

Daniel 5:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Belshazzar, whiles 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.

Analysis

Belshazzar, emboldened by wine, commands bringing the sacred vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem's temple—the most sacred objects from Israel's worship, now used for drunken revelry honoring Babylonian idols. This act represents ultimate sacrilege: profaning holy things, mocking the defeated nation's God, and demonstrating contemptuous pride. The timing is significant—this occurs during Persian siege of Babylon; the king's drunken feast while enemies approach demonstrates dangerous complacency. The wine's influence suggests impaired judgment, but Scripture presents this as revealing rather than excusing character: intoxication unleashes what's already present in the heart. This sacrilege proved the final provocation bringing immediate divine judgment (handwriting on the wall, v.5). It illustrates how mocking God's holiness, particularly when combined with covenant-breaking nations' pride, guarantees divine response.

Historical Context

Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's grandson (through Nabonidus who married into the royal line), serving as co-regent while his father Nabonidus campaigned in Arabia. The feast occurred in 539 BC as Cyrus's Persian-Median army besieged Babylon. The city's massive fortifications and substantial food stores made the

inhabitants feel secure—hence the king's feast while under siege. The temple vessels had remained in storage for decades (since 586 BC conquest). Bringing them out for pagan revelry represented deliberate sacrilege: Belshazzar knew their sacred significance, making their profanation conscious defiance. Historical sources (Herodotus, Xenophon) confirm Babylon's fall came suddenly during festivities, vindicating Daniel's account of divine judgment during the feast.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does wine-induced 'boldness' reveal rather than excuse sinful attitudes already present in the heart?
2. What does Belshazzar's sacrilege teach about the danger of mocking God's holiness?
3. Why does feasting while danger approaches demonstrate dangerous spiritual complacency?

Interlinear Text

בִּלְשַׁאצַּר	אָמַר	בְּטַעַם	חֶמֶךְ	לְהִיטִיָּה	לְמַאֲנֵי
Belshazzar	commanded	whiles he tasted	the wine	to bring	vessels
H1113	H560	H2942	H2562	H858	H3984
מִן	אֲבִי	נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר	הֵנִיֶּקֶת	וְכֶסֶף	וְזָהָב
	which his father	Nebuchadnezzar	had taken	and silver	the golden
H4481	H2	H5020	H5312	H3702	H1722
מֶלֶךְ	בָּהּ	וְיָשַׁת	בִּירוּשָׁלַם	דָּ	הַיְכָל
that the king	H0	might drink	which was in Jerusalem	H1768	the temple
H4430		H8355	H3390		H1965
וְלִחְנִיתָהּ:	שְׁגִלָּתָהּ	וְכִבְרֵכָהּ	וְהִי		
and his concubines	his wives	and his princes			
H3904	H7695	H7261			

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 1:2 (Kingdom): And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

2 Kings 24:13 (Kingdom): And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.

2 Kings 25:15 (Parallel theme): And the firepans, and the bowls, and such things as were of gold, in gold, and of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard took away.

Daniel 5:23 (Parallel theme): 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 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:

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