshazzar had.
  2. Usually it is just the simple conscience of man telling him he stands guilty before his creator of exploiting other people for selfish ends.
  3. Though still many more will never awake to their peril until they meet the holy God at the judgment and they are banished to the realm of darkness, impurity and evil, lies and abominations.
  4. Some of Hefner's girls have awakened to the fact that he is merely using them to serve his own selfish purposes . . . that they are nothing more than things he uses to satisfy himself and he does not care one bit for them, they have exposed him in magazines.
  5. IT IS THE DUTY OF EVERY CHRISTIAN, YOUNG AND OLD, TO USE THE POWERFUL WORD OF GOD TO GUIDE THE HELL-BENT, SELFISH, SENSUAL-MINDED WORLD BACK TO TRUE HAPPINESS IN GOD'S WILL.

## III. THE PLAYBOY WEIGHED

- A. What brings on this playboy attitude?
1. "And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, but you



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- have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. . . .”
2. “. . . you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.”
  3. Wm. Banowsky says in *It's A Playboy World*, “When men lose their sense of established standards, they tend to fall victim to an urge for pleasure or a lust for power. And when the loss of standards occurs during a period of peril, men seem to prefer pleasure to power. It is one of the sad facts of war that the specter of danger and death causes many soldiers to want to spend the evening before the terrible battle with the prostitute rather than the priest. It has been said that there are more brothels in Saigon, today, than in any other city of comparable size in the world.”
  4. We have lived in years of war for decades now and the easiest anesthesia to deaden the constant ache of emptiness is proving to be the simple pursuit of pleasure.
  5. Frank Sinatra has been quoted as saying, “I'm for anything that gets you through the night, be it prayer, pills, or a bottle of Jack Daniels.”
  6. D. H. Lawrence, author of *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, says, “My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong with our minds, but what our blood feels and believes and says is always true. The real way of living is to answer one's wants.”
  7. Affluence, unbelief, uncertainty all bring on the popular idea that the answer is to be found in pleasure with its two indivisible components, sensuality and immediacy.
- B. Playboyism has been weighed and found wanting.
1. Many pleasure-seekers in our modern world have been driven to the desperate conclusion that it is

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- impossible to achieve and, therefore, the pathway to pleasure is in the grave.
2. Ernest Hemingway write in *Death In The Afternoon*, "There is no remedy for anything in life. Death is the sovereign remedy for all our misfortunes."
  3. The very rich, beautiful, and famous often learned that pleasure is a hard master, an appetite that grows on what it feeds. It is a physiological fact that a stimulated muscle reflexively demands greater stimulation, and people become enslaved by their passions in much the same way. With each overindulgence, the level of physical and emotional expectation gradually rises so that an increasingly greater thrill is required to satisfy the urge. Eventually, the thrill begins to diminish but the hunger for stimulation is ever present, now stronger than ever. Without finding full satisfaction, the hunger need settles into the monotony of filling and emptying. One beings by seeking pleasures to fill his boredom and ends by being bored with his pleasures. As Shakespeare said, "If all the years were playing holidays, to sport would be as tedious as to work."

## CONCLUSION

### I. PLAYBOYISM BRINGS TRAGEDY

- A. It destroys the image of God in man.
  1. Belshazzar allowed himself to become as an animal.
  2. He served no human or spiritual purpose except to glut himself on sensual pleasures;
  3. So, God took away his existence.
- B. Enslaving oneself to the passions of the flesh takes away freedom.
  1. The philosophy of playboyism is aggrandizement of the self, with all its accompanying disorders of arrogance, exaggerated self-importance, and unrealistic self-expectation.
  2. Ayn Rand, praised by Hefner, author of *Atlas Shrugged*, and *The Virtue of Selfishness*, writes,

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“Man exists for his own sake, the pursuit of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose, that he must not sacrifice himself to others nor sacrifice others to himself.”

3. What is necessary for the sake of survival itself, as well as for the sake of the moral life, is a more realistic understanding of the terms of genuine freedom. Freedom is something to be earned, and individual responsibility—discipline at the personal level—is always the price of freedom at the corporate level.
4. We take an important step forward when we realize that, like it or not, we are going to be governed by something.
5. Only when individual men are free, because they are disciplined, can the society of men be free. Edmund Burke said, “Men are qualified for civil liberties in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites. Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.”
6. “NO MAN IS FREE WHEN HE IS A SLAVE TO HIS FLESH.” Seneca

## II. THERE IS NOTHING BUT FRUSTRATION AND DEATH IN THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE AND THINGS

- A. John W. Gardner, former Sec. of HEW, in his book, *Self-Renewal*, said, “It is not unduly harsh to say that the contemporary idea of happiness cannot possibly be taken seriously by anyone whose intellectual or moral development has progressed beyond that of a three-week-old puppy . . . Despite almost universal belief to the contrary, gratification, ease, comfort, diversion in the state of having achieved all one’s goals do not constitute happiness for man.

## THE PLAYBOY OF BABYLON

The reason Americans have not trapped the bluebird of happiness, despite the most frantic efforts the world has ever seen, is that happiness as total gratification is not a state to which man can aspire. The irony is that we should have brought such unprecedented dynamism to the search for such a static condition. Comforts and the pleasure of good living will never be enough. If they were, the large number of Americans who have been able to indulge their whims on a scale unprecedented in history would be deliriously happy. They would be telling one another of their unparalleled serenity and bliss instead of trading tranquilizer prescriptions."

- B. What is the solution? Malcom Muggeridge wrote, "how infinitely sad it is that the present moral upheaval should amount to nothing more than a demand for Pot and Pills, for the most tenth-rate sort of escapism and self-indulgence ever known. How pathetic that when the world is waiting for a marvelous release of creativity, all we actually get is the resort of any old slobbering debauchee anywhere in the world at anytime—DOPE AND THE BED."
- C. Mr Muggeridge puts in the plainest possible words the conviction that is also deepest in the life of any committed Christian, "So I come back to where I began, to that other King, one Jesus; to the Christian notion that man's efforts to make himself personally and collectively happy in earthly terms are doomed to failure. HE MUST INDEED, AS CHRIST SAID, BE BORN AGAIN, BE A NEW MAN, OR HE'S NOTHING. SO AT LEAST I HAVE CONCLUDED, HAVING FAILED TO FIND IN PAST EXPERIENCE, PRESENT DILEMMAS AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS, ANY ALTERNATIVE PROPOSITION. AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED, IT IS CHRIST OR NOTHING."

### III. JESUS TOLD A PARABLE ABOUT A PLAYBOY

A young man who wanted to be free to do his own thing. Terribly bored with the family farm, he demanded his inheritance immediately so that he could go

## DANIEL

to the glittering city and lead his own life. But the selfish satisfactions were short-lived. Though the son surrendered himself to every pleasure, he did not find freedom; he did not find joy. Having refused to serve his father, he ended up serving pigs. When the terrible bondage of self-indulgence was complete "he came to himself." He realized that even the slaves in his father's house were much better off than he. When he found the courage to go back home, to ask for a job, his father met him saying, "It is not another slave I seek, but a son." What Jesus was saying is that every man must choose to be either a son or a slave; and that the greater freedom of sonship always involves the greater responsibility—personal discipline.

### EXAMINATION FIVE

#### REFUTATIONS

(Answer the following by giving the argument which will correct the statement)

1. Belshazzar was not a true historical personage. Refute!
2. Daniel was being sarcastic when he told Belshazzar, "... thy gifts be to thyself..." Refute!
3. Belshazzar was not responsible for his actions since he knew nothing about the God of Israel's actions towards his ancestors. Refute!

#### ASSOCIATIONS

(Associate the persons or events of column one with the correct person or event of column two)

1	2
Belshazzar	Daniel
concubine	Nebuchadnezzar
queen	purse
Beltshazzar	Vashti
talti	authority
vessels	mistress

## EXAMINATION FIVE

Mene	mother
Judah	king of Babylon
Tekel	third
chain	numbered
Upharsin	Meshach
	weighed
	threescore
	divided

### MEMORIZATIONS

(Fill in the blanks:)

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not \_\_\_\_\_ thy heart, though thou \_\_\_\_\_ all this, but hast \_\_\_\_\_ up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the \_\_\_\_\_ of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy \_\_\_\_\_ have drunk wine from them; and thou hast praised the \_\_\_\_\_ of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which \_\_\_\_\_ not, nor \_\_\_\_\_, nor \_\_\_\_\_; and the God in whose hand thy \_\_\_\_\_ is, and whose are all thy ways hast thou not glorified.

### EXPLANATIONS

1. Explain why Belshazzar was called "king" of Babylon, when history says it was Nabonidus who was king of Babylon at that time.
2. Explain the relationship of the "queen" to Belshazzar.
3. Explain why Belshazzar was so terrified at the handwriting on the wall.
4. Explain why the wise-men of Babylon could not read the writing on the wall.
5. Explain how Belshazzar was slain that night.

