

previous king, and suggested that he might be able to interpret the writing. Daniel was called in, and the same offer made as had been given to the others: "If thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom" (vs. 16). Daniel answered and explained the meaning of the writing, that God would punish Belshazzar's pride by taking away his kingdom and giving it to the Medes and Persians.

Verse 29 is most astonishing, because it shows what an honorable king Belshazzar must have been. Despite the very unpleasant nature of the interpretation which Daniel had given, he immediately proceeded to carry out his promise: We read in verse 29, "Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom."

The following verse tells of the fulfillment of the terrible prediction of disaster: "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."

Now let us see how the ancient records found in Babylon are related to this story. According to this chapter Belshazzar was the name of the last king of Babylon before the kingdom was conquered by the Medes and Persians. Yet the clay tablets indicate that the last king of Babylon before the Persian conquest was a man named Nabonidus. Furthermore, Nabonidus was not killed at the time of the Persian conquest, but was allowed to live out his natural life. Here are two very sharp contradictions to the narrative. If Daniel 5 was written by someone in Babylon at the time of these events, it is simply impossible to understand how such mistakes could have occurred. But if it was written by an unknown writer clear across the desert in Palestine at the time of the Maccabean revolt in the Second Century B.C. it is easy to see how these historical details might be incorrect.

It is never safe, however, on finding an apparent contradiction in Scripture, to assume that the Bible has been proven wrong. In connection with any study it is necessary to get all the data before reaching final conclusions. The God of history, and the God of the Bible, is one God. If the Bible is His Word it would hardly be in error on so important a point as this. This being the case, it is desirable to examine the facts more fully. Hence Dr. Pinches of the British Museum undertook a thorough investigation of the clay tablets from the reign of Nabonidus. Since the business documents of ancient Mesopotamia were not written on destructible paper or papyrus, but on clay tablets, hundreds of business documents from that period are extant, and a great many of these are in the British Museum. Eventually Dr. Pinches found one which contained the actual name Belshazzar, thus showing that his name had been borne by someone who lived at the time of the end of the Babylonian kingdom. Further search brought to light other tablets containing this same name. One of them proved to be a contract to rent a house for three years, made by a man who described himself as agent "for Belshazzar, the king's son." This connected Belshazzar with the royal family.

Further search brought to light tablets in which the oath was taken in the name of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. Oaths were always taken either in the name of a god or of a reigning king. Evidently Nabonidus had actually associated Belshazzar with him as king, a practice not at all uncommon in the ancient world.

Now Professor Dougherty of Yale University began a further investigation into the matter. He undertook to make a careful study of all the records that have come to us from that period. Ultimately he wrote a book on this subject. In the book in the Yale Oriental Series: Researches Vol. XV, entitled, Nabonidus and Belshazzar, which was published in 1929, Professor Dougherty gave the results of his research. He found absolute proof that Belshazzar had indeed been co-king with Nabonidus during the latter years of Nabonidus' reign. In fact, Nabonidus had lived for a number of years at Tema, an oasis in the Arabian desert, leaving his son Belshazzar as actual reigning king in complete charge of affairs and commander-in-chief of the army. One tablet states that the king's son was killed in the conquest of the city. On page 186 Professor Dougherty says:

"Cuneiform allusions to Belshazzar have thrown so much light upon the role which he played that his place in history stands clearly revealed. There are many texts which indicate that Belshazzar almost equalled Nabonidus in position and prestige. Dual rulership during most of the last Neo-Babylonian reign is an established fact. Nabonidus exercised supreme authority from his court at Tema in Arabia, while Belshazzar acted as co-regent in the homeland with Babylon as his center of influence. It is evident that Belshazzar was not a