

~BELSHAZZAR (525)

(Bel-shaz'zar) [from Akkadian, meaning, Protect His Life, or, possibly, May Bel Protect the King]

.. The End Of Belshazzar's Rule

- The firstborn son of Nabonidus, and coregent of Nabonidus in the last years of the Babylonian Empire. He is mentioned in the Bible account only by the prophet Daniel, and for long his position as king of Babylon was denied by Bible critics.
- As regards **Belshazzar** the king, he made a big feast for a thousand of his grandees, and in front of the thousand he was drinking wine. (**Daniel 5:1**)
- Consequently King **Belshazzar** was very much frightened and his complexion was changing within him, and his grandees were perplexed. (**Daniel 5:9**)
- In the first year of **Belshazzar** the king of Babylon, Daniel himself beheld a dream and visions of his head upon his bed. At that time he wrote down the dream itself. The complete account of the matters he told. (**Daniel 7:1**)
- In the third year of the kingship of **Belshazzar** the king, there was a vision that appeared to me, even me, Daniel, after the one appearing to me at the start. (**Daniel 8:1**)
- However, archaeological evidence in the form of ancient texts has since demonstrated the historicity of the Bible account.
- **Belshazzar**, under the influence of the wine, said to bring in the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken away from the temple that was in Jerusalem, that from them the king and his grandees, his concubines and his secondary wives might drink. (**Daniel 5:2**)
- There exists a capable man in your kingdom in whom there is the spirit of holy gods, and in the days of your father illumination and insight and wisdom like the wisdom of gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar your father himself set him up as chief of the magic-practicing priests, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the astrologers, even your father, O king. (**Daniel 5:11**)

- As for you, O king, the Most High God himself gave to Nebuchadnezzar your father the kingdom and the greatness and the dignity and the majesty. (**Daniel 5:18**)
- And as for you, his son **Belshazzar**, you have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. (**Daniel 5:22**)
- Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as the father of **Belshazzar**, and **Belshazzar** as Nebuchadnezzar's son. The book **Nabonidus and Belshazzar** [by R. P. Dougherty, 1929], reasons that it is probable that **Belshazzar's** mother was Nitocris and that she was a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar II. If so, Nebuchadnezzar was the grandfather of **Belshazzar**.
- Note as below for a comparable scriptural use of **father**.
- And Jacob continued on his way out from Beersheba and kept going to Haran. (**Genesis 28:10**)
- And, look! There was Yehowah stationed above it, and he proceeded to say; I am Yehowah the God of Abraham your **father** and the God of Isaac. The land upon which you are lying, to you I am going to give it and to your seed. (**Genesis 28:13**)
- However, not all scholars find the evidence for such a relationship completely satisfying. It may be that Nebuchadnezzar was simply the father of **Belshazzar** as to the throne, Nebuchadnezzar being a royal predecessor. In a similar manner, the Assyrians used the expression son of Omri to denote a successor of Omri.

See Also OMRI 3

Does Secular History Confirm The Role Of Belshazzar?

- A cuneiform tablet dated as from the accession year of Neriglissar, who followed Awil-Marduk or Evil-merodach, on the Babylonian throne, refers to a certain **Belshazzar**, the chief officer of the king, in connection with a money transaction.
- It is possible, though not proved, that this refers to the **Belshazzar** of the Bible. In **1924 C.E.**, publication was made of the decipherment of an ancient cuneiform text described as the **Verse Account of Nabonidus**, and through it valuable information was brought to

light clearly corroborating **Belshazzar's** kingly position at Babylon and explaining the manner of his becoming coregent with Nabonidus.

- Concerning Nabonidus conquest of Tema in his third year of rule, a portion of the text says; He entrusted the Camp to his oldest son, the firstborn **Belshazzar**, the troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted the kingship to him and, himself, he Nabonidus started out for a long journey, the military forces of Akkad marching with him, he turned towards Tema (deep) in the west. [Ancient Near Eastern Texts, edited by J. Pritchard, 1974, p. 313]

- Thus, **Belshazzar** definitely exercised royal authority from Nabonidus third year on, and this event likely corresponds with Daniel's reference to the first year of **Belshazzar** the king of Babylon.

- In the first year of **Belshazzar** the king of Babylon, Daniel himself beheld a dream and visions of his head upon his bed. At that time he wrote down the dream itself. The complete account of the matters he told. (Daniel 7:1)

- In another document, the Nabonidus Chronicle, a statement is found with regard to Nabonidus seventh, ninth, tenth, and eleventh regnal years. It reads; The king was in Tema while the prince, the officers, and his army were in Akkad Babylonia. [Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles, by A. Grayson, 1975, p. 108]

- Apparently Nabonidus spent much of his reign away from Babylon, and while not relinquishing his position as supreme ruler, he entrusted administrative authority to his son **Belshazzar** to act during his absence. This is evident from a number of texts recovered from the ancient archives proving that **Belshazzar** exercised royal prerogatives, that he issued orders and commands.

- Matters handled by **Belshazzar** in certain documents and orders were those that would normally have been handled by Nabonidus, as supreme ruler, had he been present. However, **Belshazzar** remained only second ruler of the empire, and thus he could offer to make Daniel only the third one in the kingdom.

- And I myself have heard concerning you, that you are able to furnish interpretations and to untie knots themselves. Now, if you are able to read the writing and to make known to me its very interpretation, with purple you will be clothed, with a necklace of gold around your neck, and as the **third one in the**

kingdom you will rule. (Daniel 5:16)

- **It is true that official inscriptions give Belshazzar the title crown prince, while in the book of Daniel his title is king.**
- **As regards Belshazzar the king, he made a big feast for a thousand of his grandees, and in front of the thousand he was drinking wine. (Daniel 5:1)**
- **Belshazzar, under the influence of the wine, said to bring in the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken away from the temple that was in Jerusalem, that from them the king and his grandees, his concubines and his secondary wives might drink. (Daniel 5:2)**
- **At that time they brought in the vessels of gold that they had taken away from the temple of the house of God that was in Jerusalem, and from them the king and his grandees, his concubines and his secondary wives drank. (Daniel 5:3)**
- **They drank wine, and they praised the gods of gold and of silver, copper, iron, wood and stone. (Daniel 5:4)**
- **At that moment the fingers of a man's hand came forth and were writing in front of the lampstand upon the plaster of the wall of the palace of the king, and the king was beholding the back of the hand that was writing. (Daniel 5:5)**
- **At that time, as regards the king, his very complexion was changed in him, and his own thoughts began to frighten him, and his hip joints were loosening and his very knees were knocking each other. (Daniel 5:6)**
- **The king was calling out loudly to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the astrologers. The king was answering and saying to the wise men of Babylon; Any man that will read this writing and show me its very interpretation, with purple he will be clothed, with a necklace of gold about his neck, and as the third one in the kingdom he will rule. (Daniel 5:7)**
- **At that time all the wise men of the king were coming in, but they were not competent enough to read the writing itself or to make known to the king the interpretation. (Daniel 5:8)**

- Consequently **King Belshazzar** was very much frightened and his complexion was changing within him, and his grandees were perplexed. (**Daniel 5:9**)
- As regards the queen, because of the words of the king and his grandees she entered right into the banqueting hall. The queen answered and said; O king, keep living even to times indefinite. Do not let your thoughts frighten you, nor let your complexion be changed. (**Daniel 5:10**)
- There exists a capable man in your kingdom in whom there is the spirit of holy gods, and in the days of your father illumination and insight and wisdom like the wisdom of gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar your father himself set him up as chief of the magic-practicing priests, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the astrologers, even your father, O king. (**Daniel 5:11**)
- Forasmuch as an extraordinary spirit and knowledge and insight to interpret dreams and the explanation of riddles and the untying of knots had been found in him, in Daniel, whom the king himself named **Belteshazzar**. Now let Daniel himself be called, that he may show the very interpretation. (**Daniel 5:12**)
- Accordingly Daniel himself was brought in before the king. The king was speaking up and saying to Daniel; Are you the Daniel that is of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Judah? (**Daniel 5:13**)
- I have also heard concerning you that the spirit of gods is in you, and illumination and insight and wisdom extraordinary have been found in you. (**Daniel 5:14**)
- And now there have been brought in before me the wise men and the conjurers, that they may read this very writing, even to make known to me its interpretation, but they are not competent enough to show the very interpretation of the word. (**Daniel 5:15**)
- And I myself have heard concerning you, that you are able to furnish interpretations and to untie knots themselves. Now, if you are able to read the writing and to make known to me its very interpretation, with purple you will be clothed, with a necklace of gold around your neck, and as the third one in the kingdom you will rule. (**Daniel 5:16**)

- **At that time Daniel was answering and saying before the king: Let your gifts prove to be to you yourself, and your presents do you give to others. However, I shall read the writing itself to the king, and the interpretation I shall make known to him. (Daniel 5:17)**
- **As for you, O king, the Most High God himself gave to Nebuchadnezzar your father the kingdom and the greatness and the dignity and the majesty. (Daniel 5:18)**
- **And because of the greatness that He gave him, all peoples, national groups and languages proved to be quaking and showing fear before him. Whom he happened to want to, he was killing, and whom he happened to want to, he was striking, and whom he happened to want to, he was exalting, and whom he happened to want to, he was humiliating. (Daniel 5:19)**
- **But when his heart became haughty and his own spirit became hard, so as to act presumptuously, he was brought down from the throne of his kingdom, and his own dignity was taken away from him. (Daniel 5:20)**
- **And from the sons of mankind he was driven away, and his very heart was made like that of a beast, and with the wild asses his dwelling was. Vegetation they would give him to eat just like bulls, and with the dew of the heavens his own body got to be wet, until he knew that the Most High God is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind, and that the one whom he wants to, he sets up over it. (Daniel 5:21)**
- **And as for you, his son **Belshazzar**, you have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. (Daniel 5:22)**
- **But against the Lord of the heavens you exalted yourself, and they brought before you even the vessels of his house, and you yourself and your grandees, your concubines and your secondary wives have been drinking wine from them, and you have praised mere gods of silver and of gold, copper, iron, wood and stone, that are beholding nothing or hearing nothing or knowing nothing, but the God in whose hand your breath is and to whom all your ways belong you have not glorified. (Daniel 5:23)**
- **Consequently from before him there was being sent the back of a**

hand, and this very writing was inscribed. (**Daniel 5:24**)

- And this is the writing that was inscribed. Mene, Mene, Tekel and Parsin. (**Daniel 5:25**)
- This is the interpretation of the word; Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and has finished it. (**Daniel 5:26**)
- Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and have been found deficient. (**Daniel 5:27**)
- Peres, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. (**Daniel 5:28**)
- At that time **Belshazzar** commanded, and they clothed Daniel with purple, with a necklace of gold about his neck, and they heralded concerning him that he was to become the third ruler in the kingdom. (**Daniel 5:29**)
- In that very night **Belshazzar** the Chaldean king was killed (**Daniel 5:30**)
- An archaeological discovery in northern Syria suggests why this may be the case. In **1979 C.E.**, a life-sized statue of a ruler of ancient Gozan was unearthed. On its skirt were two inscriptions, one in **Assyrian** and the other in **Aramaic** the language of the **Belshazzar** account in Daniel.
- The two almost identical inscriptions had one outstanding difference. The text in the imperial Assyrian language says that the statue was of the governor of Gozan. The text in **Aramaic**, the language of the local people, describes him as **king**.
- Thus, archaeologist and language scholar Alan Millard writes: **In the light of the Babylonian sources and of the new texts on this statue, it may have been considered quite in order for such unofficial records as the Book of Daniel to call **Belshazzar king**. He acted as king, his father's agent, although he may not have been **legally king**. The precise distinction would have been irrelevant and confusing in the story as related in Daniel. [Biblical Archaeology Review, May/June 1985, p. 77]**
- Those who wielded sovereign power in Babylonia were expected to be exemplars in reverencing the gods. There are six cuneiform texts

concerning events from the 5th to the 13th year of Nabonidus reign that demonstrate **Belshazzar's** devotion to Babylonian deities.

- As acting king in Nabonidus absence, **Belshazzar** is shown in the documents to have offered gold, silver, and animals to the temples in Erech and Sippar, thereby comporting himself in a manner consistent with his royal position.

• The End Of Belshazzar's Rule

- On the night of **October 5,539 B.C.E, Gregorian calendar, or October 11, Julian calendar**, **Belshazzar** celebrated a great feast for a thousand of his grandees, as **(Daniel Chapter 5)** relates.

- As regards **Belshazzar** the king, he made a big feast for a thousand of his grandees, and in front of the thousand he was drinking wine. **(Daniel 5:1)**
- Babylon was then menaced by the besieging forces of Cyrus the Persian and his ally Darius the Mede. According to Jewish historian Josephus, who, in turn, quotes the Babylonian Berossus, Nabonidus had holed up in Borsippa after having been defeated by the Medo-Persian forces in battle. **[Against Apion, I, 150-152 [20]]**

If so, **Belshazzar** was the acting king in Babylon itself. The holding of a feast when the city was in state of siege is not so unusual when it is remembered that the **Babylonians confidently regarded the city's walls as impregnable.**

- Historians Herodotus and Xenophon also state that the city had abundant supplies of necessary items and hence was not concerned with shortages. Herodotus describes the city as in a festive mood on that night, with dancing and enjoyment.
- During the feast and under the influence of wine, **Belshazzar** called for the vessels from the temple of Jerusalem to be brought so that he and his guests and his wives and concubines might drink from them while praising the Babylonian gods.
- Obviously, this request was due to no shortage of drinking vessels, but, rather, it **constituted a deliberate act of contempt by this pagan king in reproach of the God of the Israelites, Yehowah.**
- **Belshazzar**, under the influence of the wine, said to bring in the

- vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken away from the temple that was in Jerusalem, that from them the king and his grandees, his concubines and his secondary wives might drink. (**Daniel 5:2**)
- At that time they brought in the vessels of gold that they had taken away from the temple of the house of God that was in Jerusalem, and from them the king and his grandees, his concubines and his secondary wives drank. (**Daniel 5:3**)
 - They drank wine, and they praised the gods of gold and of silver, copper, iron, wood and stone. (**Daniel 5:4**)
 - He thereby **expressed defiance of Yehowah**, who had inspired the prophecies foretelling Babylon's downfall. While **Belshazzar** seemed lighthearted about the siege set by the enemy forces, he was now severely shaken when **a hand suddenly appeared and began writing on the palace wall**.
 - His knees knocking, he called upon all his wise men to provide an interpretation of the written message, but to no avail. The record shows that the queen now gave him sound counsel, recommending Daniel as the one able to give the interpretation.
 - At that moment the fingers of a man's hand came forth and were writing in front of the lampstand upon the plaster of the wall of the palace of the king, and the king was beholding the back of the hand that was writing. (**Daniel 5:5**)
 - At that time, as regards the king, his very complexion was changed in him, and his own thoughts began to frighten him, and his hip joints were loosening and his very knees were knocking each other. (**Daniel 5:6**)
 - The king was calling out loudly to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the astrologers. The king was answering and saying to the wise men of Babylon; Any man that will read this writing and show me its very interpretation, with purple he will be clothed, with a necklace of gold about his neck, and as the third one in the kingdom he will rule. (**Daniel 5:7**)
 - At that time all the wise men of the king were coming in, but they were not competent enough to read the writing itself or to make known to the king the interpretation. (**Daniel 5:8**)

- Consequently King **Belshazzar** was very much frightened and his complexion was changing within him, and his grandees were perplexed. (**Daniel 5:9**)
- As regards the queen, because of the words of the king and his grandees she entered right into the banqueting hall. The queen answered and said; O king, keep living even to times indefinite. Do not let your thoughts frighten you, nor let your complexion be changed. (**Daniel 5:10**)
- There exists a capable man in your kingdom in whom there is the spirit of holy gods, and in the days of your father illumination and insight and wisdom like the wisdom of gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar your father himself set him up as chief of the magic-practicing priests, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the astrologers, even your father, O king. (**Daniel 5:11**)
- Forasmuch as an extraordinary spirit and knowledge and insight to interpret dreams and the explanation of riddles and the untying of knots had been found in him, in Daniel, whom the king himself named **Belteshazzar**. Now let Daniel himself be called, that he may show the very interpretation. (**Daniel 5:12**)
- Certain scholars consider the queen to be, not **Belshazzar's** wife, but his mother, believed to be Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, Nitocris. Daniel, by inspiration, revealed the meaning of the miraculous message, predicting the fall of Babylon to the Medes and the Persians.
- Though the aged prophet condemned **Belshazzar's** blasphemous act in using vessels of Yehowah's worship in praising see-nothing, hear-nothing, know-nothing gods, **Belshazzar** held to his offer and proceeded to invest Daniel with the position of third ruler in the doomed kingdom.
- At that time Daniel was answering and saying before the king: Let your gifts prove to be to you yourself, and your presents do you give to others. However, I shall read the writing itself to the king, and the interpretation I shall make known to him. (**Daniel 5:17**)
- As for you, O king, the Most High God himself gave to Nebuchadnezzar your father the kingdom and the greatness and the dignity and the majesty. (**Daniel 5:18**)

- **And because of the greatness that He gave him, all peoples, national groups and languages proved to be quaking and showing fear before him. Whom he happened to want to, he was killing, and whom he happened to want to, he was striking, and whom he happened to want to, he was exalting, and whom he happened to want to, he was humiliating. (Daniel 5:19)**
- **But when his heart became haughty and his own spirit became hard, so as to act presumptuously, he was brought down from the throne of his kingdom, and his own dignity was taken away from him. (Daniel 5:20)**
- **And from the sons of mankind he was driven away, and his very heart was made like that of a beast, and with the wild asses his dwelling was. Vegetation they would give him to eat just like bulls, and with the dew of the heavens his own body got to be wet, until he knew that the Most High God is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind, and that the one whom he wants to, he sets up over it. (Daniel 5:21)**
- **And as for you, his son **Belshazzar**, you have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. (Daniel 5:22)**
- **But against the Lord of the heavens you exalted yourself, and they brought before you even the vessels of his house, and you yourself and your grandees, your concubines and your secondary wives have been drinking wine from them, and you have praised mere gods of silver and of gold, copper, iron, wood and stone, that are beholding nothing or hearing nothing or knowing nothing, but the God in whose hand your breath is and to whom all your ways belong you have not glorified. (Daniel 5:23)**
- **Consequently from before him there was being sent the back of a hand, and this very writing was inscribed. (Daniel 5:24)**
- **And this is the writing that was inscribed; Mene, Mene, Tekel and Parsin. (Daniel 5:25)**
- **This is the interpretation of the word; Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and has finished it. (Daniel 5:26)**
- **Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and have been found deficient. (Daniel 5:27)**

- Peres, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. (**Daniel 5:28**)
- At that time **Belshazzar** commanded, and they clothed Daniel with purple, with a necklace of gold about his neck, and they heralded concerning him that he was to become the third ruler in the kingdom. (**Daniel 5:29**)
- **Belshazzar** did not live out the night, being killed as the city fell during the night of **October 5,539 B.C.E**, when, according to the Nabonidus Chronicle, the army of Cyrus II. entered Babylon without a battle. [Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles, pp. 109,110]
- In that very night **Belshazzar** the Chaldean king was killed (**Daniel 5:30**]
- With the death of **Belshazzar** and the apparent surrender of Nabonidus to Cyrus, the Neo-Babylonian Empire came to a close.

See Also CYRUS

See Also NABONIDUS