

Daniel 5:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Belshazzar immediately summons Babylon's wise men—astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers—offering extravagant rewards for interpretation: scarlet/purple clothing (royal colors), gold chain (symbol of high office), and position as 'third ruler' in the kingdom. The offer reveals desperation: the king will give nearly anything for understanding. 'Third ruler' reflects political reality—Nabonidus was first, Belshazzar (co-regent) second, so the highest available position was third. This echoes chapter 2 and 4's pattern: when confronted with divine revelation, human wisdom proves inadequate. The wise men will fail (v.8), preparing for Daniel's entrance and interpretation. This repeated pattern demonstrates that spiritual understanding comes through divine gift, not natural ability, education, or compensation. Truth can't be purchased; it must be revealed.

Historical Context

Scarlet/purple dyes were expensive in the ancient world—requiring thousands of murex snails to produce small amounts of dye, making purple clothing a status symbol reserved for royalty and highest officials. A gold chain represented official authority—visible symbol of the king's favor and delegated power. The offer of

'third ruler' position showed genuine desperation: Belshazzar would share his power with whoever could interpret. This reflected ancient beliefs that those who could decode divine messages possessed supernatural wisdom worthy of highest honor. Yet all their learning, all their methods, all the promised rewards couldn't unlock God's message. Only Daniel, empowered by God's Spirit, could interpret—and he refused the rewards (v.17), showing his motivation was God's glory, not personal gain.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does Belshazzar's lavish offer of rewards reveal about his desperation and misunderstanding of spiritual truth?
2. How does the inability of highly educated experts to interpret God's message challenge modern confidence in human expertise?
3. Why can't spiritual truth be purchased or earned through human effort, education, or compensation?

Interlinear Text

פָּשָׁדִים אַ	לֹא שָׁפִי אַ	לְבָעָלָה	בְּמִלְּכָה	מֶלֶךְ אַ	יְהִי הַ
cried	And the king	aloud	to bring	in the astrologers	the Chaldeans
H7123	H4430	H2429	H5954	H826	H3779
בְּכָל לְחַכִּים וְאֶתְּמָרְאֵת	מֶלֶךְ אַ	עָנָה הַ	לְבָעָלָה	לֹא שָׁפִי אַ	פָּשָׁדִים אַ
and the soothsayers	spake	And the king	and said	to the wise	men of Babylon
H1505	H6032	H4430	H560	H2445	H895
וְפִשְׁרָה	דָּבָר הַ	כְּתָב הַ	יְהִי הַ	אֶתְּנֶשׁ כָּל דִּ	וְפִשְׁרָה
Whosoever	cried	writing	this	me the interpretation	
H1768	H3606	H1768	H1836	H6591	
H606	H7123	H3792			
דָּבָר דִּ	וְקָמָונָךְ אַ	אַרְגָּנָה אַ	יְחִיבָּנָה	וְפִשְׁרָה	
and shew	with scarlet	thereof shall be clothed	and have a chain		
H2324	H711	H3848	H2002	H1768	H1722
וְשָׁלְטָן:	בְּמַלְכּוֹת אַ	צָאֵר הַ	עַל	וְקָמָונָךְ אַ	דָּבָר דִּ
about	his neck	and shall be the third	in the kingdom	ruler	of gold
H5922	H6676	H8523	H4437	H7981	H1722

Additional Cross-References

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.

Daniel 5:16 (Kingdom): 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.

Daniel 2:48 (Kingdom): Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 2:6 (Parallel theme): But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.

Isaiah 47:13 (Parallel theme): Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

Ezekiel 16:11 (Parallel theme): I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

Daniel 2:2 (Kingdom): Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

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