

Daniel 4:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying,

Analysis

Daniel's entrance is marked by Nebuchadnezzar noting his Babylonian name Belteshazzar ('Bel protect his life'), which the king explicitly connects to his chief god. Yet Nebuchadnezzar also acknowledges 'the spirit of the holy gods' is in Daniel—a polytheistic interpretation of the Holy Spirit's work. This mixed understanding shows the king's incomplete theological grasp: he recognizes divine enablement but misconstrues it through pagan categories. The phrase 'spirit of the holy gods' (רוּחַ אלֹהִים קָדְשִׁים) uses plural 'gods' (reflecting Babylonian worldview) while 'holy' suggests transcendence beyond typical deities. Daniel's consistent witness throughout captivity had impressed the king, leading to recognition of supernatural ability even if imperfectly understood. This demonstrates the power of faithful testimony—even pagan rulers acknowledge God's work in His servants, though they may misinterpret its source.

Historical Context

Babylonian names for Hebrew captives represented cultural assimilation efforts (Daniel 1:7). 'Belteshazzar' honored Marduk (called 'Bel'), Babylon's patron deity, contrasting with Daniel's Hebrew name ('God is my judge'). Nebuchadnezzar's reference to Daniel by this name shows the ongoing tension between Jewish identity and Babylonian environment. The king's phrase 'spirit of the holy gods'

reflects Mesopotamian polytheism's hierarchy—recognition that some spiritual forces transcend others, though still conceived pluralistically. Daniel's reputation had grown across decades of faithful service, making him the king's trusted interpreter despite being a conquered exile.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do faithful Christians' lives cause even unbelievers to recognize God's work, even if misunderstanding its source?
2. What does Nebuchadnezzar's mixed understanding (recognizing divine enablement but misconstruing it polytheistically) teach about incomplete spiritual knowledge?
3. How can we maintain spiritual identity while living in cultures hostile or indifferent to biblical truth?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	מִ	כִּי	אָלָה	יְהִי	עַל	אַחֲרֵי	יְהִי	עַל	בְּלֹטְשָׁאָצָר	כִּי	מִ	רֹוחַ	
But at	the last	H5954	and before	Daniel	H1768	according to the name							
H5705	H318		H6925	H1841									
was Belteshazzar	according to the name	H1096		gods	H1768	and in whom is the spirit							
		H8036		H426		H7308							
gods	of the holy	H6922	the dream	and before	him I told								
H426			H0	H2493	H560								

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 1:7 (Parallel theme): Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

Daniel 5:14 (Spirit): I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.

Daniel 4:18 (Holy): This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

Daniel 2:11 (References God): And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

Daniel 4:9 (Holy): O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.