

# DANIEL FREED FROM THE CRITIC'S DEN

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**Taken From *Your Heritage***

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Plus Critical Notes

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, many Bible critics trained their heavy artillery upon the book of Daniel. They asserted that the greatness of Babylon had been grossly exaggerated and that Belshazzar was fictitious. They also said that Daniel, if he ever existed, was not the author of the book that bears his name. These critics claimed that this asserted prophetic volume must have been written later, after the events predicted had taken place.

During this age of scholarly disbelief archaeologists, the modern historians of the past, arose to vindicate the Bible narrative. However, so many who believed the higher critics haven't kept up with modern discoveries, so we find many people, even ministers who have no belief in the Old Testament.

Let's examine the evidence produced by the archaeologists, as it relates to the book of Daniel. We now know Babylon was indeed a mighty city, even when judged by modern standards. It was laid out in a square, and around the city were two walls, 300 feet high above ground. The bases of the walls extended 35 feet into the ground, so they couldn't be undermined. The inside walls were as high and as thick as the outside walls, the space between the walls was reserved for farming in case of siege. There were 100 gates penetrating these walls, 25 on each side and the gates were made of copper and bronze. The streets originating from these gates crossed the city in straight lines and were, on the average, 125 feet wide. The city was built on both side of the river and there were bridges and ferry boats.

The palace of the emperor was a fortress itself, in turn having great walls around it. Within the grounds of the palace were the famous hanging gardens of Babylon. These were the imitations of mountains, the mountains of the country from which the Empress came as she got homesick for the mountains of her native land, which was Persia. The king, in attempting to cure her homesickness, built these gardens producing one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The word translated hanging, really conveys the meaning of balconies. Balconies raised one above another, is exactly what they were. They comprised a series of wide stone terraces, supported by arches, and rose like a stairway to a height of 350 feet. The gardens were watered by means of hydraulic pumps, which raised the water to a reservoir on the highest terrace, quite an accomplishment for that day. On top of the many arches, the builders laid reeds and bitumen, a kind of mineral pitch used as mortar, and above these, thick sheets of lead.

This served to prevent moisture from the ceiling leaking through and damaging the spacious and superbly decorated apartments constructed in the vaulted spaces between the arches below.

To beautify Babylon, armies of workmen performed the incredible task of transporting from afar, huge granite and marble blocks, and giant cedars from the Mediterranean coast, across 700 miles of desert. An inscription of Nebuchadnezzar reads, "I did what no former king had done. I cleft high mountains, stones of the mighty mountain I quarried, I opened passes, I made a straight road for the cedars. Mighty cedars they were, tall and strong, of wonderful beauty, whose dark appearance was remarkable, the mighty products of Mount Lebanon."

Other surprises have greeted the excavators. In the Bible story, Daniel and his youthful companions are said to have been enrolled in a state school or university, at Babylon. Critics of the book ridiculed the idea that such schools were conducted in that remote age. The critics also didn't believe that captives were treated by ancient kings, with such kindly consideration.

Among the marble palaces unearthed in the ruins of Babylon, one bears the title, engraved upon enduring stone, "The Place of Learning". In the library at the school there were two regulations, I'm sure you will find interesting. (1) Any impiety to the gods, carried the penalty of the offender being cast into the fiery furnace. (2) Any untoward act relative to the king, carried the penalty of being cast alive in the den of lions.

Remember the story in Daniel chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold 90 feet high and 9 feet in breadth, which he erected on the plain of Dura, about 6 miles below Babylon. He decreed that everyone who did not fall down and worship the image, would be cast into the fiery furnace. Daniel 3:16-18 says, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we would not make any defense in this matter; for the God whom we serve, is able to save us from the fire of the furnace and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But whether He does or not, be it known to you, O king, we will not serve your gods, or worship the image which you have set up."

The story of the fiery furnace has also been branded as mere myth, or fiction. Again archaeology comes to the rescue. Some years ago excavators uncovered what appeared to be a firing kiln for the production of brick and pottery. The inscription at the base said, "This is the place of burning where men who blasphemed the gods of Chaldea die by fire." So this is probably where Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were cast, when they wouldn't bow down to the golden image. It was the customary punishment for that sort of misdeed.

Marcel Dieulafoy, when excavating at Babylon, fell into a pit which first appeared to be an ancient dry well. However, it was found to be one of the open cages for lions in the zoological gardens. At the curb was the inscription, "The place of execution where men who angered the king died, torn by wild beasts." A list of 484 men of high standing, was found that were executed in this fashion. Of course Daniel wasn't among them because he came out alive.

Many critics of the Bible have ridiculed the story of Nebuchadnezzar's madness. However, an ancient document has been deciphered which reads as follows. "In all my dominions I did not build a high place of power, the precious treasures of my kingdom I did not lay up. In Babylon, buildings for myself and for the honor of my kingdom I did not lay out. In the worship of Merodach, my lord, the joy of my heart, in Babylon the city of his sovereignty, and the seat of my empire, I did not sing his praises. I did not furnish his altars with victims, nor did I clear out the canals." This indicates there was a period when Nebuchadnezzar transacted no business.

For centuries the critics pointed to Belshazzar as a creature of fancy, but today he is known to have been an actual sovereign. His name appears on commercial contracts and state documents, some of which ascribe to him royal powers, and dual rulership with his father Nabonidus. Nabonidus was much more interested in archaeology than in ruling his empire, so he let Belshazzar rule. The records show that Nabonidus, and his brilliant daughter Belshalti, established schools and a famous museum of antiquities in Babylon.

The excavators have also unearthed the royal banquet hall, its foundations were 56 by 168 feet. Here Belshazzar drank to a thousand of his lords, and here he brought out the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple in Jerusalem. His princes, wives and concubines drank wine from them, this is in Daniel chapter 5. Here too, the hand traced words on the palace wall meant, "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting, and thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians."

Regarding the book of Daniel, eminent archaeologists assert that its narrative is so vivid and detailed, that it must have been written at the time of Babylon's greatness, not two or three hundred years later.

The prophet Ezekiel mentions Daniel, who was still living. In Ezekiel 14:14 he says, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls for their righteousness, saith Yahweh." Yahshua voiced approval of the study of the book of Daniel in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. "When you therefore see, the desolating abomination mentioned by the prophet Daniel, set up in the holy place." Let the reader take notice of this. John, in the book of Revelation, used more than forty direct and indirect quotations from Daniel. These references from the Bible and archaeology, establish Daniel both as an historic character and prophet of Yahweh.

#### **Archaeology has indeed brought Daniel out of the critic's den.**

**Critical note** by Clifton A. Emahiser: To add to Inez Comparet's presentation here, I will quote a paragraph from my *Watchman's Teaching Letter #58* for February, 2003: "Contrary to the futurist Tim LaHaye, the Babylonians and Persians kept accurate records. *The Popular And Critical Bible Encyclopedia And Dictionary* by the Rev. Samuel Fallows (1920) makes a superb comment on this in volume 1, pages 486-487: 'Fortunately we are not dependent upon the statements of second or third-hand historians for a description of the fall of Babylon. We have the records both of Nabonidus, the reigning and vanquished king, and of Cyrus, the conqueror. Though somewhat fragmentary in some places, they nevertheless furnish us with a reasonably good picture of that momentous event. Nabonidus' own record will be cited first (Nab.-

Cry. Chron. col. i: Rev. 12-24) ... Cyrus' own cylinder gives us a no less wonderful story. This sets out by assuring the reader that Cyrus was thoroughly imbued with the idea that he was a man of destiny (Cyl. 11-19, 22-24) ... These two records of the capture of Babylon from two different sources — one might rightfully say from two opposing forces — present a marvelous harmony. They unite in the statement that the city made no resistance to the entrance of the army of Cyrus, neither were there any objections to his immediate assumption of control unless in the Nab.-Cry. Chron., we interpret the guard about the temple of Esagila as a minor siege. On the other hand, the population of the city seems to have welcomed their new conqueror, deliverer, and ruler, as a friend and benefactor.' Although I didn't quote the contents of these chronicles here, you can see that the author was quite complementary of them."