

A Night in a Palace — Admonition.

Daniel 5.

Night Scenes of Scripture

Seventeen Bible Night Scenes, illustrating and elucidating various truths of the Gospel.

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Chapter 13

A Night in a Palace — Admonition.

God always warns before He judges. He is giving you your warning tonight, friend. You will do well to be wiser than Belshazzar. He had his warning, but did not heed it; nevertheless he had it. Had he heeded it, I think it might have ended differently with him, because God, although He does judge, loves mercy. Scripture calls judgment "his strange work" (Isa. 28: 21). He loves mercy, He loves blessing. He loves to bless the soul. Do you suppose, friend, that God wants to judge you? No, it is the last thing in His heart; but, if you refuse to be blessed by Him, you must be judged.

Now of all the night scenes in Scripture I think this in the fifth of Daniel one of the most suggestive, and striking, because it shows the way in which God can step into a scene where man is doing his very best to make himself happy without God, and what the effect of the intrusion is. Here we see Belshazzar doing his best to insult and defy Him. And mark this, my friend, Belshazzar is not the only man who has openly insulted God in the way that this chapter describes. It is a scene of the most daring impiety the eye could possibly rest upon, and when Belshazzar defies God, He as it were rises, and says, We will see who is the greater. Friend, if you are on the road of impiety, sin, carelessness, and opposition to God and His grace, you had better learn the lesson from this chapter, that the man who resists God always gets the worst of it. What God wants is your salvation. He wants your blessing. He desires to bring you into touch with Himself in the day of His grace, for, I repeat, judgment is "his strange work."

Now look at this scene. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand" (ver. 1). It must have been a marvellous assembly. The banquet took place in one of the many palaces which adorned the city regarded as the mistress of the earth. Babylon stood on a broad plain, and was exactly square. Its walls ran fifteen miles in each direction, were 300 feet high, 75 feet broad, and pierced by a hundred brazen gates, with lintels and sideposts of brass. The broad river Euphrates divided the city into two parts as it ran through its midst, the river banks being faced with burnt brick, and brazen gates closed the

streets which ran at right angles to the river and dipped into the water. Brazen gates, dipping low, also guarded the opening in the walls through which the river glided. Thus defended, Babylon thought herself impregnable. It was a city where all the gaiety, the godlessness, and the luxury that man could possibly surround himself with were gathered together. The king and the inhabitants thought themselves proof against every power, either heavenly or earthly. But they were mistaken, for they had forgotten God, and He had said by one servant, one hundred and fifty years before, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (Isa. 21: 9); and a hundred years later had predicted the manner of the fall: "One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end" (Jer. 51: 31).

Little did Belshazzar the king regard God, or trouble his head with His predictions, — on the eve of fulfilment — the day that he "made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." History says it was an annual feast. Of that I am not certain, but Scripture tells us that it was a feast marked by daring impiety on the part of "Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine." Many a man has been led to ruin through wine. Whisky will do quite as well. Many a man, many a woman, has made his, or her bed in hell, if not through wine, through whisky. Ah, friend! are you a whisky-lover — a winelover? Let Belshazzar warn you. There is no pravity to which the soul will not descend that gets under the influence of strong drink. Its victims worship it, while it damns them. I met a woman a little while ago, in this town, in a stair in College Street, as I passed up to see a sick child. I was led to speak to her about her soul. She listened quietly for a minute or two, and then when I said, "Would you not like to go to heaven?" she nervously said, "Is there any whisky there?" "No," I replied, "and there is no water in hell." She was perfectly sober when she spoke, but it was a revelation as to what governed her. My negative surprised her evidently, and the statement as to hell startled her. Good would it be for every lover of strong drink if it were borne in mind.

"Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father (or grandfather) 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, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone" (vers. 2-4), and they thought they had done bravely, doubtless. But what had they done? I will tell you. Belshazzar had flung down the gauntlet before the eye of God. The bringing into that feast of the golden vessels, which were taken from "the temple of the house of God," was tantamount to saying to Jehovah: "My gods are better than you. My gods helped the men who took your golden vessels, and brought them here." That is what he meant. These golden vessels, brought from the house of the Lord, in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, were exhibited as trophies of the Babylonian victory over Jehovah's people, and therefore over Jehovah.

But who was the king of Babylon? What was this Nebuchadnezzar but the whip that the Lord had selected and used to chastise His guilty and lawbreaking people Israel. A hundred years before, He had said: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so. . . . Wherefore it

shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (Isa. 10: 5, 6, 7, 12). God raised up Nebuchadnezzar for that purpose. He was the head of gold in the remarkable figure which you read of in the second chapter of this Book of Daniel, and God used him to punish His chosen earthly people, who had departed from Him. All men wondered when they learned that Jehovah had allowed His temple to be razed to the ground, and His holy vessels to be carried to Babylon.

The lesson to be learned from this is, that God will never be a party to hypocrisy, nor will He maintain His people in a false condition. He knows how to take care of His own glory, even though His people utterly fail, so He allows the vessels of His earthly sanctuary to be carried into captivity; but when Belshazzar, intoxicated with wine, flaunts in the face of Jehovah these trophies of victory, as a sort of indication that the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone were those who had helped in the victories, and won these trophies, and thus, you see, insulted God to His very face, then God resents the insult.

Ah, my careless, worldly, sin-loving friend, you may not defy God in the same way perhaps as Belshazzar. You may not be running full tilt against God in exactly the same way as this impious king did, but are you not following dangerously near in his track?

Without doubt the wine had begun to circulate, and had inflamed Belshazzar's mind ere he gave the order that wrought his ruin. "They that be drunken, are drunken in the night," we are told (1 Thess. 5: 7), and that this was a night scene is unmistakable from the statement that "in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote;" and also that "in that night was Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans slain" (vers. 5, 30). In the middle of the festivity, when all is gay and bright, and hilarity and impiety are at their height, all of a sudden God steps in. Now every one knows the utter collapse of everything worldly when God comes in. Bring the Lord into a scene of worldliness, and what is the effect? He spoils it. Solemn thought! It is the effect of sin, and the answer of conscience regarding God as an intruder. How does He intrude here? "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." It was only part of a hand, but the king saw it. The light of the candlestick shone on it, the eye of the impious monarch was arrested by it, and in a moment that man's conscience awoke with the sense, the eye of God is upon me. Do not forget, my friends, that God has His eye upon you too.

Belshazzar recognises the hand of God as he sees those fingers writing his doom on the plaister of his own palace. What is the result? "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" (ver. 6). He is frightened. His conscience is reached. It is a blessed thing when a man's conscience gets divinely reached. Has your conscience ever been reached? Come, friend, now frankly and honestly own, has your conscience ever been reached? And have you ever been convicted of your sins against God? Oh, you say, we are all poor sinners. I do not call you a poor sinner. God calls you a guilty sinner. Possibly you are a hardened sinner, even an impious, sacrilegious sinner. Oh, but you say, I have not sinned like Belshazzar. Are you sure of that?

Belshazzar made light of the Lord. So have you, my friend, and your guilt is great, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Scripture says.

You may not have been mixed up in a scene of revelry and devilry as manifestly as Belshazzar and his guests were, but "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27: 19). The devil was the spirit that ruled that feast. They were all pleasing themselves, but the devil was behind them all. You have been pleasing yourself, and the devil has been working behind it all, for Satan is the god of this world. Are you aware how Satan has ruled you, governed you? The man who does his own will is in the service of Satan. The man that does his own will is but the property, and the slave of Satan. Therefore our Lord said, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, *his goods are in peace*" (Luke 11: 21). The strong man is the devil; his armour "the pleasures of sin"; his palace the world; and his goods sinners in their sins. Possibly you do not believe that. I do. Of course the devil will not let you believe this solemn fact if he can help it. He keeps his goods in peace — false peace — till it be too late to get God's peace. Belshazzar pleased himself, and so have you. So did I until Christ met and saved me. That is what He wants to do for you. Will you let Him?

The king saw the part of the hand, and his conscience, although scared by depravity, was reached, for the moment. What was written on the plaister, was perfectly plain, since it was written in Chaldee characters, but the king nevertheless did not understand the import. Blinded by the god of this world, whose utter slave he was — as is every man till God illuminates his heart — writing in his own language failed to convey to his mind any definite sense of what was meant, though he trembled before the hand that wrote his doom. He felt instinctively that One whom he had impiously defied had him in hand.

God was giving Belshazzar his warning ere He judged him. He does the same now, in the day of His grace, ere judgment arrives. He is on the pathway of blessing now, in the gospel, and is saving, not judging. His blessed Son has lived on earth, accomplished redemption, and gone up into glory; and the Holy Ghost has come down to tell the tale that God is now seeking to bring men to believe in, receive, and exalt Him. That is what God is doing now. judgment is not His work at this moment. He warns men that He may awaken and save them.

I believe God is giving you your warning just now. I wish I saw your "countenance change." I have often seen such a change in a meeting like this; many a careless, worldly, sin-loving man has come into a meeting like this, and the arrow of conviction has entered his conscience, and he has learned he is a sinner on the road to hell, and his countenance has changed. The night I was converted — and I am not ashamed to admit it — my countenance changed so much that a lady labelled me as a man of five-and-forty, when I was not half that age. Why? Because I looked serious; and thank God, I felt it. I was a convicted sinner — an awakened man — an anxious soul — a man in the travail of the new birth. I saw I was a man hurrying on the road to hell, and that if God cast me into hell, it would be a perfectly righteous action. God grant that you, young man, and you, young woman, may have your "countenance changed" and your thoughts troubled. I should like to see it. Think of the lost opportunities of your life; look at the whole period of guilt and sin in your history of rebellion against God.

Little wonder that Belshazzar's "thoughts troubled him." In a moment the past came up, with its memories of godlessness; the future loomed darkly before him. The eye and hand of God were on him, and he knew it, and "the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." He was profoundly moved, deeply alarmed, and thoroughly wretched, for the moment. Have you ever in your history passed through an experience of this kind, when your countenance changed, your thoughts troubled you, and your knees knocked one against the other? Yes, God was speaking to Belshazzar then, and He is speaking to you tonight. I am certain He is speaking the voice of warning to you, my friend, and your eternal destiny may hang on this night's meeting.

So alarmed was Belshazzar, that, forgetful of kingly dignity, in his anxiety to understand the writing, he "cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers" (ver. 7). There were plenty of them in Babylon, so they were brought in. "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." Why the third ruler? Because Belshazzar was the second ruler. His father was in reality the king, but he was not in Babylon at that moment, and Belshazzar was in joint kingship with him.

The king got no help from his wise men. "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" (ver. 8). A spirit of deep sleep was on them; every eye seemed closed to the truth, and the offer of the highest reward produced no effect. "Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished" (ver. 9). Tremendous was the effect made upon this godless man. We rejoice when sinners are impressed, aroused, troubled, and yet more deeply troubled. The devil, however, is always keen and anxious to get these impressions removed, and in the case before us, I do not think the effect was long-lasting. It is fear, not of God, but of the consequences of sin, that sometimes affects men in this way — fear produced on a deathbed — pure fear of hell, and damnation.

But, you say, some men turn to the Lord on their deathbed. I do not deny it. But who gives you the assurance that after you have spent your life in the service of sin, and after you have lived only for this world, to the utter neglect of eternity, that you will be able to turn to the Lord at the twelfth hour, and have all settled up. Take warning, Belshazzar died that night, and you may die this night.

At this juncture, in the midst of the still increasing alarm of the king, and the bewilderment of his lords, a friend comes into the banqueting-hall in the person of the queen (the queen-mother most probably, see vers. 2 and 10). She had evidently taken no part in the feast, but "by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet-house." Clearly she kept aloof from this scene of sacrilege and devilry. She was outside it, and there was one more outside than herself, the man of whom she can now speak. She comes and says to the king in ver. 10, "O king, *live for ever.*" What a delusive wish! Poor man, he died that night. And you, my friend, may not have many hours before you. Death, that terrible archer, has his arrow fitted to the bow tonight, and ere the morning that arrow may have sped its way, found a target in thy heart, and the morning light may find thee gone.

But three days have rolled away, since a young man came to my house, in hot haste, and said, "Can you come, and see my father at once." I went, and saw him. He had been ill but a few days. I found the mark of death on the old man's face, and they asked me how long he would live. "Twenty-four hours at the longest," was all I could say. He was dead in eighteen hours, but, thank God, he was a believer and went to glory. Friend, if you die now in your sins, you will go down into eternal judgment, spite of some friend whispering to you, "Live for ever." Belshazzar died that night. Does he live for ever? He exists for ever, but we have no reason whatever to think that Belshazzar was a saved man. I believe he earned his bed in hell, and went there. He was awakened, and he was impressed, but he was not converted. I will prove that shortly.

The queen-mother now tries to calm her son's anxiety — just as the devil would calm an awakened sinner today. She says: "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; and in the days of thy father (or grandfather) 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. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake, and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom, is found in thee. And now the wise men, the astrologers, 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: and I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom" (vers. 11-16).

Evidently Belshazzar knew nothing about Daniel. He had quite forgotten, even if he had ever heard that Nebuchadnezzar, his grandfather, had exalted him to the place next himself; and placed him as "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. . . . Daniel sat in the gate of the king" (Dan. 2: 48, 49). Godless men do not like, and usually do not know godly men. Godless men are not in touch with godly men; and therefore Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, did not know the man whom his grandfather had placed at the head of affairs only a few years before. This fact speaks volumes as to Belshazzar. Great as might be the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, he had recognised the moral worth of the captive Daniel, as his exaltation to be second ruler in the kingdom showed, but his depraved grandson had ignored his very existence. But Daniel was there all the time, separate, devoted to God, having His mind, and ready to reveal it at the fitting moment.

This scene has been often repeated in the history of the souls of men. When eternity confronts an ungodly man, he resorts to the godly man, for light, help, and comfort if possible. This proves that godliness is profitable in this life, and in the one to come. Depend upon it, the godly man has the best of it. It is very likely, my unsaved friend, you live quite close to a godly man, one who could help you to apprehend the truth, and yet you know nothing about him really.

You give him a wide berth, close quarters is the very thing you avoid. You will want him yet, that Godfearing, holy, separate man, who lives for Christ, and labours to present Him to needy souls, and win weary hearts for Him. The careless sinner does not like such neighbours. But what a wonderful thing it is that God has His witnesses even in Babylon. You should thank God if He has put one of His servants near you, who will speak faithfully, and tell you the truth plainly.

Such was Daniel, and the dissolute king had to admit it as he says: "I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. . . . And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts." Yes, the truth of God is unveiled by the servants of God. He reveals, and they proclaim the truth. You need not have the slightest doubt of your bourne, my unsaved friend: it is an absolutely divine certainty that unless you become converted to God, and washed in the precious blood of Jesus, that you are bound for the lake of fire. I said this to a man lately who sent for me. It was the old story. His heated face, and dirty tongue, told me that long and deep potations of whisky had brought him once more to his bed. I said: "You have only just to go on as you are going to land in hell for ever. You do not need to move an eyelid, just go on as you are going." "I do not want to go there," he replied. Probably you do not want to go there either, but it is well that you should know that you do not need to sin extraordinarily, or commit some terrible evil to find yourself there. You are perhaps a moral, respectable, outwardly religious, Bible-reading man or woman, but if you are not converted, if you are not born of God, you need have no doubt whatever that you are on the direct road thither. You must go through the new birth to escape it. The scripture dissolves every doubt on that point: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The man who dissolves doubts is now before the king, who offers him all manner of rewards, saying, "Now, if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom." Daniel replies as becomes the occasion: "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." But before doing so he gives the king a most solemn and bitter admonition, as he briefly recounts Nebuchadnezzar's history, and God's dealings with him, and then charges home on his conscience the gravity of his own indifference on the one hand, and his reckless insults against God on the other.

He says to Belshazzar: "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, 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 set up; and whom he would he put down." (Thus God gave his grandfather universal power.) "But when his heart was lifted up" (that is always the way when men get power, their hearts are lifted up), "and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him." (Dan. 4 tells us of the incident where his reason, clearly for the time being, is taken away.) "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: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will" (vers. 18-21). Nebuchadnezzar had to take his place amongst the beasts of

the field. These have no idea of God. Man has, for he has a conscience in him. The great difference between a man and a beast is that the former recognises God, the latter does not, but "man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49: 20). The unconverted man does not know Him; be he ever so learned or intelligent, he has no true knowledge of God. Nebuchadnezzar, as his term of judgment expires, lifts up his eyes to heaven. His intelligence is returning. A beast looks down, never up, in a moral sense. Man, if conscious of his relationship to God, as a creature looks up to the One from whom he derives all. By this painful process Nebuchadnezzar learned to know the most high God. He got to know His supremacy.

And you too, my friend, have to learn the supremacy of the most high God, and woe betide the man that Sets himself up against God. He will yet learn by bitter experience that the most high God rules in the kingdom of men. Belshazzar knew all that, and what effect had it upon him? "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, *hast not humbled thine heart*, though thou knewest all this. 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" (vers. 22, 23).

What a solemn indictment! And possibly you exclaim, What a fool was this besotted monarch to be thus guilty of such open impiety, as regards God, and to be given up to idolatry! Yes, he was worshipping gods who neither saw nor knew; but whom do you worship? You say, I go to church. Granted, but whom do you worship? Who is your God? I should not wonder if bank-notes were among the gods which you worship. They govern you, and whatever governs a man is really his god. Not forty-eight hours ago, at a dispensary, a young man told me that he was a "bookmaker." "A poor business," I remarked; "do you make money?" "Sometimes." "And when you do not, you work, I suppose." "Oh, no, I go to drink." "And you are very happy?" Happy! His face was a picture of misery. No! he was wretched. "Have you a mother?" "Yes." "Have you seen her lately?" "Not for over two years." "Have you written to her?" "No." "Broken her heart?" "Yes, I believe I have." "Man," said I, "get to the Lord, get your soul saved, and then go and bind up your mother's broken heart."

Do you think money-making means happiness? Never! Money was this youth's god. And it may be yours — gods of gold — or silver even. Perhaps yours is a pleasure god. Others with their whole heart and soul live for music. They have a musical god. Possibly whisky is your god. God save you from it. Ah! Belshazzar was not the only man that bowed down to idols.

Now, mark, behind all these varied idols stands he who is the god of this world — Satan. The man who is doing his own will is simply doing Satan's, and is in his service. Liberty, without God, is only to do the devil's will, and his work, and in the contempt which you in your way, and Belshazzar in his, have shown for God, the working not of your mind but of Satan's is manifest. But the king had willingly yielded himself to be the devil's tool, so that a controversy between him and God existed, hence he hears from Daniel's lips, "And the God in whose hand thy breath is" (mark that), "and whose are all thy ways, *hast thou not glorified.*" A solemn, a grave charge, but absolutely true. My friend, is this true of you too? Take care. God gives you your warning

tonight. It may be your last one. "Thy breath" too is in His hand. The little string of life has but to be broken, and you pass from time into eternity. I repeat God is warning you, and giving you an opportunity tonight to get right with Him. Embrace it.

There was a man who sat in this hall once, twice, and thrice, hearing the gospel. On the first occasion I happened to meet him at the door, as he left, and spoke to him about his soul's salvation. He replied, "I am not going in for this sort of thing just yet." I met him another night, and he said, "It will be all right, let me go, do not be put about on my account; I do not mind hearing you preach," and he departed. I saw him the third night. He came each time with a godly coachman whom I knew. Again I asked him if he were decided for Christ, but he said, "It will be all right yet; good-night, sir." I did not see him again, and some months after, meeting the coachman who had brought him, I asked if he were yet unsaved. "Have you not heard what happened to him?" was the reply. "No," I said; "what has happened?" "Do you not remember he was here one Sunday, and you spoke to him? Well, the next day while driving his master, the horses slipped, and pulled him off the driving box. He fell, striking his head on the curb stone, was stunned, and carried to the Infirmary. He never spoke again, and died within forty-eight hours." God had given that man his warning. I fear he heeded it not. Be wiser than he, for "the God in whose hand thy breath is" may cut you off as suddenly. You had better bow at once and let Jesus save you.

But what about this writing that king Belshazzar saw? Daniel now says to the king, "Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." And what did these words mean? They were only four Chaldean words, and at least one was repeated twice. MENE, meant numbered. The king knew the word meant numbered, and that TEKEL meant weighed, and UPHARSIN divided. Yes, numbered, weighed, and divided. What has that to do with me? the king might have said. He was soon told. "This is the interpretation of the thing: "MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." Your history is over. You have got to the full length of your tether. God has numbered thy kingdom on earth, and finished it. Belshazzar heard this, but I do not think he believed it.

"TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." That was true of Belshazzar, and it is true of you and me too, my friend. It is true of every one. Only One there is of whom it was not true, and that was the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He was put into God's balances and was found full weight. The Holy One — the true One — the devoted One — the One, who loved God with His whole heart, and soul and mind, the man Christ Jesus has been put in the balances, and has been found full weight. You and I have been found wanting. The things that we ought to have done, we have left undone, and the things we ought not to have done, we have done. That is man.

If that be the case — and you have found it out — what is to be done? You will need to repudiate your own works and rest on Christ. I have found a substitute — the blessed Saviour, who died for me — who gave Himself for my sins. What a wonderful thing it is to know Christ as your Saviour, and find all you need in Him.

Last of all, Belshazzar hears this: "PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." At that very moment the Medes and the Persians were besieging Babylon.

History lets us know that for a very long time they had been beleaguering the city, which rested in its fancied security. The king thought it could not be taken. But God had prophesied its fall, and now announces the fact. And what takes place? Does Belshazzar bow down in repentance? Alas, no! When he hears the interpretation of the writing, we read, "Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom" (ver. 29). He has been saying that my kingdom is coming to an end, says the king, but I do not believe it. I do not believe my kingdom is over. Blow the trumpet, and put a gold chain round Daniel's neck, and proclaim that I determine that he shall be the next man to me in the kingdom — my kingdom is still to go on. So thought he, and therefore so he acted. But we read, "In that night was Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans slain" (ver. 30). Did I not say that I judged he was not converted? I did. The man was clearly infidel, spite of the plain warning he had, and the testimony of God in the writing on the wall. And how many men are infidel in this hall tonight? The proof of his infidelity was this. He proclaimed that Daniel was to be the third ruler in the kingdom, though he had just heard that his kingdom was finished. He did not believe it. But it came true. How did it come about?

History tells us that Babylon's walls had at intervals lofty towers to the number of two hundred and fifty, whence the Chaldeans could watch their foe, and from these towers they saw no evidence of danger. The foe outside, however, had done a very simple thing. The river Euphrates, as we have already seen, ran right through the centre of the city, guarded by great brazen gates, so that no one could get into it by water. It was a very simple little artifice that Cyrus, the Persian leader, adopted. The Euphrates makes a bend near Babylon, so Cyrus cut a new bed for the waters a few miles up, and diverted their course. He made an immense canal forming the chord of the bend. When darkness had come on the sluices were opened, and the river turned into this new direction. As a consequence the bed of the river was practically dry as far as regards Babylon. The Persian troops marched quietly along that bed, and under the brazen gates, and got possession of the city. Then was fulfilled what Jeremiah has told us, a messenger ran "to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end" (Jer. 51: 31). In the midst of this feast, which was the object of admiration of everybody who was careless and heedless, the hosts of the foe came in, and the news reached the king that his city was taken, and immediately the feast was broken up. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." His bloody corpse, on the very floor of the banqueting house, should be a warning note to every sinner in this hall tonight not to despise the message of God.

Unconverted one, could Belshazzar speak tonight, I know what he would say: "Men and women of Edinburgh, do not trifle with God. Sinners of Edinburgh, do not disregard the warning of God. I did. I was a fool for my pains. He warned me. I believed Him not, nor heeded Him; and I died that night in my unbelief." I believe he was damned. I know that you will be too, if you do not turn to God. God is giving you your warning, my friend. Let me implore you to accept it, and turn to the Lord this night, for "he, that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. 29: 1).

Where will you spend eternity?

This question comes to you and me!

Tell me, what shall your answer be —

Where will you spend eternity?

Eternity! eternity!

Where will you spend eternity?