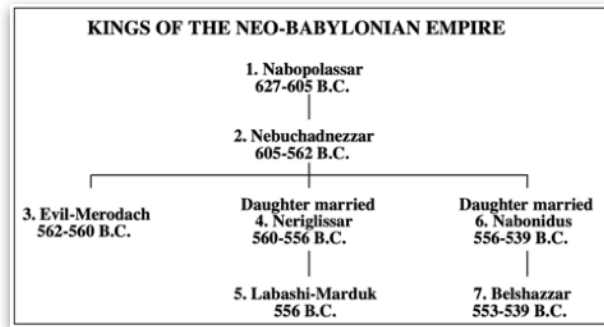


DANIEL 5 | *Belshazzar's Feast*

Belshazzar's Blasphemy

1 King Belshazzar¹ made a great feast² for a thousand of his lords and drank wine³ in front of the thousand.⁴ 2 Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels⁵ of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father/predecessor had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem⁶ be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.⁷ 3 Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank wine⁸ and praised⁹ the gods of gold and



¹ Da 7 and 8 describe events that took place during the reign of Belshazzar, co-ruler of the Neo-Babylonian empire, who came to power nine years (553 bc) after Nebuchadnezzar died (561 bc). Chronologically, Da 5 (539 bc) takes place after Da 7 (553 bc) and Da 8 (551 bc). By the time of this chapter, Daniel already knows the 70 years of exile are just about up (Da 9:2) and that the Medo-Persians, under Cyrus (Is 44:28, 45:1), will prevail (Da 8:20). It's just a matter of time. He interprets prophecy literally. Daniel is now in his 80s. Belshazzar is acting king during the frequent and prolonged absences of his father, Nabonidus, to Arabia. The "zar" at the end of Nebuchadnezzar, Belteshazzar, and Belshazzar may relate to "Caesar" and "Tsar."

² This feast takes place as the invading Medes and Persians, led by Gubaru, are just outside the city walls. Belshazzar is either totally confident in the security of his capital or has totally given up and is enjoying himself for one last night.

³ **Pr 31:4** 4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink....

⁴ In the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace, archeologists have uncovered a large throne room 19 metres wide and 58 metres long which probably was the scene of this banquet.

⁵ The vessels haven't been mentioned since Da 1:2. Great literary craftsmanship. These vessels had been used in the Jerusalem temple to hold wine symbolising blood atonement (Nu 7:1). Cyrus will soon send the vessels back to Jerusalem (Ezr 1:7-11). **2 Ch 36:7** 7 Nebuchadnezzar... carried part of the vessels of the house of Yahweh to Babylon and put them in his palace in Babylon. **2 Ch 36:18-19** 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. **Da 1:2** 2 And Yahweh gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into [Nebuchadnezzar's] hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.

⁶ Of all the vessels in Babylon, why did Belshazzar choose the ones from Jerusalem for this particular feast?

⁷ Belshazzar insults the God of Israel by drinking from these vessels, in an act of deliberate blasphemy. Nebuchadnezzar never did so.

⁸ How drunk are Belshazzar and his guests? If they are quite drunk, they must sober up pretty quickly! **Is 22:12-14** 12 In that day the Lord Yahweh of hosts called for weeping and mourning, for baldness and wearing sackcloth, 13 and behold, joy and gladness, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. 14 Yahweh of hosts has revealed himself in my ears: Surely this iniquity will not be atoned for you until you die, says the Lord Yahweh of hosts.

⁹ Cf. Da 4:34, 37, where Nebuchadnezzar *praises* the God of Israel.

silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.¹⁰

Writing on the Wall



Rembrandt, “Belshazzar’s Feast” (1635-38), National Gallery, London

5 Immediately¹¹ the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. 6 Then the king’s colour changed, and his thoughts alarmed him.¹² His limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. 7 The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon,

Whoever reads this writing and shows me its interpretation shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.¹³

¹⁰ **Re 9:20** 20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk....

¹¹ **Da 4:33** 33 *Immediately* the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. Unlike his grandfather, Belshazzar does not get a one-year warning. His arrogance surpasses that of his predecessor.

¹² **Da 4:5** 5 I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. **Da 7:28** 28 As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.

¹³ Nabonidus is first ruler, and Belshazzar himself is second ruler. Who will be third ruler?

8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read¹⁴ the writing or make known to the king the interpretation.¹⁵ 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his colour changed, and his lords were perplexed.

The Queen Mother's Advice

10 The queen [mother],¹⁶ because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall. And the queen mother declared,

O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your colour change. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods/God (אֱלֹהִים).¹⁷ In the days of your father/predecessor, light (נְהִירוֹ), understanding (שְׂכִלְתָּנוּ), and wisdom (חֵכְמָה) like the wisdom of the gods (אֱלֹהִים) were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, 12 because an excellent spirit (רִיחָ), knowledge (מְנַדָּע), and understanding (שְׂכִלְתָּנוּ) to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems (קָטַר) were found in this Daniel,¹⁸ whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called,¹⁹ and he will show the interpretation.

Daniel Summoned

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel,

You are that Daniel,²⁰ one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah.²¹ 14 I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods/God is in you, and that light, understanding, and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15 Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. 16 But I have

¹⁴ *Read* and *interpret* are repeated together five times (vv. 7-8, 15-16, 25-26). It seems Daniel is the only one who can read the message. Perhaps *Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin* is an Aramaic translation of what he saw.

¹⁵ As in Da 2 and 4, the wisdom of the world is totally unable to solve its major problems or to understand the present or the future. **Ge 41:8** 8 So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

¹⁶ She is probably Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, Adad-guppi, the wife of Nabonidus.

¹⁷ Da 4:8.

¹⁸ Daniel is a blast from the past, a relic from his father's day. The queen knows and uses Daniel's Jewish name, which is significant. Daniel's ethnicity is important to the story. **Da 1:20** 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, [Nebuchadnezzar] found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

¹⁹ Daniel is about 80 years old and has retired from active public service.

²⁰ Ironic. Daniel's name means "God is my judge."

²¹ This detail is key to the story. Belshazzar recognises Daniel's origin and knows where the vessels are from (vv. 2-3). **Da 2:25** 25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation.

heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Daniel's Interpretation

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king,

Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another.²² Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.²³

18 O king, the Most High God²⁴ gave Nebuchadnezzar your father/predecessor kingship, greatness, glory, and majesty. 19 And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive. Whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly,²⁵ he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. 21 He was driven from among the children of mankind, his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven,²⁶ until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he desires.²⁷

22 And you his son/successor, Belshazzar, have not humbled (פִּלַּשׁ) your heart, though you knew all this,²⁸ 23 but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven

²² Awesome response. Daniel doesn't need a thing from Belshazzar. **Ge 14:22-23** 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I would not take a thread, a sandal strap, or anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich. **2 Ki 5:16** 16 But he said, As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it, but he refused. **Mt 4:8-10** 8 Again, the devil took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me. 10 Then Jesus said to him, Be gone, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.

²³ Viewing history through the lens of the Bible, we can interpret history better than anyone.

²⁴ This title for Yahweh continues to be repeated (Da 4:2, 34).

²⁵ Da 4:29-30.

²⁶ Da 4:31-33.

²⁷ Da 4:34-37. This verse is the primary theme of Daniel. Jesus is the one whom the Most High God desires to set over the kingdom of mankind.

²⁸ It is wise to learn from the mistakes of our parents, grandparents, and predecessors. Belshazzar has free will. He can humble his heart if he wants to. God doesn't need to give us a personal warning about the consequences of unbelief and sin. He's already warned us through the examples in Scripture. **1 Co 10:6** 6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we [believers] might not desire evil as they did. **1 Co 10:11** 11 Now these things happened to [Israel] as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. "One of the most amazing spectacles in this world is how little men really profit from the judgments of God" (Charles Feinberg, 69). "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (George Santayana).

(מְרֵא־שִׁמְיָא). And the vessels of his house [in Jerusalem] have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them.²⁹ And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see, hear, or know,³⁰ but the God in whose hand is your breath (נְשָׁמָה)³¹ and whose are all your ways (אָרְחָה) you have not honored.³²

24 Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. 25 And this is the writing that was inscribed:

Mene (מְנֵא), Mene (מְנֵא), Tekel (תְּקֵל), and Parsin (פְּרִסִין).

26 This is the interpretation of the matter: Mene (מְנֵא), God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end.³³ 27 Tekel (תְּקֵל),³⁴ you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.³⁵ 28 Peres (פְּרִס), your kingdom is divided³⁶ and given to the Medes (מְדֵי)³⁷ and Persians (פְּרִסִין).³⁸

²⁹ Belshazzar has been drinking from vessels that belong to the Lord of heaven.

³⁰ **Ps 115:4-7** 4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. 5 They have mouths, but do not speak, eyes, but do not see. 6 They have ears, but do not hear, noses, but do not smell. 7 They have hands, but do not feel, feet, but do not walk. And they do not make a sound in their throat.

³¹ Belshazzar's breath is in the hand of Yahweh. So is ours. **Job 12:10** 10 In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.

³² Belshazzar should humble himself and honour the true God. Instead he lifts himself up, brings in God's vessels, drinks wine from them, and praises false gods. **Ac 12:23** 23 Immediately an angel of Yahweh struck [Herod] down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.

³³ Repetition stresses certainty. It is an unconditional prophecy. **Ge 41:32** 32 And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. **Ps 90:12** 12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

³⁴ From the same root word we get the Hebrew word *shekel*.

³⁵ **Ro 3:23** 23 ...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.... Belshazzar is like Verruca Salt in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and Chocolate Factory*.

³⁶ *Peres* (the singular of *Parsin*) sounds like the Aramaic for divided and for Persia. Farsi is the language of Iran today. **Mt 13:49** 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and *separate* the evil from the righteous. **Mt 25:32** 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will *separate* people one from another as a shepherd *separates* the sheep from the goats. **Ro 8:35-39** 35 Who shall *separate* us from the love of Messiah? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to *separate* us from the love of God in Messiah Jesus our Lord.

³⁷ **Da 9:1** 1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.... **Is 13:17** 17 Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them, who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold. **Is 21:2** 2 A stern vision is told to me. The traitor betrays, and the destroyer destroys. Go up, O Elam. Lay siege, O Media. All the sighing [Babylon] has caused I bring to an end. **Je 51:28** 28 Prepare the nations for war against [Babylon], the kings of the Medes, with their governors and deputies, and every land under their dominion.

³⁸ Mene, mene, tekel parson basically means "numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided."

Gold to Silver

29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.³⁹ 30 That very night⁴⁰ Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed.⁴¹ 31 And Darius the Mede⁴² received the kingdom,⁴³ being about sixty-two years old.⁴⁴

³⁹ This is laughable and ironic. The Neo-Babylonian empire's last official act is to elevate Daniel, a Jew, to the third position in the empire.

⁴⁰ On 13 October 539 bc, the Medo-Persians diverted water from the Euphrates into a lake north of Babylon, allowing them to walk on the riverbed and scale the undefended walls along the river. As Daniel interprets the writing on the wall, the Medo-Persians are already pouring into the city. Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted Babylon's fall (Is 13:17-22; 21:1-10; 47:1-5; Je 51:33-58), and Herodotus, Xenophon, Berosus, the Babylonian Chronicles, and the Cyrus Cylinder describe it historically. **Je 25:11-14** 11 This whole land [Israel] shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares Yahweh, making the land an everlasting waste. 13 I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. 14 For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands. **Je 50:24** 24 I set a snare for you and you were taken, O Babylon, and you did not know it. You were found and caught, because you opposed the Lord. **Je 51:31** 31 One runner runs to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to tell the king of Babylon that his city is taken on every side.... **Je 51:39** 39 While they are inflamed I will prepare them a feast and make them drunk, that they may become merry, then sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake, declares Yahweh. **Je 51:57** 57 I will make drunk her officials and her wise men, her governors, her commanders, and her warriors. They shall sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake, declares the King, whose name is Yahweh of hosts.

⁴¹ Xenophon records Belshazzar's death in his *Cyropaedia*. This is a good example of the biblical doctrine of sin unto death (1 Jn 5:16-17). What Belshazzar does is so bad, he doesn't get a second chance. **Ps 146:3-4** 3 Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. 4 When his breath departs, he returns to the earth. On that very day his plans perish.

⁴² Darius the Mede is probably another name for Gobryas (*Gubaru*), the military commander who led Cyrus' assault against Babylon and who became its ruler under Cyrus. Gobryas was one of Nebuchadnezzar's outstanding generals and had been appointed by him as governor of Elam. He defected to Cyrus and with Cyrus' troops entered and took Babylon without a battle on 13 October 13 539 bc. Cyrus himself entered Babylon on 29 October 539 bc. When were the fall feasts that year?

⁴³ Jeremiah's 70-year clock must have begun with the fall of Harran in 609 bc. **2 Ch 36:20-21** 20 He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfil the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years [609-539 bc]. Darius (and Cyrus) receive the kingdom from God, as a gift. Empires can change hands overnight, if that's what God wants. **Da 1:2** 2 And Yahweh gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into [Nebuchadnezzar's] hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. **Da 2:21** 21 [The Most High] changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding..

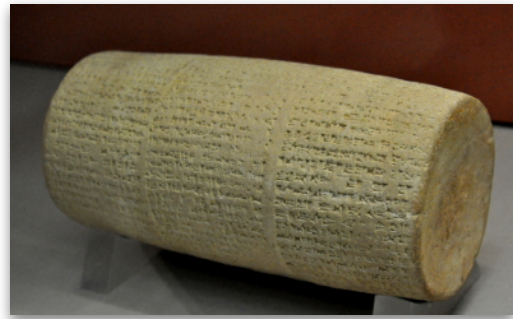
⁴⁴ What happens to Nabonidus, Belshazzar's father? Cyrus' decree to rebuild the Jerusalem temple occurs the following year (538 bc).

Overview

“The downfall of Babylon is in type the downfall of the unbelieving world [cf. Rev. 17—18]. In many respects, modern civilization is much like ancient Babylon, resplendent with its monuments of architectural triumph, as secure as human hands and ingenuity could make it, and yet defenseless against the judgment of God at the proper hour. Contemporary civilization is similar to ancient Babylon in that it has much to foster human pride but little to provide human security. Much as Babylon fell on the sixteenth day of Tishri (Oc. 11 or 12) 539 B.C., as indicated in the Nabonidus Chronicle, so the world will be overtaken by disaster when the day of the Lord comes (1 Th 5:1-3 [cf. Ps. 2:4-6; Rev. 19:15-16]). The disaster of the world, however, does not overtake the child of God; Daniel survives the purge and emerges triumphant as one of the presidents of the new kingdom in chapter 6.”⁴⁵

Ancient Texts

“As for me, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, save me from sinning against your great godhead and grant me as a present a life long of days, and as for Belshazzar, the eldest son—my offspring—instill reverence for your great godhead in his heart and may he not commit any cultic mistake, may he be sated with a life of plenitude.”⁴⁶



Cylinders of Nabonidus, 555-40 bc

“When Cyrus had made all the mainland submit to him, he attacked the Assyrians. In Assyria there are many other great cities, but the most famous and the strongest was Babylon, where the royal dwelling had been established after the destruction of [Nineveh]. Babylon was a city such as I will now describe. [2] It lies in a great plain, and is in shape a square, each side fifteen miles in length; thus sixty miles make the complete circuit of the city. Such is the size of the city of Babylon; and it was planned like no other city of which we know. [3] Around it runs first a moat deep and wide and full of water, and then a wall eighty three feet thick and three hundred thirty three feet high. The royal measure is greater by three fingers' breadth than the common measure.

Further, I must relate where the earth was used as it was dug from the moat and how the wall was constructed. As they dug the moat, they made bricks of the earth which was carried out of the place they dug, and when they had moulded bricks enough, they baked them in ovens; [2] then using hot bitumen for cement and interposing layers of wattled reeds at every thirtieth course of bricks, they built first the border of the moat and then the wall itself in the same fashion. [3] On the top, along the edges of the wall, they built houses of a single room, facing each other, with space enough between to drive a four-horse chariot. There are a hundred gates in the circuit of the wall, all of bronze, with posts and lintels of the same. [4] There is another city, called Is,¹ eight days' journey from Babylon, where there is a little river,

⁴⁵ John Walvoord, 131.

⁴⁶ Cylinders of Nabonidus, 555-40 bc, British Museum, London.

also named Is, a tributary of the Euphrates river; from the source of this river Is, many lumps of bitumen rise with the water; and from there the bitumen was brought for the wall of Babylon.

Thus, then, this wall was built; the city is divided into two parts; for it is cut in half by a river named Euphrates, a wide, deep, and swift river, flowing from Armenia and issuing into the Red Sea. [2] The angles of the wall, then, on either side are built quite down to the river; here they turn, and from here a fence of baked bricks runs along each bank of the stream. [3] The city itself is full of houses three and four stories high; and the ways that traverse it, those that run crosswise towards the river and the rest, are all straight. [4] Further, at the end of each road there was a gate in the riverside fence, one gate for each alley; these gates also were of bronze, and these too opened on the river.

These walls are the city's outer armor; within them there is another encircling wall, nearly as strong as the other, but narrower. [2] In the middle of one division of the city stands the royal palace, surrounded by a high and strong wall; and in the middle of the other is still to this day the sacred enclosure of Zeus Belus, a square of four hundred and forty yards each way, with gates of bronze. [3] In the center of this sacred enclosure a solid tower has been built, two hundred and twenty yards long and broad; a second tower rises from this and from it yet another, until at last there are eight. [4] The way up them mounts spirally outside the height of the towers; about halfway up is a resting place, with seats for repose, where those who ascend sit down and rest. [5] In the last tower there is a great shrine; and in it stands a great and well-covered couch, and a golden table nearby. But no image has been set up in the shrine, nor does any human creature lie there for the night, except one native woman, chosen from all women by the god, as the Chaldeans say, who are priests of this god.⁴⁷

“Then at the beginning of the following spring, when Cyrus had punished the Gyndes by dividing it among the three hundred and sixty canals, he marched against Babylon at last. The Babylonians sallied out and awaited him; and when he came near their city in his march, they engaged him, but they were beaten and driven inside the city. [2] There they had stored provisions enough for very many years, because they knew already that Cyrus was not a man of no ambition, and saw that he attacked all nations alike; so now they were indifferent to the siege; and Cyrus did not know what to do, being so long delayed and gaining no advantage.

Whether someone advised [Cyrus] in his difficulty, or whether he perceived for himself what to do, I do not know, but he did the following. [2] He posted his army at the place where the river goes into the city, and another part of it behind the city, where the river comes out of the city, and told his men to enter the city by the channel of the Euphrates when they saw it to be fordable. Having disposed them and given this command, he himself marched away with those of his army who could not fight; [3] and when he came to the lake, Cyrus dealt with it and with the river just as had the Babylonian queen: drawing off the river by a canal into the lake, which was a marsh, he made the stream sink until its former channel could be forded. [4] When this happened, the Persians who were posted with this objective made their way into Babylon by the channel of the Euphrates, which had now sunk to a depth of about the

⁴⁷ Herodotus, *The Histories* 1.178-81, trans. A. D. Godley (Harvard University Press, 1920).

middle of a man's thigh. [5] Now if the Babylonians had known beforehand or learned what Cyrus was up to, they would have let the Persians enter the city and have destroyed them utterly; for then they would have shut all the gates that opened on the river and mounted the walls that ran along the river banks, and so caught their enemies in a trap. [6] But as it was, the Persians took them unawares, and because of the great size of the city (those who dwell there say) those in the outer parts of it were overcome, but the inhabitants of the middle part knew nothing of it; all this time they were dancing and celebrating a holiday which happened to fall then, until they learned the truth only too well."⁴⁸

Music



William Walton, "Belshazzar's Feast" (1931)

⁴⁸ Herodotus, *The Histories* 1.190-191, trans. A. D. Godley (Harvard University Press, 1920).