

# Blind Belshazzar and Seeing Bartimaeus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn back first of all to Daniel and chapter 5 and we're going to look at the story of Belshazzar and then we're going to turn to Mark's Gospel chapter 10.

And to focus in really on two sections from the word, we'll read first in Daniel chapter 5. And then when we come to Mark, we're going to focus on chapter 10 and verse 7.

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. This morning, the sermon is very simply how we study on contrasts between two people.

One man who at that point was probably the most powerful man in the world because the Babylonian Empire was the great empire. Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar's father or possibly grandfather, was the great ruler, the great world ruler, the head of gold in the dream that Daniel interpreted in chapter 2.

So this man, Belshazzar, had everything. He had perfect vision. He was able to see everything. But he was incredibly spiritually blind.

[ 2 : 19 ] And because he was spiritually blind, though he had physical eyesight, his spiritual blindness caused him to lose everything. The other man we're going to look at, and again his name begins with B, Belshazzar and Bartimaeus.

Bartimaeus was a poor man who had nothing. He was a beggar who had not a thing that he could call his own. He just made his living sitting at the roadside begging.

Any food people would give him or any coins somebody would give him. And he was blind. He couldn't see. But although he was blind, he was spiritually not blind.

Because when Jesus passed by, although he couldn't see physically, he could see spiritually who Jesus was, even when a lot of other people didn't recognize that Jesus was the promised Messiah. And that's why he cried out, Jesus, son of David, which was the Messianic promise, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

[ 3 : 26 ] So very simply looking at the man who had great vision and who could see everything and lost everything, and the man who couldn't see naturally, but was able to see spiritually and gained everything.

Now, this man, as we said, Belshazzar, was at this particular point the great ruler in the world.

There was a while, there was a kind of a co-regency with Nabonidus, but he was the main man.

And the solemn thing about this man, Belshazzar, although Babylon was a heathen kingdom, a heathen empire, Belshazzar knew everything about the living and through God.

That's something Daniel reminded him. Daniel tells him very forcefully that you knew all this. You, in verse 22, you, his son Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this.

What did he know? Well, in the chapter we read what happened with Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar was the great king, ruled with a rod of iron, and as it said, whom he wanted to keep alive, if we read in verse 19, and because of the greatness that he gave him, all people's nations' 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.

[ 5 : 01 ] So this man, Nebuchadnezzar, ruled, and everybody in the world trembled because of his greatness, his power, his authority, his dominion, and his rule. But God was going to teach Nebuchadnezzar a lesson.

And side by side with the story of Nebuchadnezzar, we have the story of Daniel. And Daniel was so used by God. And Nebuchadnezzar was brought to see that although he was powerful and mighty, everything that he had had been given to him by God.

Because God humbled Nebuchadnezzar right into the dust so that he lost his reason and his mind and he was living with the animals. He was living out in the open, covered by the dew of heaven. And seasons went and seasons came. And eventually, his reason returned. But he had been through that time, he had been so humbled by the living and through God, that he gives in chapter 4 one of the great declarations of who God is.

Remember, this is this great heathen king. And God so worked in him. If we go back to Daniel 4, verse 34. At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me.

[ 6 : 25 ] And I blessed the Most High and praised and honored him who lives forever. For his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing. And he does according to his will among the hosts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. And none can stay his hand or say to him, What have you done?

That's what Nebuchadnezzar came to understand. And it changed him, his whole outlook, his whole being. He came to realize the greatness, the majesty, the power, the authority, the dominion, the rule of God.

And that anything and everything that he was had been given to him by God. And that's what Daniel is saying to Belshazzar. Belshazzar, you knew all this.

Because Nebuchadnezzar told you all this. The records of Babylon will show you what exactly happened. So, Belshazzar, you are inexcusable.

[ 7 : 36 ] You may have forgotten all about God. You may have chosen to push God out of your thinking. Because, you know, when you push God out of your thinking, then all of a sudden you feel you're not accountable.

And that's what so many people do today. People choose to forget God. People choose to deny God. People choose to suppress the knowledge of God that maybe they once had.

But irrespective of what people do, that doesn't change God. It doesn't alter who God is or God's word or God's authority or God's rule.

And God is going to call every single person to give an account one day of what they've done in this world, good or bad. All of us. You and I. And so, this is what has happened for Belshazzar.

Belshazzar. His day of reckoning is coming because God is dealing with him. Now, the incredible thing that we find here if we read through this amazing book, the book of Daniel, is that the day of the reign of the Babylonian Empire has just come to an end.

[ 8 : 51 ] And the great Medes and Persian army was really outside the city wall. But Belshazzar felt incredibly safe inside because the walls of Babylon, they were over 300 feet high and over 80 feet wide.

And anybody would feel safe and secure in a city like that. So, instead of preparing the city for the possibility of a siege or war, he throws this massive drinking party with a thousand of his lords, his wives, his concubines.

And Belshazzar is really living the life of the playboy because here he is, he's got no thought.

Outside, right outside is the enemy. And they're threatening death and destruction not only to him but to all the people.

He's not interested. All he's concerned about is living for today. It's a philosophy we're told in the Bible of how many people live. They eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.

In other words, we don't think about anything but about the present and enjoying life as much as we can. No thought of God, no thought of eternity, no thought of accountability.

[ 10 : 17 ] But one day, the day of reckoning is going to come. And that's exactly what happened for Belshazzar. And we find that what Belshazzar does is when he tasted the wine, in other words, when he became drunk and as so often happens when people drink more than they should, that reason begins to go.

And so he sends for the vessels of gold and silver that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem when Jerusalem had been invaded and destroyed. And these vessels had been consecrated to God.

They were the vessels that were used in the worship of the Lord. And so it was like God was being particularly mocked by Belshazzar.

Not only was Belshazzar pushing God out of his thinking, but he took the vessels of gold and silver that had been used for the worship of God, and he used them to worship the gods of bronze and stone and all the false gods that he had.

So like his final act was one of utter defiance against God, of mocking God. But the thing is you cannot do that to God.

[ 11 : 35 ] And then the whole picture changes. Because while they were doing that and as they were, raising their glass and toasting one after the other and praising all the different gods, all of a sudden this hand appeared writing on the wall.

It's amazing how many biblical expressions have found their way into our everyday sort of language or the way we speak. And so often when we find that people often use that expression when something is about to collapse something is coming to an end.

You often use the expression but the writing was on the wall. You could see that coming. Well that's this is exactly what it was. The writing was on the wall.

And we find that there was never a quicker sobering up ever than happened at that moment. because from all the drunken euphoria and all of a sudden this appears this hand writing on the wall we find that Belshazzar he begins to tremble.

Again we use the expression if you were really afraid your knees were knocking. Well that's exactly what had happened to him. It was like his limbs went loose. He just he was so utterly not paralyzed but trembling literally trembling with fear with what was happening before his very eyes.

[ 13 : 09 ] As he saw this writing on the wall. And the thing is that the Lord could have chosen to write in language that Belshazzar would have understood.

Probably he wrote in this way in order that Daniel would be brought back to the forefront. because Daniel was somebody who was pushed aside. Belshazzar didn't want to know anything about him. And he called of course all the run of the usual astrologers and magicians come and interpret. What does this mean? None of them could say. Then the queen came in probably the queen mother and she said way back in father's day there was a special man in the kingdom called Daniel and the spirit of the gods but of course it was the spirit of the living and through God that was in him. She said he could interpret dreams. So Daniel was called in and he was told he would become third ruler in the kingdom and offered great power and all the rest and he said keep your gifts but I'll tell you exactly what's there.

Belshazzar and this is the great judgment that's come upon him. It's really it is very very serious.

[ 14 : 34 ] Verse 22 and you his son Belshazzar have not humbled your heart though you knew all this but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. You know that's about the most serious charge that can be leveled against anybody.

To know everything of God and yet to defy God to willfully go in the very opposite direction to mock God to try and put down on God it's a fearfully serious thing and here the time has come for Belshazzar and Daniel explains very simply many God has numbered your days and numbered your days your kingdom and brought it to an end.

Belshazzar it's all over. You've had your time and you didn't use your time wisely. You had all the opportunities in the world. God gave you everything.

He made you what you were and not one day of your life did you acknowledge him or care about him. All you cared about was yourself. Well it's over. And what a solemn thing.

you know I wish people would come. We have to pray for people that they will come to understand the reality of the living and through God that we are accountable to him that he gives us everything.

[ 16 : 03 ] It's in him that we live and we move and we have our being. The Bible that's why it's so important that we come to the Bible and read the Bible and seek to understand the Bible because only in the word of God do we know are we brought to see who God is.

What God has chosen to tell us about himself and what God has chosen to tell us that we need to know in order that we will be saved. It's all that we need to know is in here.

But it's essential that people come to read and understand the word. Tekel you are weighed in the balance and you are found wanting.

God has spiritual scales. We've said it before but people often think that these scales are kind of where God takes all our good deeds and he puts them on one side and then he takes all our bad deeds and he puts them on the other side and you kind of balance it out together and if the good deeds outweigh the bad deeds then you'll be okay.

Or if the bad deeds outweigh the good deeds then you're done for. That's not how it works. The good deeds and our bad deeds are all put together.

[17:14] Our whole life is put on one side and God's perfect holy laws put on the other. Can they balance out? No.

Straight away the scales go we are all guilty. We are all condemned. How can the scales be balanced?

The only way is by taking Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Jesus who fulfills the law and made it honorable.

Jesus who washes away our sin. And if Jesus goes into the scales for us against God's holy law on the other side then it all balances out and we're clean, we're clear.

You make sure that you will not be weighed in the balances and found wanting. If you take Jesus as your own Lord and Savior then you won't.

[18:14] And then finally it says Paris your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. Belshazzar you had everything.

You felt so safe and so secure in this great walled city. But you know it's over. You can't protect yourself. The only protection you could really have, it's not made with stones and bricks and mortar and all that.

The only real protection is from the living and through God and you don't have his protection. Your time is up. And we're told that that very night that the king was slain.

The man who had everything and the man who could see so clearly was so so blind to spiritual realities. I hope and pray that that's not how you are.

But then we turn very briefly and we go to Mark's gospel and we see the very opposite there of this man Bartimaeus. And again just in five minutes here is this man who had nothing.

[19:29] Man who said Bartimaeus I know that he didn't have trousers and stuff the way we have nowadays but if we say what's in your pockets Bartimaeus he would put his hands in his pockets I've got nothing.

What are you working at? Oh I can't work. Where do you get your food or just what people give me? He was this poor man who had absolutely nothing.

But you know Bartimaeus in his poor poor condition had more going for him than Belshazzar. He had more going for him than the mightiest man in the whole world.

And that's what Jesus said what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. And this is a kind of commentary on that very thing.

Belshazzar had the whole world and yet he lost his own soul. He lost everything. But here is this poor man sitting by the side of the road.

[20:31] And on this particular day just outside Jericho Jesus is passing by and he's on his way to Jerusalem. And he hears the rustle and the movement and the patter of feet on the ground and he says what's going on?

Because he would be used to hearing two or three walking by but he's aware there's a huge crowd of people, there's a surge of people passing. And he's told that it's Jesus of Nazareth that is passing by.

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth he began to cry and to say. Now what's beautiful about this is here's this man Bartimaeus and what he heard of Jesus he knew there and then when he heard the name Jesus of Nazareth this is a man who's a friend of publicans and sinners this is a man who opens the eyes of the blind this is a man who heals the lepers this is a man who restores hearing to those who have lost their hearing and restores speech to those who have lost their power of speech and so he takes the opportunity as Jesus is passing but what he does is more than simply saying Jesus of Nazareth have mercy on me Jesus you son of David have mercy on me because Bartimaeus was seeing what a lot of people weren't seeing that Jesus is the son of God Jesus is the Messiah he is the one who can help him he is a man in real need and you know when he began to cry and the people round about instead of encouraging him it's quite extraordinary they told him to be silent stop your shouting he is a man in desperation to be healed and people are saying no no just keep quiet and what a spiritual picture that is as well because you know the moment you begin to become serious about your soul the moment you begin to realize that you need to get right with

God and the moment you say I really want to become a Christian voices will start saying hey hey don't get too serious about that leave that to another time oh yes it's all very well being a Christian but you don't want to be a Christian today leave that till later on if you become a Christian just now it's going to muck up your life as things are it's going to muck up the plans that you have leave it for later these are the voices that will be saying to you hey keep quiet but no what did Bartimaeus do he cried all aloud this was a golden opportunity Jesus might not be passing by this way again in fact Jesus didn't pass by that way again Jesus was on his way to die this was Bartimaeus his last opportunity and we don't know you know today you might have a decide you might be sitting here and saying you know I really want to become a Christian and a voice is saying leave it for tomorrow you know tomorrow you might not have that desire today you may have it tomorrow you may not Bible says now is the accepted time now is the day of salvation and so Bartimaeus cries for mercy what does Jesus do he stops Jesus always stops when there is a call for mercy it is a cry he will never ever turn away from because he is the one who delights in mercy I love that we are told that about our God that he delights in mercy mercy is something he just loves and he doesn't just love to display mercy and love to respond to the one who cries for mercy but he loves to see us displaying a heart of mercy towards others blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy can't be calling to the Lord for mercy all the time and have a hard heart towards others it doesn't work that way but

[ 24 : 59 ] Jesus you notice the number of times people have called for mercy and the Lord always always responds and so he responded and he called for Bartimaeus and Bartimaeus was brought to Jesus and Jesus said to him Bartimaeus what is it you want me to do now obviously you all say it's very obvious you're a blind man Jesus why are you asking because Jesus wants to hear from our own lips from our own heart what we want and that's why he says what do you want what do you want me to do for you and Jesus is saying the same to you today what do you want me to do for you Bartimaeus says very simply Lord that I might receive my sight I want to see and Jesus said to him go on your way your faith has made you whole and it tells us that at that moment

Jesus got a new follower because it says he began to follow him on the way that's what Bartimaeus did he was I'll tell you there wasn't a happier man in the whole countryside in Jerusalem or Jericho or anywhere round about at that particular moment than Bartimaeus his vision and you know the wonderful thing is when Jesus restored his sight the very first person he saw was Jesus standing in front and that's what Jesus will do spiritually for us as well he will restore your sight he will enable you to see what right now you can't see and if you're here today and you have to say to yourself you know I hear all this gospel I hear this day week in week out but you know something I still don't understand it I still haven't been able to see I can't see anything it's just a fog when you ask the Lord Lord help me to see help me push through that fog push through that darkness help me to just get a little glimpse of you enough just to see you a savior Lord save me have mercy of me and if you really ask that really cry that then the Lord will and like Bartimaeus you will begin to follow him today two men Belshazzar Bartimaeus which camp are you in I hope you're not where Belshazzar was that you are weighed in the balances and found wanting but that you are with Bartimaeus having come to see Jesus and are now following him in the way let us pray oh Lord our God we give thanks again for your word we give thanks for this word that makes us wise and to salvation and we pray today that we may hear you and that we may find our souls living it is a wonderful opportunity that we have and we pray that we might not despise these opportunities but that we may gladly embrace

Jesus Christ as he is freely offered to us in the gospel watch over as we pray blessed tea cup of tea and coffee in the hall afterwards we pray to take us all home safely and do us good and cleanse us from our sin in Jesus name amen our concluding item of praise is psalm 146 from the Scottish Psalter psalm 146 it's on page 446 and the tune is Arlington it's at verse 7 who righteous judgment executes for those oppressed that be who to the hungry giveth food God sets the prisoners free the Lord doth give the blind their sight the bow down doth raise the Lord doth dare love all those that walk in upright ways the stranger shield the widow stay the orphan help is he but yet by him the wicked way turned upside down shall be psalm 146 verses 7 to the end on the tune is Arlington who righteous who righteous judgment executes all of God eyes who almost Jimmywan who sae To the hungry give us food.

[ 30 : 05 ] To the hungry give us food. All sets of prisoners free.

The Lord doth give the blind their sight. The bow and down doth raise.

The Lord doth dearly love all those. The Lord doth dearly love all those.  
That walk in upright ways. The stranger shield the widow's stay.  
The orphan's help is he. But yet by him the wicked's way.  
[ 31 : 26 ] But yet by him the wicked's way. Turned upside down shall he.  
The Lord shall reign forevermore. Like God, O Zion he.  
Prince to all generations. Prince to all generations.  
Prince to the Lord give me. Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen. Amen.