

**KING BELSHAZZAR AND DARIUS THE MEDE**

In Daniel chapter 5, a Babylonian king by the name of Belshazzar mocks God by throwing a party with articles taken from the Jewish temple. As a result, God passes judgement on Belshazzar by taking away his kingdom and dividing it between the Medes and Persians.

Bible critics love to use this story to point out apparent historical errors in the text, trying to disprove the accuracy of the Bible.

The first thing they say is that the last king to rule the empire of Babylon before being captured by the Medes and Persians, was a man by the name of Nabonidus, not Bel-shazzar.

Secondly, Belshazzar was never a king of Babylon.

And third, the Bible refers to Nebuchadnezzar as the father of Belshazzar, which he wasn't.

But these statements made by the Bible critics are full of half truths.

First of all, Belshazzar's name is found in archaeology, and he just happens to be the son of King Nabonidus, making him a crown prince in the kingdom of Babylon.

And although some translations of the Bible state that Nebuchadnezzar was his father, the Hebrew word for father can also be interpreted into English as meaning grandfather or ancestor. And in fact, Belshazzar was a blood line descendent of Nebuchadnezzar.

The same goes for the fact that the Bible calls Belshazzar a king. Even though historical records do not mention he was a king, the Hebrew word for king can also be interpreted as governor or royal prince. And history records that he was both.

Nabonidus, who ruled the empire of Babylon from 555-538 B.C., mentions his firstborn son Belshazzar on an inscription found in the city of Ur in 1853.

The inscription reads: "May it be that I, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, never fail you. And may my firstborn, Bel-shazzar, worship you with all his heart."

Another piece of evidence for Belshazzar's reign in the city of Babylon comes from an inscription where he is referred to as the son of Nabonidus and is given authority to rule.

**"Putting the camp under the rule of his oldest son, the firstborn. The army of the empire he placed under his command. His hands were now free; He entrusted the authority of the royal throne to him. "**

Yet even another piece of evidence comes from a tablet dating back to the seventh year of the rule of Nabonidus, where he is mentioned in the same light as his father:

**"In regards to the bright star which has appeared, I will undertake to interpret its meaning for the glory of my lord Nabonidus, Babylon's king, and also for the crown prince, Belshazzar"**

What is interesting to note is that on this oath, the man swore by both Nabonidus and Belshazzar. While on oaths dating back to other times, generally only the king is mentioned. This seems to indicate that Belshazzar had a co-reigning authority that was second only to his father throughout all the Empire.

This backs up the Bible completely: Belshazzar speaking to Daniel in chapter 5 verse 16 says: . . . "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.**" (Here

Belshazzar indicates he was the second highest ruler in Babylon and not the first.)

We also know that at the time the Medes and Persians captured the Babylon, Nabonidus was not living in the city of Babylon, but was staying in a place called Teima in the northern part of Arabia. Leaving his son back home in charge of governing the city.

The text from an artifact known as the Nabonidus chronicle states: **"Nabonidus, the king stayed in Tema; the crown prince, his officials and the troops were in Akkad."**

King Cyrus of Persia also refers to Belshazzar when he conquered Babylon in his writings:

"A coward was put in charge as the king of this country . . . With evil intents he did away with the regular offerings to the gods . . . and desecrated the worship of the king of his gods, Marduk."

Cyrus's statement that Belshazzar desecrated the worship of his god Marduk matches very closely to the story in the book of Daniel. Although it wasn't Marduk whose handwriting appeared on the wall, but the one true God of Israel.

According to the Bible, Belshazzar was holding a feast at the time the city of Babylon was run over by the Medes and Persians.

The fall of Babylon as recorded by the ancient historians Herodotus, Berosus and Xenophon verifies this:

"Cyrus then dug a trench and diverted the flow of the Euphrates river into the new channel which led to an existing swamp. The level of the river then dropped to such a level that it became like a stream. His army was then able to take the city by marching through the shallow waters . . . The Babylonians at the time were celebrating intensely at a feast to one of their gods and they were taken totally by surprise."

Another part of the story Bible critics try to attack is mentioned in Daniel 5:30-31:

"That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old."

Liberal Bible scholars say that according to history there was no such man as Darius the Mede and say that the writer of scripture must have gotten him mixed up with a later king named Darius of Persia.

But this apparent error can also be explained. First of all, the "Babylonian Chronicles" tell us the exact date which Babylon fell. October 13, 539 B.C.

According to historical records a man named Gubaru, a Mede, was appointed by King Cyrus to be ruler in Babylon at this time. Gubaru was born in 601 B.C. which would make him 62 years old when he invaded Babylon. Exactly the age found Daniel 5:31.

The Babylonian record of Darius the Mede's conquest of Babylon is given below:

"In the month of Tashritu, at the time when Cyrus battled the forces of Akkad in Opis on the Tigris river, the citizens of Akkad revolted against him, but Nabonidus scattered his opposition with a great slaughter.

On the 14th day, Sippar was taken without a fight. Nabonidus then fled for his life.

On the 16th day, Gubaru (Darius the Mede) the leader of Gutium along with the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without any opposition. Later they arrested Nabonidus when he returned to Babylon."

On the third day of the month of Arahshamnu, Cyrus marched into Babylon, and they laid down green branches in front of him. The city was no longer at war, Peace being restored. Cyrus then sent his best wishes to the residents living there. His governor, Gubaru, then installed leaders to govern over all Babylon."

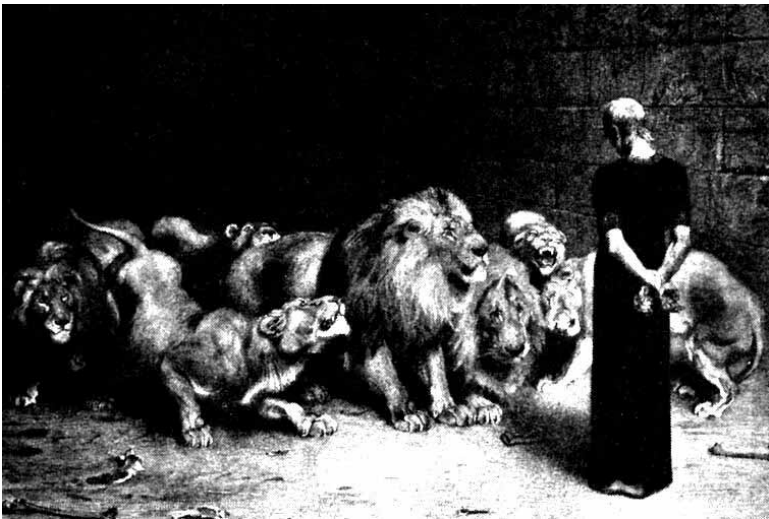
This account says that Darius the Mede in-

stalled sub governors in Babylon. The Bible says the same thing, and the prophet Daniel was one of them:

"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss.

Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him." Daniel 6: 1-4

This was the same Darius the Mede who had the prophet Daniel thrown into the lions den, mentioned in Daniel Chapter six.



As far as his name goes, historians believe that the name Darius was not a proper name at all, but a title of honor meaning "**Holder of the Scepter.**" In other words "**The Scepter Holder (King) of the Medes.**"

The Jewish historian Josephus also recorded that: "Darius the Mede, who along with his relative, Cyrus the King of Persia, brought an end to the Babylonian empire. Darius was the son of Astyages."

## **THE GREATEST WORDS OF DARIUS THE MEDE**

"Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.

I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the lions."

Daniel 6:25-27

**Next Chapter >>**