

Daniel 5:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Belshazzar recounts what he's heard about Daniel: '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.' This secondhand knowledge ('I have heard') explains why he didn't summon Daniel initially—the current king knew of Daniel's reputation but had no personal relationship or recent experience with him. The description ('spirit of the gods,' 'light,' 'understanding,' 'excellent wisdom') echoes the queen mother's words (v.11-12), emphasizing supernatural enablement. The king attributes Daniel's abilities to polytheistic categories ('spirit of the gods') rather than recognizing the one true God—typical of pagan perspective recognizing supernatural power while misconstruing its source. This sets up Daniel's eventual interpretation, which will clearly identify Yahweh as the sovereign God who judges Babylon.

Historical Context

Belshazzar's use of secondhand information ('I have heard') reflects Daniel's apparent retirement or reduced role during Nabonidus and Belshazzar's co-regency. Political transitions often sideline previous administrations' advisors. The king's polytheistic interpretation ('spirit of the gods') shows the persistent pagan worldview despite decades of Daniel's witness under Nebuchadnezzar. This demonstrates how even repeated demonstrations of Yahweh's power don't automatically produce genuine conversion—Nebuchadnezzar came to acknowledge

God's sovereignty (4:34-37), but subsequent rulers reverted to polytheism. This pattern repeats throughout history: revival doesn't guarantee the next generation's faithfulness; each generation must encounter God personally.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does Belshazzar's secondhand knowledge of Daniel teach about the danger of not personally seeking God's wisdom?
2. How can societies benefit from godly people's wisdom while still misunderstanding or rejecting its true source?
3. Why doesn't one generation's spiritual breakthrough guarantee the next generation's faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁמַעַתְּ	עַל־יְיָ	דִּי	רוּחַ	אֱלֹהֵי יִן	בְּרַחֲמֵי
I have even heard	is in thee	H1768	of thee that the spirit	of the gods	H0
H8086	H5922		H7308	H426	
וְנֹהָר וְ	וְשִׂכְלִיתָנָו	וְחָכְמָה	וְיָתִיבָהּ	הַשְׂתֵּתְךָ חַת	בְּרַחֲמֵי
and that light	and understanding	wisdom	and excellent	is found	H0
H5094	H7924	H2452	H3493	H7912	

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