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## Sabbath School.

# BIBLE LESSONS.

FROM PELOUBETS SELECT NOTES

First Quarter.

**Lesson VII. Feb. 14, Dan. 5: 1-12, 25-28.**

### THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting.—Dan. 6: 27.

INTERVENING HISTORY.—After the last lesson's account of the companions of Daniel rescued from the fiery furnace at the inauguration of the golden image, there is silence in the history for 15 or 20 years. Then Daniel is again brought into notice as the interpreter of a marvellous dream of Nebuchadnezzar. After interpreting this dream, the history is silent about Daniel for some 30 years, when he is again called into notice by the handwriting on the wall at the feast of Belshazzar.

For some years after Nebuchadnezzar's death the kingdom was in a very unsettled state. Finally, *Nabonidus*, a leading person, usurped the throne, and reigned for 17 years, the last king of Babylon. It is probable that he married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, so that his son Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, according to the accurate prophecy of Jermiah (50: 15; 51: 53, 58.)

CONFIRMATION OF SCRIPTURE HISTORY FROM THE STONE RECORDS OF THE PAST.—The kings wrote the history of their times on clay cylinders, or slabs, and baked them into stone. These records, hidden for 25 centuries, now come forth to confirm and explain the Bible. One of the most interesting of these confirmations is in relation to King Belshazzar. No name like his was given in secular history. Indeed, that said that *Nebonidus* was the last king of Babylon, and that he was not killed when Babylon was taken. Skeptics said that Daniel was in error. Now, cylinders of this hardened clay have been found, and are in the British Museum, which says that *Nabonidus* associated his eldest son Belshazzar with him in the kingdom, and that he was king in Babylon, while his father was with the army outside. This explains why Belshazzar offered as a reward to make the interpreter of the writing on the wall third ruler. He himself was second, while his father was first. They also gave facts which imply that *Nabonidus* married Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, and hence Belshazzar was a grandson of that great king, and so the statements of Jeremiah (50: 15-18; 51: 53-58) are confirmed. This is but one illustration of many.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES.—The Medo-Persian empire had for several years been coming into power, and under Cyrus (558-528) had been conquering the outlying provinces of the Babylonian empire.

About two years before the feast described in to-day's lesson, Cyrus had begun the seige of Babylon. He at once saw that its reduction would be no easy enterprise. King *Nabonidus*, for some unexplained reason, left his capital and the defence which it afforded him, and went out to meet his foe. He was completely defeated; his soldiers fled to the capital; and he himself found refuge at Borsippa, a town to the south-west of Babylon.

Thus the young king Belshazzar was left sole king within the city. No wars could be undertaken. To while away the time, to keep the leaders busy, to give confidence to all, may have been the reasons for celebrating on an unusual scale an annual festival to a chief Babylonian diety.

II. THE GREAT FEAST.—1. *Made a great feast.* Not improbably an annual festival in honor of some of the Babylonian deities. *To a thousand of his lords.* This was not so large a number in oriental banquets as it may seem to us: 15,000 men feed daily at the king's cost in the Persian courts.

2. *Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine.* The folly and wickedness that followed grew out of the wine-cup. These are among the demons that always dwell in wine-cup. *That the king*, etc., *might drink therein.* This act was not one of necessity or for honor's sake, but in reckless profanity.

THE WICKEDNESS of this act consisted, (1) In profaning these sacred utensils to base uses. (2) Increasing the insult by doing it at a feast to an idol. (3) By doing it at an immoral and drunken revel.

III. THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.—5. *In the same hour.* While the profane revelry mentioned above was going on. *Came forth fingers of a man's hand*, i. e., so much of the hand as held the pen or stylus. As there was no arm and person attached to the hand, it was manifestly supernatural. The hand coming from behind a cloud is a commonly received symbol of Diety, and was used as such by the Assyrians.

6. *His thoughts troubled him.* He was conscience-smitten at what he had done. His soul was filled with fears and presentiments of what an offended God might do to him.

7. *The king cried aloud.* Marg., as in the Chaldee, *with might.* This indicates a sudden and an alarming cry. *Astrologers.* Those who studied the stars, and thought to foretell events by the position and movement of the stars. They were the Magi. *Chaldeans.* These were a priest-caste of wise, learned, influential men in all religious matters, and so named from being of the ancient Chaldee race who conquered Babylon. *Soothsayers.* Those who dealt in magic and occult arts, "mesmerism," and pretended to have communication with invisible powers or agencies. *Shall be clothed with scarlet.* Worn as the robe of honor by those singled out by the king for special excellence. *A chain of gold.* An emblem of office as distinction. *The third ruler in the kingdom.* In every similar case (Gen. 41: 40-45; Esth. 10: 3; Dan. 2: 48, 49), the elevation to the *second* place, the place next to the king. The only reason that can be assigned for the variation in this instance is that the first and second places were both filled (Nabonidus in the first, his son Belshazzar, the second), and therefore the highest assignable reward was the *third* place.

8. *They could not read the writing, nor make known.....the interpretation.* The words of the writing are Aramaic, the language of which Chaldaic, Syriac, and Hebrew are different branches. The literal meaning of the words was therefore evident to the Babylonians as soon as they were pronounced. The word *read* is doubtless to be understood as to *read so as to understand*; just as any person now can pronounce the words of John Eliot's *Indian Bible*, whole works are spelled in English letters; but there is only one person living who can *read* it. The wise men would not be able to know what the words on the wall meant as applied to Belshazzar, even if they could pronounce the words and know their separate meanings.

IV. THE INTERPRETATION.—10. *Now the queen.* This was the queen-mother, who was probably the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. To her the former life of Daniel would be familiar.

11. *There is a man in thy kingdom.* Daniel had some official position in the kingdom (Dan. 8: 27), but it was probably removed from immediate connection with the king. Belshazzar may have heard of him, but as a young man of 17 he would not have remembered much about him. *Nebuchadnezzar thy father*: i. e., ancestor, grandfather.

12. *And dissolving of doubts.* Marg., "or a *dissolver*" of "*knots*." So the Chaldee. This language is still common in the East, to denote one who has skill in explaining difficult subjects. Daniel is brought before the king. He faithfully refers to what God had done for his father, Nebuchadnezzar, and how he was punished for his pride. Then he shows the king his own sins, and declares that the handwriting on the wall expresses the punishment God sent upon him for his high-handed outrage.

26. *Mene, Mene.* This word is repeated to give emphasis and impressiveness. That which is foretold shall certainly and swiftly come to pass. *Mene* means *numbered*, the count is *finished*. So Daniel interprets its application to be, *God has numbered thy kingdom*—i. e., its duration of its days, —*and has finished it*,—i. e., its duration is so counted out that it is full, that it now comes to an end.

27. *Tekel.* In this lies the double sense of *weighed* and *found light*. The application is that Belshazzar had been weighed as to his moral character and actions, and been found wanting, of light weight.

28. *Peres.* This is the singular form, of which *Upharsin* is the plural. It means *divided, broken into pieces. Thy kingdom is divided.* Not divided into two parts, but broken into pieces, destroyed. *Given to the Medes and Persians.* Media was a large country lying east of Assyria, north of Persia, and south-west of the Caspian Sea. Persia was a smaller and more mountainous country lying east of Chaldea, south and south-east of Media, and north of the Persian Gulf. These nations had been combined into one kingdom by Cyrus, who at this time was besieging Babylon.

Even while Belshazzar was puzzling over the handwriting, the Persians were swarming into the city. Cyrus for some time had been planning to draw away the water of the river. When all was prepared, he waited for the great feast, described in this lesson, to come, hoping to take the people off their guard. "The experiment of Cyrus was an extremely hazardous one; for if the heavy brazen gates had been properly watched and guarded, the Persians not only would not have been able to get into the city, but would have been caught in the bed of the river between two fires, and would have been slaughtered like sheep in a pen." But when the festival came, all the leaders were revelling in the palace. Elsewhere the rest of the population was occupied in feasting and dancing (Jer. 51: 39). Soon shadowy forms began to emerge from the obscurity of the river-bed, and on the landing-places opposite the river-gates scattered clusters of men grew into solid columns; the undefended gateways were seized; a war-shout was raised; the alarm was taken and spread, and swift runners started off to "show the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end" (Jer. 51: 31). In the darkness and confusion of the night a terrible massacre ensued (Jer. 50: 30; 51: 4). The drunken revellers could make no resistance. The king, paralyzed with fear at the awful handwriting upon the wall, which too late had warned him of his peril (Jer. 50: 43; Dan. 5: 5-28), could do nothing even to check the progress of the assailants, who carried all before them everywhere. Bursting into the palace, a band of persians made their way to the presence of the monarch, and slew him on the scene of his impious revelry. Other bands carried fire (Jer. 50: 32; 51: 30, 32, 58) and sword through the town. When morning come, Cyrus found himself undisputed master of the city, which, if it had not despised his efforts, might with the greatest ease have baffled them.

PRACTICAL.

1. *The danger of revelry and drunkenness.* (1) They are crimes themselves. (2) They lead to sins and crimes that would not otherwise be committed. (3) They bring disaster upon those engaged in them.

2. *Sacrilege and irreverence.*

3. *The handwriting on the wall.* (1) The doom is pronounced against all sinners. (2) It is written though invisibly, on all nations who despise God and the institutions of religion. (3) God warns men in love that they may turn from their sins. (4) The power of fear in compelling men to see the evil nature of their sins.

4. *Fruitless convictions of sin. The suffering which accompanies hopeless conviction of sin is no more than a sinner deserves.* Hopeless consciousness of sin is remorse.

5. *Weighed in the balance.* (1) God weighs every one in the balances. (2) He weighs actions, words, motives, intentions. (3) He weighs with perfect justice and exactness. (4) Those that are found wanting cannot fill the places they desire. (5) Professions do not count, but what we really are in heart and character. (6) We are weighed by the work God gives us to do, by means of the trials and temptations of life, by the business and duties of life, by God's word. (7) In one scale are the souls of men, in the other what God requires them to be. In one scale are our hopes of eternal life, in the other are the conditions of salvation as laid down by God.

6. *Daniel.* (1) Faithful to the end. (2) Bold in speaking God's word even under the most difficult circumstances. (3) Neglected in the hour of pleasure, but called in the hour of need.

### What Charlie Did For His Mother.

"The flour's out, ma'am," said Bridget, putting her head into the sitting-room, where Mrs. Helps and Charlie were sitting.

"Very well, Bridget," said Mrs. Helps; but when the door was shut she sighed a and though Charlie asked her twice what "succor" meant she gave him no answer.

Charlie looked up from his book and saw tears were falling on his mother's hands as she sewed.

"Mamma! mamma! what's the matter?"

"O, nothing, child! don't worry. I'm sure it's all right; and I'm glad you little ones have such good appetities."

Charlie thought hard for a moment. "O, I know!" he said, with a wise look; "it's the flour. You were ever so happy till Bridget put her head in. Now, mamma, I'll tell you what; you get a whole barrel instead of a bag, and then you won't have to be bothered." It was over at Henry's the other day, and his mother went in the closet, and I saw her take such a lot of flour out of a barrel! Get a barrel, mother!" and Charlie put his arms around the dear neck and kissed the face he loved so much.

Mrs. Helps could not but smile at her little boy. "Child, the trouble is, I can't get a barrel. It would cost nine dollars, and I haven't got that. But no matter, my son; you are growing older every day. God is very good, and I know we shall not starve. Now I must go up to my study, and you can run out-doors."

Charlie put on his hat and ran out. Henry was waiting for him to play; but Charlie said, "No; I can't now. I want to go to the village."

"Can I go too?"

Now Charlie would have rather Henry had staid at home, but he was trying to be an unselfish boy; so he said, "Yes; only please, Henry, I can't talk."

The two walked along; and though Charlie had said he could not talk, he soon began to tell Henry what was on his mind. "Mother works so hard," he said "since father died last winter, and she's so worried how she ought to have a whole barrel of flour, I'm going to see if I can't earn one."

Henry opened his eyes at this: "You earn a barrel of flour! Why, father paid for our barrel the other day, and I saw the bill, ten dollars. How'd you earn that?"

"Mother said nine dollars," said Charlie, a little discouraged. "I don't know how, but I got a plan. I'm going to the grocer's."

"To buy your flour?" said Henry, half-laughingly.

They went to a large grocery-store in the village, and the clerk asked the boys what they wanted. Charlie answered that he would like to see Mr. Dunning.

"He's busy," said the clerk.

"I see, but I can wait."

In a little while Mr. Dunning came to the boys. "Now, my boys," said he, "what can I do for you?" Charlie felt like throwing his arms around the gentleman's neck, he looked and spoke so kindly and telling all his hopes, but he tried to tell as little as possible of his real need. "You know I wasn't begging," he said afterward.

"I want to know, sir, if I can do any work for you—sweeping or cleaning—here or in your house? I can chop wood and light fires, and bring water and peel potatoes, and post letters, and"—

"Stop, stop, my boy!" said Mr. Dunning. "I see you can do a good deal for a little fellow. But can't you do all this at home? Don't they need you there?"

"O, I'll do all that too. I can't be here all the time; but please, sir, I'll work very hard, and a very, very long time, if only I can earn ten dollars."

"Ten dollars! Well that is a large sum to pay a little boy. What do you want it for?"

"Please, sir, mamma's writing and sewing and teaching to earn enough money for us, but she can't get enough, and I do want to get her a barrel of flour. I thought p'raps if I worked hard and earned part, you'd trust me to work for the rest."

"Why, what's your name?"

"Charlie Helps."

"So you're Mrs. Help's boy! Bless you, child! you shall have work to do; and if you are faithful your mother shall have the flour. Now, what time can you come here?"

"I dress Johnnie and the baby for mother in the mornings, and then I study; but perhaps mother could hear me some other time. I can chop our wood any time, and I can get up early and draw the water before breakfast."

"Well, you come around at ten o'clock every day and stay till four; tell you mother you'll not be in the store, but with my wife. I fancy she'll like to see a boy about again; and Mr. Dunning sighed.

Ah, children! death takes a father from one home and a child from another, and only God can comfort those that are left. Mr. Dunning had lost his boy, a little fellow about Charlie's age, a few months before.

Now, I must not make my story too long. Charlie worked hard. He peeled potatoes, cleaned knives, sorted potatoes and apples (and if you have ever tried it, you will find that it is very hard work,) split wood, and even set the table. Charlie's mother did not know that he was to be paid for all this, but supposed that he had hired himself out to relieve her of his board, for Charlie always ate his dinner at the Dunnings, and the noble boy used to eat as little as possible at home. At last, when he had worked three weeks, Mr. Dunning called him into the store. "Here's a friend of yours, Charlie," he said; and there was Charlie's Sunday school teacher, Mr. Kimball.

"Charlie, I want to tell you that I'm going to send your barrel of flour home to-night," said Mr. Dunning; "and as Mr. Kimball is here, he shall see it marked. You've earned more than half the price already, and so you shall give this to your mother, and tell her if she will give you to me for my own boy—my very son—she shall never want for flour or anything else I can furnish her out of my own store."

Charlie could not answer, and could only smile from ear to ear as Mr. Dunning wrote, "Mrs. Helps, ordered and paid for by Charlie Helps," on the top of the barrel. Charlie rode home with the man that took the barrel, and his mother came out to see who was there.

"Here's your flour, mamma!—here's your flour! I earned it! And O, mamma, Mr. Dunning will give you everything you want if you'll give me to him. But, mamma! dear mamma! don't give me, for I mean to work for you, and I love you so much!"

Dear little fellow! the joy and the surprise were too much for him, and he cried in his mother's arms. Mr. Dunning called in the evening, and it was arranged that though Mrs. Helps could not give Charlie, he should live part of the time at the Dunnings'.

All this happened years ago; and very few know that Charlie Helps, who is Mr. Dunning's right-hand man, earned his barrel of flour for his mother from that very store when he was nine years old.—*Well Spring.*


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Consisting of ENGLISH and SCOTCH TWEED, FINE DIAGONALS, SPRING OVERCOATINGS and a Large Variety of PANTALOON GOODS, which have been selected with care, bought close and on the most favorable terms.

☞ Cash Customers would find it to their advantage to call and examine.

Windsor and Annapolis Railway.

1885. WINTER ARRANGEMENT. 1886.

| Miles. | TRAINS GOING WEST. | Exp. dy. A M | Acc. M.W.F. A.M. | Acc't dy P.M. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Halifax,—leave, | 7 00 | | 2 30 |
| 1 | Richmond, | | 7 15 | 2 33 |
| 14 | Windsor Junction, | 7 40 | 7 15 | 3 30 |
| 40 | Newport, | 8 43 | 8 12 | 4 58 |
| 46 | Windsor, | 9 00 | 10 05 | 5 33 |
| 53 | Hantsport, | 9 20 | 10 37 | 6 03 |
| 64 | Wolfville, | 9 54 | 11 25 | 6 46 |
| 66 | Port Williams, | 19 00 | 11 35 | 6 55 |
| 71 | Kentville—Arrive | 10 15 | 11 55 | 7 10 |
| | do—Depart, | 10 30 | 12 25 | |
| 83 | Berwick | 11 03 | 1 17 | |
| 88 | Aylesford, | 11 18 | 1 40 | |
| 95 | Kingston, | 11 36 | 2 10 | |
| 102 | Middleton, | 11 57 | 3 00 | |
| 116 | Bridgetown, | 12 40 | 4 00 | |
| 130 | Annapolis—arrive | 1 20 | 4 55 | |

| Miles. | GOING EAST. | Acc. dy. T. T. S. A.M. | Acc. Exp dy. P.M. |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Annapolis—leave | 6 15 | 1 30 |
| 14 | Bridgetown, | 7 10 | 2 13 |
| 28 | Middleton, | 8 10 | 2 58 |
| 35 | Kingston, | 8 40 | 3 10 |
| 43 | Aylesford, | 9 15 | 3 27 |
| 47 | Berwick, | 9 35 | 3 52 |
| 59 | Kentville—arrive | A.M. 10 30 | 4 25 |
| | Do—depart, | 5 40 11 15 | 4 40 |
| 54 | Port Williams | 6 00 11 35 | 4 05 |
| 66 | Wolfville, | 6 10 11 44 | 5 09 |
| 77 | Hantsport | 6 58 12 30 | 5 39 |
| 84 | Windsor, | 7 50 1 20 | 6 05 |
| 90 | Newport, | 8 10 1 44 | 6 21 |
| 116 | Windsor Junction, | 10 00 3 45 | 7 28 |
| 129 | Richmond, | 10 40 4 27 | |
| 130 | Halifax—arrive, | 10 45 4 30 | 8 05 |

N. B.—Trains are run on Eastern Standard Time. One hour added will give Halifax time.

Steamer 'Secret' leaves St. John every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, a.m. for Digby and Annapolis, returning from Annapolis the same day.

Steamer "Evangeline" leaves Annapolis every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday p. m. for Digby.

Trains of the Western Counties Railway leave Digby daily at 3.30 p. m., and leave Yarmouth daily at 7.15 a. m.

Steamer 'Dominion' leaves Yarmouth every Saturday evening for Boston.

Through tickets by various routes on sale at all stations

P. INNES,
Kentville, 13th Nov, 1885. General Manager.

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