

Ministry on Daniel

Part 3

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Duration	00:38:16
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/eb030/ministry-on-daniel

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[00:00:01] From the book of Daniel, chapter 5, beginning at verse 1.

Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

Belshazzar, whilst 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 [00:01:09] drank in them.

They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

In the same hour came forth 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. 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. [00:02:02] The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And 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 scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then came in all the king's wise men, but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

[00:03:01] Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another. Yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. Thou 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 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.

[00:04:06] And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified? 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, Eupharsin. 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. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold [00:05:02] about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

In that night, in that night, was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

I haven't read every book that's ever been written, that's obvious. But one thing I'm sure of, the one book that's been written, and remains undated, unaffected by the changing fashions of this world, a book which is always topical, is the Bible. [00:06:05] Belshazzar, the last effective sovereign of the kingdom of Babylon, before it lost its place as the ruler of the nations.

Wherever you find Babylon referred to directly by name, or by the other name connected with Babylon, Shinar, wherever the word or the name or the place is mentioned, we read about [00:07:04] something where those who are there are set against God.

Maybe in word, maybe in declared atheism, I don't believe there is a God at all.

Maybe as an agnostic, I'm not very sure.

I'm willing to be convinced, but you'll have to give me sufficient proof to satisfy my clever mind.

The audacity of sinful men and women that demand proof to their satisfaction. Oh, we shall be required to give satisfaction to God, to give account of ourselves to God. [00:08:03] Belshazzar then, repudiating the true God, desecrating those vessels that were dedicated to the service of God, paying homage, as I suppose 90, 95% of the people in our land do now, paying homage to materialism.

Paying homage to the gods of gold and silver and wood and food and drink.

If there could or were to be a census in Newcastle upon Tyne and every question was answered [00:09:09] and there must be, how many would have to say, I, by my lifestyle, I don't say the words, but by the way that I live, I'm just like Belshazzar and his lords, I pay homage to the four Bs.

Pierre, Bucky, Bingo and Benidorm. You analyse it.

I would say most people in this country are governed by the four Bs. Things that give pleasure to the natural senses.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

[00:10:06] I think, well no I'm sure, we are returning to the sort of pagan days where it will take spectacular miracles to shift needy souls out of their indifference.

Like the days of Belshazzar and his lords. Busy man, wasn't he? Head of the nation.

Probably the prince regent in the absence of his general father who was away doing battles from time to time. Belshazzar, the virtual king, spent his days in feasting with his princes, his wives, his

concubines. [00:11:02] Busy man.

God was crowded out of his life.

Whether believer or unbeliever, how easy it is for God to be crowded out of our busy lives.

Not openly, not blatantly, but surreptitiously, bit by bit.

Oh yes, I get to the meetings, I do my duty and then the rest of the time is my own. Far be the thought.

Belshazzar gathers with his lords, repudiates the true gods, sets about enjoying himself [00:12:04] and he needs to be brought to an abrupt halt and he was.

I remember reading once a comment on this chapter, normally called Belshazzar's feast. But writers like to be alliterative. It's not always peace like we had last night. The comment of one writer was about this feast, fingers that finished a feast. Fingers that finished a feast. There he was, reveling, literally and metaphorically, carousing, having an orgy and then absolutely stricken.

[00:13:05] He sees the fingers of a man's hand writing on the wall.

Oh how significant that is. In the same hour, while God was crowded out of his life, by choice came forth fingers of a man's hand.

I wonder how many of you shared an experience that occasionally used to happen to me. My mother used to say to me, don't point, it's rude.

Why is it that if someone points at you, you feel uncomfortable?

[00:14:02] You feel invaded.

You feel insulted.

The answer to all important questions is found in the Bible. I think we just have time to let our eyes fall upon a few examples where the Bible talks about the finger being raised. And we'll learn something if we haven't noticed it before. Turn back to Exodus chapter 8.

Moses and Pharaoh's magicians contesting before Pharaoh.

[00:15:01] Up to a certain point, the world's magicians can copy the acts and the power of Moses, the man of God. But then Moses does something which is beyond the magicians. Pharaoh, their master, says now come on. You've copied them up to now. Don't let me down. Verse 19.

The magicians say this is the finger of God.

This is the finger of God. I'll keep them all together, but look at chapter 31.

The last verse in the chapter. The Lord gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing

with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God. [00:16:13] Move over to Leviticus chapter 4.

Again, this is the chapter about the sin offering. We'll come back to that.

Verse 6.

The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord. Verse 17.

The priest shall dip his finger in some of the blood. Verse 25. The priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger. Verse 30. The priest shall take of the blood thereof with his finger. Verse 34. The priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger. [00:17:07] New Testament.

Luke's Gospel.

Chapter 11.

May God use our eyesight in looking at these verses for our spiritual blessing. Luke 11 20.

If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. John chapter 8.

Well-known incident.

Verse 6.

They tempted him that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground. The message is consistent.

[00:18:04] When God wants you to know that all things are naked and open in his sight. That there's no escape. You cannot hide from God and he knows all about you. God raises his finger in accusation.

The law, Exodus, accuses.

It tells you where you've gone wrong but it cannot put you right. All those instructions about the sin offering in Leviticus 4. How important they are.

The only way.

The righteous accusation of God against you because of your sins. The only righteous answer to that is the finger of accusation. [00:19:06] Being satisfied by the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses from all sin. There's no other way.

Cleansing, forgiveness, bestowal of righteousness, fitness for heaven.

Sins and their penalty have to be met once and for all.

And this was signified on behalf of the whole nation. For the ruler that sinned. For the priest that sinned. For one of the common people that sinned. Didn't matter who it was.

Noble or of humble birth.

[00:20:02] Prominent or obscure.

Many or a few.

The only answer to the sinfulness was that the blood had to be sprinkled before the veil. There was no approach possible to God unless the blood was shed and applied in the sight of God. It's the blood that maketh atonement for the soul. The life of the flesh is in the blood. And it was for that reason that the Lord Jesus Christ had to come into the world and die. And that his blood must needs be shed.

There was never ever a life on earth like the life of Jesus my Lord. [00:21:03] There was never a death like the death of Jesus my Lord.

God took account of it. And as I said last week I would say again tonight. God looking at the death of Jesus. God looking at the blood.

He clearly says there's sufficient worth in that blood to cleanse every sin.

The potential is there to cleanse every sinner. To remove the stain of every sin.

But before it's effective it must needs be applied.

There were those in the days when Jesus lived upon earth. We read about it in John 8.

[00:22:04] Where they thought they were alright. Came into the presence of the Lord accusing a woman who was a sinner. They were accusing her.

The Lord said, think about yourselves. And he wrote with his finger on the ground. He says if we are talking about accusations. Consider yourself before God.

How tempting it is to think about other people. Who in our eyes are worse sinners than us.

More blatant, more flagrant, more regular over a longer period. Oh the God who says there's sufficient worth in the blood of Jesus. [00:23:04] To deal with your every sin.

The same God says if you've only sinned once.

The whole weight of the wrath of God hangs over your head.

This was the message.

Meanie, meanie, teakle, you farson.

Forgive the pronunciation. It's like the tunes we sing. As long as we all sing the same thing and understand it. Whether we are 100% accurate perhaps is secondary. Well give me a better pronunciation. But we don't need worry about the interpretation. God gives it to us.

[00:24:02] God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it.

You may get people at your door. And tell you they've got good news for you. And they will encourage you to understand. That if you behave yourself. And read their books.

And do what they say.

They'll promise you life on earth.

I'm not quite sure whether they would still say forever. But they'll promise you an extended life on earth. That's not a blessing that would be a curse. Maybe it's a sign of growing older. But the idea of living forever on earth. [00:25:05] Gets increasingly unattractive the longer we live. As the vortex of the whirlpool gets quicker.

As the pace of life increases. As the thin veneer of respectability is taken off the cesspool. That's society in 1991.

The time must come. When as to Belshazzar.

God says to the world at large enough. No more.

The reckoning day will have arrived. Now what basis was the reckoning going to be on? Listen to what the message is. [00:26:02] Thou art weighed in the balances.

And art found wanting.

You remember.

When Eve transgressed.

Being deceived.

Took Adam with her.

Just like now.

Everybody wanted to blame somebody else. Not me Lord somebody else. Adam says not me Lord it was the woman. The woman says it wasn't me it was the serpent. God says to the serpent. Because thou.

God said to the woman. Because thou.

God said to Adam.

[00:27:03] Because thou. Individual responsibility.

Ezekiel 33 is it.

Each will have to bear their own responsibility before God. And because God is entirely consistent. With what he's declared himself to be. As he spoke to Adam. As he spoke to Eve. As he spoke to the serpent. So he spoke to Belshazzar. And says thou.

Individual.

I've weighed you up.

I don't want to open any old wounds.

But any of you who've been burgled. [00:28:03] Will probably share with many others.

A common reflection.

It's not so much.

The things that were taken.

It's not even the terrible mess that was left behind. The best of all is to know. That for a long time.

Somebody had been watching you. Taking account of all your movements. And making a note perhaps. When you went out. When you came in. What your habits were. How many people came to visit you. Was there a time. When your house was left unguarded. Without anybody there. I'm told. That that's the common experience. [00:29:02] Of those who've been burgled.

God. Watches us. All the time.

There's not a thing that we do. There's not a word that we utter. There's not a thought that passes through our minds. That he doesn't know all about.

At the last assize.

We read.

That the wicked.

The wicked dead small and great. They'll be raised. They will stand before God. And the books will be opened. The books of records.

I suppose. For most of us. Certainly for me.

[00:30:02] There are some things that I've done in my life. Some things I've said perhaps. Many thoughts.

That I've allowed to pass through my mind. I wouldn't want my best friend. Never mind my worst enemy. To know anything about them. But God knows them all. And the time will come. When everything will be revealed. And Belshazzar here. Is a picture of that.

I've been watching you Belshazzar. I've been taking notes. There's a record of everything. That you've ever done or said or thought. And the result is. You've been found wanting.

As we learn in Romans. We've all come short. [00:31:02] Of God's standard. The glory of God.

I may well.

Be ashamed.

Of things that are on my record.

But thank God.

They've all been dealt with. None of them outstanding. The blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. God's son.

Has cleansed me. From every sin.

God forbid that I should use that as an excuse. For doing as I like. But the Bible says. It doesn't work like that.

When your sins are forgiven. You're determined. To live for the one that saved you.

Romans 6. God forbid.

[00:32:02] That we should give the impression. That we would like to abound in sin. That grace might super abound.

But there he was. Belshazzar.

Doesn't say. How many sins he'd committed. Didn't say where about. On the scale of grossness. Or seriousness. Any of them were.

You. Have been weighed up. And found wanting.

Any of us.

Could put ourselves. On the scale.

And the same would be said about us. However old.

However experienced. However mature or immature. Put on the scales. God says about you and me. You've been found wanting.

Many would like to think. [00:33:03] That the scales of justice stand. Adjusted.

So that they're perfectly in balance. And the pointer is on mid scale. Zero. And they would like to think. That. The commendable things they've ever done. The good things. The good works. Will be put on one side. And that.

The admitted wrongdoing is put on the other side. And then you have to watch the scale. And. If the bad things outweigh the good things. Well. That would be a pity. But if.

Your good things outweigh the bad things. Well it'll be all right in the end. It's a lie of the devil. God said to Belshazzar. He says to you and me. He says. You are in the balances. [00:34:01] All right. We'll adjust the scales. They are fair. God is righteous. It's on. The point is on zero. God says. I'm putting you on one side. And he says.

If there's one sin. That you've ever committed. Can be put on the other sides of the scale. Bump it will go down against you.

In the days.

When Belshazzar lived. That was the end of it. Tonight.

You're finished. No opportunity. For repentance. Yes he may have had opportunities in his life. He'd seen the life of those who were true to God. Daniel and others. He'd ignored that. Lived for himself. And he exits.

[00:35:01] On his way to judgment. The accusation. Of the finger of God.

Meant that he was without excuse. How sad it would be.

If regular attenders.

At gospel meetings.

Who'd had far more opportunity than Belshazzar. To know.

Not only the justice of God. But the mercy of God. You see at the present time. It's not like Belshazzar. That you're ushered into eternity. And you're away. And no opportunity. Up till now.

The grace of God is available to you and me. And that in the light of the gift of God. [00:36:01] His beloved son. Who died at Calvary for our sins. God says oh yes. I must point the finger. You are weighed in the balances. You are found wanting. Oh but the cry of mercy is this. Trust Jesus as your saviour.

Forget about yourself. Realize there is a God with whom you have to do. Get the matter settled. While still you can.

I feel it right. At the close of this meeting. To draw your attention particularly. To the words that we are going to sing. Think about Belshazzar. Think about yourself.

Acknowledge your sins. Confess them before God. And accept what the Bible says. [00:37:03] The only way of salvation. Is to put your simple trust. In the Lord Jesus Christ. And accept that he loved you. And gave himself for you.

Simply trusting every day. Number 120.

Simply trusting every day.

Oh far better than the four B's.

Trust Christ as your saviour. Confess your sins.

Turn your back. On whatever has governed you in the past. And say from now on. Whatever happens. I'm going to put my simple trust. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Trusting through a stormy way. Even when my faith is small. Trusting Jesus. [00:38:02] That is all. Trusting as the moments fly. Trusting as the days go by. Trusting him whate'er befall. Trusting Jesus. That is all. 120.