

Daniel 5:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Analysis

Belshazzar makes his offer to Daniel: interpret the writing and receive scarlet clothing, gold chain, and position as third ruler. The king assumes Daniel, like others, will be motivated by rewards—honor, wealth, and power. This reveals Belshazzar's worldview: everyone has a price; wisdom is a commodity that can be purchased. Daniel's forthcoming response (v.17)—'Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king'—will directly challenge this assumption. True prophetic ministry isn't motivated by reward but by commitment to God's truth. The contrast between Belshazzar's offer and Daniel's refusal emphasizes different value systems: the world offers temporal rewards for service; God's servants seek His approval regardless of earthly compensation. This challenges both ancient and modern assumptions about motivation and reward.

Historical Context

The offer of 'third ruler' position reflected political reality: Nabonidus was supreme king (though absent in Arabia), Belshazzar was co-regent (second), leaving third as the highest available position. Scarlet/purple clothing and gold chains symbolized high office throughout the ancient world. Belshazzar's assumption that these

rewards would motivate Daniel shows how rulers typically operated: patronage, bribery, and reward systems maintaining loyalty. Daniel's refusal of these rewards (v.17) was culturally shocking—rejecting royal favor and high position contradicted expected behavior. His willingness to interpret despite refusing rewards demonstrated pure prophetic motivation: proclaiming God's truth regardless of personal consequence or benefit. This established prophetic authenticity.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does Belshazzar's assumption that Daniel will be motivated by rewards reveal about worldly values?
2. How does refusing earthly rewards demonstrate that prophetic ministry is motivated by commitment to truth rather than personal gain?
3. In what ways do contemporary Christians face similar temptations to compromise truth for reward, position, or approval?

Interlinear Text

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|------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| וְאָנָה | שָׁמַעַ ת | עַל יְךָ | דִּי | תִּוָּכֶ ל | וּפְשָׁרָה | לְמַפְשֵׁ ר |
| And I | have heard | H5921 | H1768 | that thou canst | interpretations | make |
| H576 | H8086 | | | H3202 | H6591 | H6590 |
| וְקָטְרִ ין | לְמַשֶּׁר א | כֵּעַ ן | הֵן | תִּוָּכֶ ל | כְּתָב־ א | לְמִקְרֹ א |
| doubts | and dissolve | now | if | that thou canst | the writing | read |
| H7001 | H8271 | H3705 | H2006 | H3202 | H3792 | H7123 |
| וּפְשָׁרָה | לְהוֹדִ עוֹת־ נִי | אֶרְגָּוֹן א | | | תִּלְבֵּ שׁ | |
| interpretations | and make known | with scarlet | | | thereof thou shalt be clothed | |
| H6591 | H3046 | H711 | | | H3848 | |
| וְהִמְוִנְךָ א | דִּי | זָהָב־ א | עַל | צַמְרֶךְ ךָּ | וְתִלְתֵּ א | |
| and have a chain | H1768 | of gold | about | thy neck | and shalt be the third | |
| H2002 | | H1722 | H5922 | H6676 | H8531 | |
| בְּמַלְכוּת־ א | תִּשְׁלֹט׃ | | | | | |
| in the kingdom | ruler | | | | | |
| H4437 | H7981 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 5:7 (Kingdom): The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Genesis 40:8 (Parallel theme): And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

Daniel 5:29 (Kingdom): Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

