

Evidence Showing Nebuchadnezzar's Change of Heart

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Introduction:

My husband and I are preparing unofficial study guides for a group of young people, ages 10-16, called the Pathfinders, to help them prepare for a quiz on the Book of Daniel in 2018¹. The Book of Daniel has had some severe critics, and to help the Pathfinders have answers to some of these critics, I wanted to find some evidence from archaeology to help support details from Daniel, to show that the specific events that are recorded as having happened, and prophecies about what will happen in the future from the book of Daniel can be trusted. This is one of the amazing things God helped me find, and I would like to share it with you, to encourage your faith in God, and His care in preserving such artifacts for us to find today. Other deities' names will not be fully given in this presentation, because of Exodus 23:13:

“And in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.” Exodus 23:13

Nebuchadnezzar says in Daniel Chapter 4 that he was once a very proud person, (v. 29-30), but that he now is a worshiper of the Most High God (v. 2), who is the God of Heaven (v. 37). Can we find evidence of that in archaeology?

1. Nebuchadnezzar's Pride Before His Conversion:

A. Bible Evidence:

Daniel Chapter 4 Describes that Nebuchadnezzar was very proud, in particular, of great palace that he had built.

“28 All *this* came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?””

31 While the word *was still* in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” Daniel 4:28-32.

B. Archaeological Evidence:

1. Unpublished Duplicate of the New York Cylinder:

Here is a copy of an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar, and some editorial comments by the author of the article:

“.-On the side of a brick was found a record of the palace of the great

¹ When finished, the study guides for Daniel and Esther can be found here:
<http://readyanswers.org/PathfinderBibleExperience/P18/P18.html>

king.

This inscription begins like No. Iv, and continues thus:

'I built a palace for the sojourn of my majesty in the city of Babylon, situated in the land of Babylon.

And I dug foundations to a great depth, below the water of the river, and wrote there the record on cylinders, covered with bitumen and brick. With thy aid, I, M* [false god's name], God of the gods, I built this palace in the heart of Babylon. Come and dwell there, multiply its progeny, and make the people of Babylon, by my hand, victorious."²

2. C34 Cylinder:

Here is another inscription from the C34 Cylinder, that says how Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon, and proudly saying he had done something that no other king had ever done.

“(ii 1–9) In order to reinforce the security of E* [(false god's name)], so that an evil man and a murderer would not reach Babylon, (I did) what no former king had done: in the environs of Babylon I surrounded Babylon on the east side with a fortified wall. I dug its moat and I built its bank with bitumen and baked brick as high as a mountain.”³

3. Nebuchadnezzar's Cylinder C29/2:

Here is inscription about the Construction of the Old Palace: C29/2: (i 30) Saying how Nebuchadnezzar treated his people whom he had conquered.

“From the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, all the lands, whose shepherding M* [false god's name] gave to me, I led the people dwelling in them aright, I curbed the unsubmissive. I made them bow their necks to the palace, my royal abode, and I made them carry the *tupfikku*-basket.”⁴

From these inscriptions, we get a picture of Nebuchadnezzar as being very proud, and not very caring for his subjected peoples, but as a harsh taskmaster.

² Excerpt from “Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar, Variants of an Unpublished Duplicate of the New York Cylinder” Author(s): J. F. X. O'Conor Source: *Hebraica*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Apr., 1887), pp. 166-170
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Accessed: 20-05-2017 22:59 UTC <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/527085.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A8230623a51eb5cb2d01bc042fd106ea7> Courtesy of Jstor.

³ Riva, Rocio Da. “Nebuchadnezzar II's Prism (EŞ 7834): a New Edition.” *Zeitschrift Für Assyriologie Und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*, vol. 103, no. 2, 2013, pp. 196–229.,
www.academia.edu/2110205/Nebuchadnezzar_II's_Prism_EŞ_7834_a_new_edition
Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie. Accessed 7 June 2017. p. 223

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 220.

4. Brick Inscriptions: “No. 81. MS 1815/3”

Here is a common inscription on building bricks that can be found at 11 different sites in Babylon: I think these were made before his conversion.

“1 Nebuchadnezzar,
2 king of Babylon,
3 provisioner of E* [false god's name]
4 and E * [another false god's name]
5 foremost heir
6 of Nabopolassar,
7 king of Babylon.”⁵

2. Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion:

A. Bible Evidence:

1. Nebuchadnezzar Now Honors the King of Heaven:

The Bible records Nebuchadnezzar's testimony that he now is a worshiper of the Most High God, and that he is not so proud anymore.

Daniel 4:37 “37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works *are* truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.” NKJV

2. Nebuchadnezzar Was to be like an Animal Until He Learned that God Sets Up Kings.

The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream includes the warning that Nebuchadnezzar would be in the field like a beast until seven times passed over him, and until he knew that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. (Daniel 4:25) Daniel 4:32, quoted above, gives the pronouncement upon Nebuchadnezzar that this would happen now.

Can we find in Archaeology evidence that he learned his lesson?

B. Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion: Archaeological Evidence

1. Brick Inscription Showing Humility, and His Other god is a Sage of the Gods

Here is another inscription found, which I think was after this experience. Can you tell the difference in writing style, and see what was added to his building brick inscription?

This is an excerpt from an inscription on some bricks found at a Temple at Larsa that

⁵ George, A. R. “Chapter VIII: Other Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscriptions.” *Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions And Related Texts In the Schoyen Collection*, vol. 17, CDL Press, 2011, pp. 171–186. Cornell University Studies in Assyrology and Sumerology, <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/12832/1/CUSAS-17-8.pdf> Accessed 7 June 2017. p. 181

Nebuchadnezzar had restored:

“1 Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, 2 humble,
submissive, prayerful, 3 who reveres
the lord of lords, 4 provisioner of E* [false god's name]
and E* [another false god's name], 5 steadfast heir 6 of Nabopolassar,
king of Babylon, am I.
7 When the great lord M* [false god's name], 8 proud
sage of the gods, 9–10 gave to me the land
and people to care for as shepherd.”⁶

Much more humble, right? Now, Nebuchadnezzar has also added that he reveres the lord of lords, before he honors his other gods. He also says M*, his other god, is a proud sage of the gods,⁷ instead of the supreme god, as he had before. He also says that he was given the people to care for as a shepherd. This sounds like he had a change of heart.

2. Nebuchadnezzar Inscription, India House Collection: Nebuchadnezzar Worships Yav.

Here is another amazing inscription, which says Nebuchadnezzar was a worshiper of Yavah:, or Yahweh, or the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

As part of a very long inscription, there has been found this evidence that he worshiped Yahweh as part of his pantheon of gods, and even built him a temple, and possibly two temples (one in Babylon, and another one in Borsippa? The text is a bit unclear).

“

“[1.47] now I, that sacred way
[1.48] for the resting-place of their divinities,
[1.49] for a memorial of all their names,
[1.50] as a worshipper of N* [false god's name], Yav and I* [false god's name]

(break)

[4.35] To the god Yav, establisher of fertility
[4.36] in my land, Bit-Numkan as his temple
[4.37] in Babylon I built.

(break)

[4.57] to the god Yav who confers
[4.58] the fertilizing rain upon my land,
[4.59, 60] his house (also) in Borsippa I strongly built:”⁸

⁶ Ibid, p. 182, 183

⁷ Elohim?, a plural name of the true God, which can be translated “gods”

⁸ Excerpt from The East India House Inscription or The Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar from the East India House slab (referred to by Massey, and other scholars, in its abbreviated form as *E.I.H.*)

Nebuchadnezzar calls him the God who sends the rain, or you could say the God of Heaven.

It is also something to consider, that the God of the Hebrews had revealed Himself to them as the God who sends the rain.

Leviticus 26 gives the blessings for keeping God's laws, and the cursings that will come if we don't keep God's laws. Verses 3 and 4 say God will send the rain if we keep God's commandments. Verses 14, 15, and 19 say that God will withhold the rain if we break His covenant.

“3 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;
4 Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

[(break)]

15 And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant:

[(break)]

19 And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:

20 And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits.” Leviticus 26:

It is nearly certain that Nebuchadnezzar knew about this chapter of blessings and cursings.⁹ Therefore, when Nebuchadnezzar, in the above inscription, acknowledges it is Yav that sends the rain on his land, he is telling God that his pride has already been

Literature, P. F. Collier & Son, 1901, pp. 250–266,
mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/Assyria/Inscrib00.html. Accessed 7 June 2017.

Text is in column 4.

9 It is nearly certain that Nebuchadnezzar had heard of this chapter of blessings and cursings given by God, because Jeremiah is quoting from this chapter in a letter he sent to the captives in Babylon shortly after Jeconiah was taken captive, telling them they would be in Babylon 70 years, because they had not kept the sabbath, and let the land rest. The warning that this would happen is in Leviticus 26:32-34:

32 And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.

33 And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

34 Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.

35 As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.”

Leviticus 26:32-34.

See Jeremiah 17: 21-37 to see that they had been warned if they didn't keep the sabbath, their land would be destroyed.

See Jeremiah 29:1-10 to see that Jeremiah wrote the letter saying they would be there in Babylon 70 years, and had it delivered to Nebuchadnezzar. (verse 3).

broken, and God doesn't need to humble him anymore.

Another interesting fact, is that Nebuchadnezzar says this god Yav is an establisher of fertility, and sends fertilizing rain on his land, and is a MALE deity. Most other fertility deities are attributed to being female.

3. Nebuchadnezzar Inscription: India House Collection: Nebuchadnezzar Knows El Restored His Life

It also seems that once per year, he honored El, which is another name for the true God, as in “Beth-el” means “House of God”, and “Dani-el”, means “God is my Judge”. Nebuchadnezzar calls El “the divine Prince, Deity of heaven and earth, the Lord god,” and he brings treasure to El, as a memorial to his lasting days and life.

This would fit very well with the testimony of Daniel Chapter 4, where Nebuchadnezzar called the true God the Lord of Heaven, and that he credits him with giving him back his sanity and kingdom. Also notice that the words “the statue” are supplied by the translator, and may not really be there. So, he may not have made a statue of the true God.

Here is an earlier part of the same inscription from above about El:

[2.56] when at the festival of Lilmuku at the beginning of the year,
[2.57] on the eighth day (and) eleventh day,
[2.58] the divine Prince, Deity of heaven and earth, the Lord god,
[2.59] they raised within it.
[2.60] (The statue) of the god El, the beauty of the sphere,
[2.61] reverently they bring;
[2.62] treasure have they displayed before it,
[2.63] a monument to lasting days,
[2.64] a monument of my life.”¹⁰

4. Nebuchadnezzar Inscription: India House Collection: Nebuchadnezzar Knows it is God Who Sets Up Kings:

Finally, in support of Nebuchadnezzar's testimony in Daniel 4:35, and which was prophesied in Daniel 4:17, 25, and 32 that he would be acting like a beast until he acknowledged that The Most High God rules in the kingdom of men and sets up whomever He will:

Also see Jeremiah 39:11-12 that show Nebuchadnezzar knew about Jeremiah, and gave commands to his officials not to harm Jeremiah, but for them to do what he said to do.

¹⁰ Rodwell, J. M, translator. “Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar.” *World's Greatest Literature: Babylonian and Assyrian Literature*, P. F. Collier & Son, 1901, pp. 250–266, mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/Assyria/Inscr00.html. Accessed 7 June 2017.

Text is in column 2.

Nebuchadnezzar, in this inscription, declares that El was the God who set up his father, and the kings (“many a Prince”) before him.

This is from the same inscription cited above, in column 7.

“[7.9] At former dates from the days of old
[7.10] to the days . . .
[7.11] of Nabopolassar King of Babylon
[7.12] the exalted father who begat me,
[7.13] many a Prince who preceded me
[7.14, 15] whose names El had proclaimed for royalty”¹¹

3. Conclusion:

In conclusion, these inscriptions are just another amazing example that archaeology supports the historical accounts mentioned in the Bible.

Rochelle A. Houser
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¹¹ Ibid. Text can be found in Column 7.