

BELSHAZZAR, THE “NON-EXISTENT” KING THAT PROVES THE BIBLE TRUE

Jason Ashe

For generations, the Book of Daniel was dismissed as historically unreliable because of one name: Belshazzar.

Eighteenth and nineteenth century critics declared that Daniel had gotten the history wrong. Classical historians such as Berossus identified Nabonidus as the last king of Babylon. Because Belshazzar’s name did not appear in the Greek sources available to scholars at the time, critics concluded that the author of Daniel had confused Babylonian history. The verdict seemed decisive: Belshazzar never existed, and Daniel was fiction.

That confidence did not survive the evidence.

In 1854, British archaeologist J. E. Taylor uncovered clay foundation inscriptions at the ancient site of Ur in modern-day Iraq. These inscriptions, now known as the Nabonidus Cylinders, were commissioned by King Nabonidus himself. In them, he refers to “Bel-shar-usur”, identifying him as his eldest son. The name critics declared imaginary had been preserved in Babylonian cuneiform for more than two millennia.

The discoveries did not stop there. Additional administrative tablets and royal documents confirmed that Belshazzar exercised real governmental authority. Historical records reveal that Nabonidus spent extended periods in the Arabian oasis of Tayma, leaving Babylon under his son’s rule. While Nabonidus retained the title of king, Belshazzar functioned as co-regent in his absence.

This historical reality explains a detail in Daniel 5 that once fueled skepticism. In the biblical narrative, Belshazzar offers to make Daniel “the third ruler in the kingdom” if he can interpret the mysterious writing on the wall. Critics argued that this phrasing exposed confusion, assuming the author mistakenly believed Belshazzar was the supreme monarch. In truth, the wording reflects precise political structure. If Nabonidus was first and Belshazzar ruled second as co-regent, then the highest rank Belshazzar could grant was third. Rather than revealing ignorance, the text demonstrates accurate knowledge of Babylon’s governmental hierarchy.

Daniel also records that Babylon fell suddenly during Belshazzar’s

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deeply spiritual concepts of faith and salvation in the Roman letter might be one place that Peter had in mind when he spoke of things hard to understand. Whatever Peter had in mind, he was right! God’s word is sometimes hard to understand, but that doesn’t let us off the hook for he also says, “*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” (2nd Peter 3:17-18). Despite the difficult passages, Peter exhorts us to understand God’s will anyway.

The Bible can be understood. Growing in grace and knowledge naturally infers a starting point. We can “*long for the pure milk of the word*” (1st Peter 2:2) but there comes a time when we must ingest the meat as we gain maturity. The Hebrew writer scolded, “*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil*” (Hebrews 5:12-14). Note carefully what he says: The one who can discern good and evil (those mature in the faith) can do that because of “*practice*”. Part of the Hebrews’ problem was not that they **could** not understand, it’s that they **would** not understand. Hence, they would not put the important truths they were taught into practice. The principle is easy: If you know something, do it (cf. James 4:17)!

While there may be some passages that you will struggle with for some time, there are also many, many more to keep you busy in honoring God by your obedience. There may be some deeply theological things that you may never untangle for yourself, but what you do understand, you’re responsible to obey.

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

“There is something good for you that you want. The only problem is that it’s on the other side of what you don’t want to do.”

– David Osteen

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Men's & Ladies' Studies @ 6:20 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

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reign. Secular historical sources confirm that Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians in 539 BC. The biblical account fits within the established historical timeline.

Some scholars still debate the dating of Daniel, but one fact is clear: Belshazzar's existence, once dismissed as proof that Daniel was mistaken, has been confirmed by archaeology. The name preserved in cuneiform permanently vindicates the biblical account. Belshazzar is no longer a problem for Daniel – only for those who claimed he was.

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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RESPONSIBILITY TO WHAT YOU KNOW

Zeke Flores, adapted

When I was a boy, my mother made a point of telling me things she expected me to do: "Clean your room", "Pull the weeds", "Mow the lawn", "Be home by 10:00", etc., were common orders she gave at different times but each time she gave the order, she only did it once. Why? Because once I heard it, she expected me to do it. Once she would yell into my room "Zeke! Get up, it's time for school!" I knew that if I stayed in bed, the next time she entered it would be with a glass of cold water to pour on me! You see, she believed that once I heard it, I understood it, and that meant I was responsible for acting on it or I'd have no one but myself to blame for the consequences.

There's a lot in life that's like that. A running criminal might hear "Stop in the name of the law!" If he chooses to ignore it, he might get a bullet for his neglect. Your employer might tell you to have a certain project ready by Friday at 5:00. If you choose to take a few days off that week, you might be spending the next week at the unemployment office. The point is, people understand responsibility and they understand that when a command is given, it is their duty to perform it. Why would we think that God's way is any different?

The Bible can be a difficult book. Peter admitted that Paul wrote "*some things hard to understand*" (2nd Peter 3:16) and that some men would take these things and distort them to their own destruction. The

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