

**"In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus saith the Lord to me; make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck, And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and HIS SON, AND HIS SON'S SON, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him."  
(Jer. 27:1-7)**

And so it came to pass, in process of time, that the end of the seventy-year punitive period, wherein the Jews were to serve Babylon, drew nigh. Belshazzar the king, grandson of the great king Nebuchadnezzar, was somehow left in charge of things in Babylon, and decided to throw a big feast. Now, Beloved, feasts were not uncommon in old Babylon. But the "Great Feast of Belshazzar" – recorded at **Daniel, chapter 5** – was no common feast. Some say it coincided exactly with the end of the 70 years of the Jewish captivity – although unknown to the Babylonians, who never intended to release their Jewish captives. But God keeps perfect time, and we therefore read:

***"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old."*** (Dan. 5:30,31)

The Feast of Belshazzar was given in a spirit of contempt and defiance of God. The city of Babylon was in a state of siege. The armies of the Medes and Persians were encamped outside its walls. But Belshazzar felt secure, for the drawbridges had been drawn up, the brazen gates barred, and Belshazzar knew that the massive walls of the city were impregnable; and he was confident that his soldiers from their position on the lofty walls would be able to destroy any who should attempt to batter down the gates. The city also was provisioned for several years' siege, and with the tillable ground within the city walls its capture could be postponed indefinitely.

So Belshazzar, to show his contempt of the besieging army, gave this Great Feast. The character of the Feast is seen in the conduct of the guests. ***"They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron*** (reminding us of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream), ***of wood, and of stone."*** It was a Feast of licentiousness, drunkenness, and of idolatrous worship.

In the midst of the Feast, the King, Belshazzar, his brain befuddled with wine, and desirous of doing something unique, sensational, and more sacrilegious than before, surpassed all his previous acts of outrage against God by ordering to be brought into the Banqueting Hall the sacred vessels of gold and silver that Nebuchadnezzar his grandfather had taken from the Temple at Jerusalem sixty-eight years before. When these vessels were brought in, they were distributed among the drunken guests, and they drank wine from them to the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone; and thus desecrated those sacred vessels of the Lord. THAT WAS THE FATAL MOMENT, THE TURNING POINT OF THE FEAST. IT FILLED BABYLON'S CUP OF INIQUITY TO THE BRIM. HER DOOM WAS SEALED. Comes now the Finger of God; to wit:

***"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. 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."* (Dan. 5:5,6)**

Note; Beloved. No flash of supernatural light, nor deafening peal of thunder, startled the drunken revellers, thus announcing the interference of God in their impious carousal. But out of the "sleeve of the night" the Hand of God appeared, and with its finger – ***“THE FINGER OF GOD”*** – silently wrote, in mystic characters, on the wall over against the lighted Candlestick, where it could readily be seen by all the assembled guests, THE DOOM OF BABYLON. The fact that the writing remained indelibly fixed on the wall showed that it was no hallucination of an intoxicated man's fancy. It sobered the King, and filled him with fear, and he at once called for the “Wise Men” of Babylon to interpret its meaning.

***"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 shew 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."* (Dan. 5:7-9)**

Again the "Wise Men" of Babylon fail in their office, as they failed in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. (Dan. 2:1-13.) They could not interpret the writing. Whether it was in a language with which they were not familiar we are not told. The true reason was that it was a message from GOD, and it takes a ***"MAN OF GOD"*** to interpret the WORDS OF GOD. The failure of the "Wise Men" to interpret the handwriting greatly troubled the King, and his countenance was changed. All the mirth and hilarity left it, and it presented the aspect of fear and terror. So marked was the change that the assembled lords were astonished, for they saw that the "handwriting on the wall" was not a part of the program, arranged by the King to entertain them, but was something supernatural and unexpected, and that the King was not needlessly alarmed. At once the boisterousness of the Feast was changed to cries of terror, and so great was the uproar and commotion the Queen came in to find out what it was all about. It is hardly likely that the Queen mentioned was the wife of Belshazzar. If he was married his wife's place was with him at the Feast. Neither is it likely that the Queen was the widow of Nebuchadnezzar. She probably was dead. Otherwise she would be very old, and indifferent to such an occasion.

It would appear therefore that the Queen mentioned was the wife and Queen of King Nabonidus, who was still the "First Ruler" of the land, though away at the time, and who had a perfect right to be living in the Palace at that time, and who as a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar would still have a fresh and vivid memory of the wonderful part Daniel had taken in the affairs of the Empire during her father's reign. This view is confirmed by the use of the word "father," instead of "grandfather," in the Queen calling Nebuchadnezzar the "father" of Belshazzar, is in accord with the usage of Old Testament times, and was made necessary because of the Semitic language there are no words for "grandfather," or "grandson."

***"Now the Queen, by reason of the words of the King and his lords, came into the Banquet House; and the Queen spake and said, O King, live forever; let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed; THERE IS A MAN IN THY KINGDOM IN WHOM IS THE SPIRIT OF THE HOLY GODS (Note: Blessed is the nation wherein dwells such a man; Cursed is the nation where no such man dwells.); and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the Gods, was found in him; whom the King Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the King I say thy father, made Master of the magicians, Astrologers, Chaldeans, and Soothsayers; forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard 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." (Dan. 5:10-12)***

For many years, Daniel had been an important figure in the powerful Babylonian government helping it to run smoothly. And when the kingdom of Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians, on the night of Belshazzar's Feast, Daniel was immediately hired by the Medes and Persians and helped run their government smoothly for many more years. Amazing. Probably unique, unequalled in human history. Listen:

***"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old. It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three presidents; OF WHOM DANIEL WAS FIRST; that the princes might give account unto them, and the king should have no damage. THEN THIS DANIEL WAS PREFERRED ABOVE THE PRESIDENTS AND PRINCES, BECAUSE AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT WAS IN HIM; AND THE KING THOUGHT TO SET HIM OVER THE WHOLE REALM." (Dan. 5:30,31; 6:1-3)***

The story of Daniel, from first to last, was truly remarkable; including what might be called supporting characters, since I am writing this sermon during the week running up to the Academy Awards, when Oscars are passed out to winners. The Queen Mother was truly a winner. Beloved, have you ever seen such ingrates as those Babylonians? After all Daniel had done for those people. Sometimes I think ingratitude is the most disgusting sin of all. The Savior once cleansed ten lepers, and only one returned to give thanks. Whereupon the Lord Jesus branded all ingrates with these words; to wit: *"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" (Lk. 17:17.)*

***"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off; and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.***

**And Jesus answering said, WERE THERE NOT TEN CLEANSED? BUT WHERE ARE THE NINE? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."**  
(Lk. 17:12-19)

Likewise, when Daniel had full knowledge that his vicious enemies had fraudulently obtained the signature of King Darius on a law making it a capital crime for Daniel to continue to pray to and THANK HIS GOD – we read these beautiful words from the same heart that purposed that he would not defile himself some 88 years ago; to wit:

**"Wherefore, King Darius signed the writing and the decree (which could not be altered or changed according to the law of the Medes and Persians). NOW WHEN DANIEL KNEW THAT THE WRITING WAS SIGNED, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and GAVE THANKS before his God, AS HE DID AFORETIME (!)"**  
(Dan. 6:8-10)

Notice, Beloved, the important place thanksgiving had in the golden life of Daniel – as with all the saints. To wit:

**"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, THE FRUIT OF OUR LIPS GIVING THANKS TO HIS NAME."(Heb. 13:15)**

Beloved, we have so very much to be thankful for, that only a hateful ingrate could go around being grumpy all day. It is a great sin not to rejoice in the Lord from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

**"O GIVE THANKS unto the Lord; for He is good. O GIVE THANKS unto the God of Gods; for His mercy endureth forever. To Him who alone doeth great wonders; for His mercy endureth for ever."(Psa. 136:1-4)**

**"I will offer to thee the SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING, and will call upon the name of the Lord."(Psa. 116:17)**

**"O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever."**  
(Psa. 107:1)

**"Praise ye the Lord. O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD; for he is good: for His mercy endureth for ever."(Psa. 106:1)**

**"O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD; call upon His Name; make known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him; talk ye of all His wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord, and His strength; seek His face evermore. Remember His marvellous works that He hath done; His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth."**  
(Psa. 105:1-5)

**"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen; Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and THANKSGIVING, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever."(Rev. 7:9-12)**

I love you. Amen.