

# Daniel 5:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

## Analysis

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The servants execute Belshazzar's command, bringing the golden and silver vessels from Jerusalem's temple. The king, his lords, wives, and concubines drink from these sacred implements 'before the thousand' (v.1)—a public spectacle of sacrilege. The vessels' golden and silver composition emphasizes their value and sacred status; they weren't ordinary cups but specially consecrated implements for temple worship. Using them for drunken pagan revelry represented conscious desecration. This verse heightens the narrative tension: the sacrilege is fully executed before divine judgment strikes. It demonstrates how sin often reaches a point where divine patience expires—God endures much, but certain provocations (particularly mocking His holiness and profaning sacred things) trigger immediate response. The multiple participants (king, nobles, wives, concubines) show corporate involvement in the sacrilege, explaining why judgment falls on the entire kingdom (Babylon falls that very night).

## Historical Context

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The Jerusalem temple vessels had been Babylon's war trophies for nearly fifty years (since 586 BC). Keeping them stored showed some respect—they weren't destroyed or melted down but preserved as valuable plunder. Belshazzar's decision to bring them out and desecrate them represented escalation: moving from

conquest to contemptuous mockery. Ancient Near Eastern warfare typically showed some respect for captured deities' cult objects (fearing divine retribution). Belshazzar's action demonstrated either remarkable hubris or desperate bravado (facing Persian siege, perhaps trying to prove Babylon's gods superior to Judah's). Either way, it sealed Babylon's fate. The historical timing is precise: this feast occurred on the night Babylon fell to Cyrus's forces, fulfilling prophecies of sudden judgment (Isaiah 21:1-10, Jeremiah 50-51).

## Related Passages

## **Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment**

## **Romans 2:1 — Judging others**

## Study Questions

1. What does God's prolonged patience (fifty years storing the vessels) followed by sudden judgment teach about divine forbearance having limits?
2. How does public, corporate sin (involving king, nobles, wives, concubines) result in corporate judgment?
3. Why is profaning sacred things particularly provocative to God?

## Interlinear Text

