

Daniel 2:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

Analysis

Daniel addresses Nebuchadnezzar as 'king of kings'—a title claiming supreme authority but ironically subordinate to the true King of kings (Revelation 19:16). Daniel immediately clarifies: 'the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.' The fourfold attribution (kingdom, power, strength, glory) emphasizes comprehensiveness while asserting divine origin. Nebuchadnezzar rules only by God's sovereign grant, not inherent right. This theological truth simultaneously honors the king's present authority while relativizing it under divine sovereignty. Daniel models speaking truth to power—respectful but uncompromising about ultimate allegiance.

Historical Context

Persian emperors later officially used 'king of kings' (shahanshah), and the title appears in ancient Mesopotamian royal inscriptions indicating supremacy over vassal kings. Nebuchadnezzar ruled the largest empire of his era, having conquered Egypt, Judah, and surrounding nations. Yet Daniel declares this vast power was granted by Israel's God, not Marduk or military prowess. This bold theological claim confronted Babylonian ideology attributing the king's success to Babylonian deities.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing all human authority as delegated from God change how we relate to earthly rulers?
2. What does Daniel's example teach about respecting earthly authority while maintaining ultimate allegiance to God?

Interlinear Text

שַׁבְתִּי	אַל	הָ	לִ	מֶלֶכִי	אַ	מֶלֶכִי	אַ	מֶלֶכִי	אַ	נָתָה
Thou	O king	O king	O king				for the God		of heaven	
H607	H4430	H4430	H4430	H1768		H426		H8065		

לְךָ	יְהִבָּ	יְקַנֵּ	אַ	מְלֹא	אַ	חָסֵן	אַ	יְמִלְאָ	אַ	מֶלֶכֶת	אַ
thee a kingdom	power	and strength	and glory	and	hath given						
H4437	H2632	H8632	H3367		H3052						H0

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 26:7 (Kingdom): For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people.

Isaiah 47:5 (Kingdom): Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.

Psalms 62:11 (References God): God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.

Daniel 5:18 (Kingdom): O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour:

Ezra 1:2 (Kingdom): Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Ezra 7:12 (Kingdom): Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time.

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