

Daniel 5:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour:

Analysis

Daniel begins his interpretation by recounting Nebuchadnezzar's history: 'O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour.' This establishes fundamental theology: earthly kingdoms come through divine grant, not human achievement. The fourfold description (kingdom, majesty, glory, honour) emphasizes comprehensive dominion—Nebuchadnezzar received everything. The phrase 'the most high God gave' attributes all success to divine providence, not Babylonian power or Marduk's favor. This introduction prepares for the coming contrast: Nebuchadnezzar eventually acknowledged God's sovereignty (4:34-37); Belshazzar has failed to learn this lesson, leading to judgment. Daniel's historical review serves pedagogical purpose: reminding Belshazzar of what he should have known and providing theological framework for interpreting the handwriting.

Historical Context

Nebuchadnezzar's historical greatness was undeniable—his military campaigns, building projects, and administrative reforms created the last great Mesopotamian empire. Daniel doesn't dispute these achievements but reframes them: success came through God's grant, not autonomous power. This challenged Babylonian ideology that attributed imperial success to Marduk and royal competence. For Jewish exiles, this interpretation provided theodicy: Babylon's conquest of Judah occurred not because Yahweh was weak but because He sovereignly granted temporary dominion to Babylon for His purposes. The historical pattern shows

God's control over geopolitics, raising and deposing kingdoms according to His redemptive plans.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does attributing Nebuchadnezzar's success to divine grant rather than human achievement challenge worldly perspectives on power and success?
2. What does God's giving 'kingdom, majesty, glory, and honour' to a pagan king teach about common grace and providence?
3. Why does Daniel begin his interpretation with historical theology rather than immediately reading the handwriting?

Interlinear Text

וּרְבּוֹתָא	מֶלֶכֶת	א	מֶלֶךְ	א	נָתָה
O thou	king		God	the most high	
H607	H4430		H426	H5943	
אָבוֹן:	לְנָבְכָדְנָצָר	ר	יְהִי ב	וַיְפִידֵנָא	אֵיךְ א
and glory	and honour		gave	Nebuchadnezzar	thy father
H3367	H1923		H3052	H5020	H2

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 4:17 (Kingdom): This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

