

LESSON 15

CHAPTER 4

Daniel 4 is unique in all scripture. The entire chapter is written from the perspective of a pagan king — notice the personal pronoun “I” that starts in verse 2 and continues through the end of the chapter in verse 37. That “I” refers to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Apparently what happened is that Nebuchadnezzar instructed Daniel to write an account of what occurred, perhaps as part of a government record, which Daniel then did.

What can we say about the inspiration of Chapter 4?

Last week, in Chapter 3 we saw some statements from Nebuchadnezzar about the fourth person in the fiery furnace, and we noted that, although inspiration tells us that the king actually made those statements, inspiration does not vouch for the accuracy of what the king said.

For example, Genesis 3:4 accurately records what Satan said to Eve (“Ye shall not surely die”) — but we know that statement was a lie because God had said the opposite in Genesis 2:17. So be careful if anyone ever asks you if every statement in the Bible is true — that is a trick question!

Here in Daniel 4 we have a long statement from Nebuchadnezzar. Inspiration tells us that he said it; but does inspiration also vouch for the truthfulness of what Neb-

uchadnezzar said? And, if so, how is this situation different from what we saw in Daniel 3 or in Genesis 3?

I think that inspiration does vouch for the accuracy of what we read in Daniel 4, even though it is a recorded statement from a pagan king. Why?

For starters, much of the chapter is a quote from Daniel himself interpreting yet another dream from the king. Yes, the quote is the king recounting what Daniel had said to him — but Daniel is writing it down, and (a) Daniel knew what the king had said to him about the dream, (b) Daniel knew what he had told the king about the dream, and (c) what Daniel had told the king about the dream had come from God. I don't believe that either Daniel or the Holy Spirit would have allowed any inaccuracies on these points to enter the Bible — even if Daniel is recording the king's recollections about the events.

The king's recollections were correct (which I believe) or Daniel would have corrected them, or perhaps the Holy Spirit would just not have included it in the book of Daniel. That we have this historical account tells me that it is correct, even though this is a very unusual chapter.

Also, later in the chapter we will see Nebuchadnezzar made like a beast in the fields, and he certainly was in no condition to record what was happening while in that condition. That we know what happened to him is because of this inspired account written down by Daniel. So how did the king know about it to tell Daniel? Because Daniel had already told him about it, and because by the time this was written down the king had returned to his senses.

So, yes, even though Chapter 4 records the statements of a pagan king, we can trust the accuracy of these statements. Chapter 4, as with Chapters 1-3, is intended to show God's power over the Babylonians — and that power would not have been shown had King Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel provided an inaccurate report of what happened.

In Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar learned that God is all knowing. In Chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar learned that God is all powerful. In Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar will learn of his own weakness and folly before God and of his own utter dependence on God and of the danger of human pride.

Nebuchadnezzar was but an instrument in God's hand. Nebuchadnezzar will come face to face with the central themes of this book: The absolute sovereignty of God and God's faithfulness to his covenant people. The first of those themes is repeated three times in this chapter:

Daniel 4:17 — *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.***

Daniel 4:25 — *That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, **till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.***

Daniel 4:32 — *And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, **until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.***

Nebuchadnezzar may have finally learned this lesson. Have we?

Daniel 4:1-3

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 3 How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

King Nebuchadnezzar is much like us — his spiritual life has its ups and downs! After Daniel interpreted his first dream, Nebuchadnezzar praised God, but in the very next chapter he made a giant graven image. After God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar again praised God. Here in Chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar again praises God but only after he has undergone a very humbling experience about which we will learn more in just a moment.

Did Nebuchadnezzar finally learn his lesson? We don't know for sure because the book will tell us nothing more about him.

Even if Nebuchadnezzar's motives are dubious, he speaks the truth about God. God's kingdom (unlike Nebuchadnezzar's) is an everlasting kingdom. His dominion is from generation to generation.

This is what Daniel had told Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:44 about the church. But it also true in a larger sense. God's kingdom and dominion are eternal. He has al-

ways and will always rule over everyone and everything. Nebuchadnezzar thought his kingdom was eternal, but it was not. Human rule is transient. God's rule is permanent. History is full of kingdoms that thought they would last forever. (Babylon, Greece, Rome, Nazi Germany — the 1000 year Reich lasted only eleven years!) There is but one eternal kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar finally understood that — as will all earthly rulers someday. Notice the language Nebuchadnezzar uses in verse 3: "his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." It reminds us of Psalm 145:

Psalm 145:13 — *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.*

And if we skip to the end of this chapter, we see similar statements from the king:

Verses 34-35 — *Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

Those statements remind us again of Psalm 145, and also remind us of:

Isaiah 40:17 — *All nations before him are as nothing*

Isaiah 14:27 — *For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*

Here is the question for us from these verses: Where did Nebuchadnezzar learn all of this Hebrew terminology? Where else? He had been hearing words like that from Daniel since they first met.

Which raises another question for us: What sort of terminology are our friends picking up from us? If we have been around someone for as long as Daniel had been

around Nebuchadnezzar, will that person be quoting more words and phrases from Scripture — or perhaps will that person have picked up other words and phrases from us?

Matthew 5:13 — *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?*

What sort of influence are we having on our friends and acquaintances? On our boss, our co-workers, and our enemies? When we are around them, do we lift them up (as Daniel did with Nebuchadnezzar) or do they pull us down? Or worse, do we pull *them* down?

Daniel 4:4-7

4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.

Poor Nebuchadnezzar. Every time things seem to be going well, he has a troubling dream. Here we have a repeat of what we saw in Chapter 2.

The king was at ease and was prospering. Verse 30 later in the chapter will imply that when this occurred, Nebuchadnezzar's building activities had been completed. If so, that means these events probably took place after Egypt had been conquered and Jerusalem destroyed and about eight or nine years before the siege of Tyre in 573 BC, which is mentioned in Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 26:7 — *For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people.*

The seven year illness of Nebuchadnezzar in this chapter may have been from 582 to 575, a period in which we know of no military operations by the king.

Probably about 25 years had elapsed between the end of Chapter 3 and the beginning of Chapter 4. Daniel is now in his forties, and the king is in his fifties or sixties (about ten to fifteen years older than Daniel).

The king may have also mellowed a bit since Chapters 2 and 3. Notice that he does not make any threats in verse 6.

Notice also that Daniel was no flash in the pan. After 25 years, he was still master of the wise men (as we will see in verse 9). And that success had not changed Daniel; he was still faithful to God.

Thus, the king was at ease and prospering — and that may have been a big source of his problems! Recall Jesus' parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. There we had a man who had everything but God — and God called him a fool.

There is a big change in the king's peace of mind between verse 4 and verse 5. He goes from being at ease to being afraid and troubled. And again, in response, the

king makes a decree. (He does that a lot, doesn't he!) This decree commands that all of the wise men be brought forward to interpret his dream.

The astrologers mentioned here were not mentioned in the list found in Chapter 2. The king seems to be grasping at straws in his increasingly desperate attempt to understand his dreams. (He may be ready to call the Psychic Hotline next!)

As before, the Chaldean wise men are unable to interpret the dream. Note that unlike last time, this time Nebuchadnezzar tells them what the dream was. Their inability to interpret it means that it must not have been listed in their dream manuals. Even if they knew or guessed the meaning, they probably would have lacked the courage to tell the king. Even Daniel will later hesitate to tell the king what the dream means.

Daniel 4:8-9

8 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, 9 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.

Daniel comes in last before the king. Daniel, it seems, was not part of the "group." (God's people are seldom part of the "group.")

Why was Daniel the *last* one called and not the first one called? There are many possible reasons.

- Maybe Daniel was out of town or ill.
- Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar didn't want to ask Daniel unless it was absolutely necessary. I doubt that Nebuchadnezzar liked having to go to Daniel for answers.
- Also, unlike the other wise men, Daniel was not a sycophant of the king. He came when he was called, but likely did not otherwise hang around the king.
- Another possibility is that Daniel may have deliberately delayed his coming in order to give the pagan wise men an opportunity to prove their inability to interpret the dream.
- Daniel was the master of the wise men, so the boss may have been the last one called.
- The king may have suspected what the dream meant, and he may have suspected that Daniel would tell him what it meant — and he may have wanted to delay the inevitable. He was hoping the Chaldeans would give him good news about the dream — but they were unable to turn that dream into anything good for the king!

It is clear from verse 8 that Nebuchadnezzar is still a card-carrying polytheist — at least at the beginning of Chapter 4. When he calls Daniel, he reminds us that Daniel's Babylonian name is Belteshazzar "according to the name of my god." The king also says that Daniel has the "spirit of the holy gods." Recall that Nebuchadnezzar's "god" was presumably Nebo, and Belteshazzar means "Nebo, protect my life." Let's see what Nebo does for the king...

Daniel 4:10-12

10 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: 12 The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

So far so good: The king had dreamed of a giant tree that gave shelter and food to all the beasts and birds of the earth.

Already the king was likely identifying himself with this tree. He like the tree had grown tall and strong with roots and limbs covering the earth. He like the tree provided health and wealth to those who lived under him.

This looks like a happy dream so far. What was troubling the king? We are about to find out.

Daniel 4:13-14

13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; 14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

This beautiful tree was going to be cut down, and its foliage was going to be stripped away. And one effect of cutting down the tree was that the birds and beasts that had found shelter under it would be scattered.

The order came from “a watcher and an holy one” who “came down from heaven.” Who was this? The word for “watcher” (and its plural in verse 17) that is used here occurs nowhere else in the Bible (but we are still in the Aramaic section, and not too much of the Old Testament was written in Aramaic — although neither is there a similar Hebrew word used).

The word does occur in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (in a commentary on Genesis), where it is used to denote an angel. This has caused some to believe that the watchers are a special class of angels whose duty is to watch and patrol the earth and who are responsible for executing the decrees of God on the earth.

As with many things about angels, you can quickly run out of scriptural support in your study and enter the realm of speculation. We should be very careful not to

make any assertions that go beyond what we have been told — and here we are told virtually nothing about the identity of these watchers.

The Babylonians believed in heavenly beings whose task was to keep watch over the earth — and perhaps the king is just substituting his own Babylonian word for what he saw. But there may be a scriptural basis for that Babylonian belief. Zechariah 1:10 speaks of those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.

We should remember that although by this time in history there are many different nations and peoples — not that much earlier there had still be one people and one nation, all coming from the first man, Adam. It is interesting to study the beliefs of these different nations and try to determine what can be traced back to that earlier time. We have already discussed how the various flood epics scattered around the globe support the Biblical account of a universal flood — perhaps the Babylonian belief in watchers likewise supports the Biblical accounts of angels and their work here on earth. (We will see more about angels as our study continues.)

Verse 13 could be described as where the Bible meets the X-Files! A great deal of speculation, most of it nonsense, has been written about the watchers. If you ever watch any of the UFO shows on TV, you will hear some very strange views about the identity of these watchers. And much of that speculation involves one of the most obscure accounts in the Bible — Genesis 6:1-4. Again, we need to be very careful that we do not go beyond what is written in the Bible, and not much is written on this subject. One of the earliest heresies, gnosticism, was based on speculative views that went far beyond the Apostolic teachings — and we need to be careful we don't ever fall in that same trap.

But, with that said, one of the most important sources regarding the Watchers is the apocryphal Book of Enoch. That book is not inspired, so we don't know if what it tells us about the watchers is true, but before we completely dismiss it, we should note that although the Book of Enoch is not inspired — that book does contain at least one inspired statement by the prophet Enoch. How do we know that?

Because Jude 14 quotes the prophet Enoch, and something very similar to the statement in Jude 14 appears in the Book of Enoch.

Notice that I did not say that Jude quoted the book of Enoch as many assert. Jude 14 is quoting Enoch himself. Yes, the Book of Enoch contains a similar quote attributed to Enoch, but Jude tells us he is quoting the person, not the book.

Fragments of the Book of Enoch were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. It had been lost for fifteen centuries until it was rediscovered. An English translation appeared in 1821.

The Book of Enoch is very strange. It describes heavenly visions, journeys through fantastic mountain ranges to see the fiery pit where evil angels burn, the last judgment before the great throne, and the movements of the sun and stars. It is divided into five sections: the Book of the Watchers, the Similitudes, the Astronomy book, the Book of Dreams, and the Epistle of Enoch.

The first section, the Book of the Watchers, takes its name from the Watchers, who, the books tells us, were the angels who came to earth and corrupted it. Enoch is assigned to take to these fallen angels the message of their judgment. The fallen angels ask Enoch to intercede for them, and Enoch is then caught up into heaven in a vision of God.

In that vision, Enoch learns there is to be no mercy for the fallen angels. The remainder of that book describes Enoch's heavenly journeys.

So what I am saying about the Book of Enoch? Just that it is interesting, that it contains at least one actual statement by the prophet Enoch, and that it **purports** to tell us a lot about these Watchers (so if you are interested in the Watchers, you should look there next).

I think that what C.S. Lewis said about demons could also be said about angels:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.

But with that said, there is nothing inherently wrong with speculating about things in the Bible. In fact, absent not having any imagination at all, it is likely impossible to study the Bible and delight in it without speculating now and then about something we are reading. But we need to make sure (a) that we never label that speculation as anything other than speculation and (b) that our speculation never runs afoul of Biblical teachings.

Daniel 4:15-16

15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: 16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

Although the tree would be cut down, the stump would be left, and it was to have a band of iron and bronze placed around it. The purpose of these bands seems to have been to protect and preserve the stump, and to keep it from being removed along with the rest of the tree. Others argue that the band is just the first indication that this imagery of a tree is about to transform into imagery of a beast. (Yes, God is mixing his metaphors!)

Although Daniel had not yet interpreted the king's dream, I think we can now see why the dream was so troubling to the king. Look very carefully at what the watcher said at the end of verse 15: *And let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let **his** portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth.* The watcher quits referring to the stump as "it" and begins instead to refer to the stump as "he"! Even before Daniel provided the interpretation, it was likely already very clear to the king which man in particular the watcher had in mind.

What was going to happen to this stump/man? The heart of this stump was to be changed from that of a man to that of a beast. Some translations have "mind" in place of "heart," and that is the correct sense of how "heart" is used here.

How long was this change going to last? It was to last for "seven times." What does that mean? Most commentators take the phrase to mean "appointed times" or "seasons," which would mean that "seven times" refers to seven years. Another possibility is that "seven times" denotes an indefinite period of time that is long enough for the lesson to be learned. As we know, seven (when used figuratively) denotes perfection. Thus, this period of seven times might denote a period of time that would be just right for Nebuchadnezzar to learn his lesson. This view may be supported by the wording used later:

Verse 25 — *And seven times shall pass over thee, **till thou know** that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*

I think the better view is that a literal seven years is meant here. We have not yet arrived at the apocalyptic sections of the book, where we would expect numbers to be used figuratively.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have a bizarre view of the "seven times." They say that the seven times denotes seven years, each day of which also denotes a year. Thus, using 360 days for the number of days in a year (which fits with the Babylonian base 60 number system, but does not fit with the actual number of days in a year), we have

7 times 360, or 2520 years. They refer to this period of 2520 years as the “times of the Gentiles” — the period of Gentile opposition, which they say is depicted by Nebuchadnezzar’s madness. (Some would argue that it seems odd for a time of Gentile *prominence* to be symbolized by the insanity of a very prominent Gentile!) This period of 2520 years supposedly began in 607 BC when they say the temple was destroyed. (This actually happened in 587 BC. They give incorrect dates for virtually all of the events that we have been studying.) Counting 2520 years from 607 BC brings us to AD 1914, which is when they say the kingdom was established.

That is what the Jehovah’s Witnesses say. What did Jehovah say? He said in Daniel 2 that the eternal kingdom would be established in the first century — **not** in the 20th century!

Daniel 4:17

17 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.

Notice the plural “watchers” and “holy ones” here. Although only one “watcher” is mentioned in verse 13, there are apparently more than one involved in this decree. The watcher continues the decree, and gives the reason behind it.

The decree was so “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.” That is, the purpose of this decree was to make clear one of the primary themes of this book — the absolute sovereignty of God.

The term “basest of men” in verse 17 is interesting from several perspectives. God chooses who will wear the crown, and often God has chosen those who are humble and of low social standing.

Job 5:11 — *To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety.*

1 Samuel 2:7-8 — *The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them.*

Luke 1:51-53 — *He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.*

But this term also has a particular application to the history of Nebuchadnezzar (as we mentioned in the introduction). The lowly origin of Nebuchadnezzar's family was otherwise unknown until an inscription made by his father, Nabopolassar, was found in which he was referred to as “the son of a nobody” (of non-royal birth), “insignificant,” “not visible,” “the weak,” and “the feeble.” This kind of knowledge (the lowly origin of Babylon's greatest king) would have quickly been forgotten — but the author of Daniel knew about it. The decrees of the Babylonian kings in Daniel are remarkably similar to those found inscribed on ancient monuments. How would a Jewish writer produce such an accurate record 400 years after the fact?

Daniel 4:18

18 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.

The king turns at last to Daniel for the interpretation of the dream because the other wise men could not interpret it. But the meaning seems clear, so why couldn't they interpret it?

For starters, they did not know the Old Testament as well as Daniel did! The portrayal of man in his pride as a lofty tree is common in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 2:12-13 — *For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: 13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan.*

Isaiah 10:34 — *And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.*

Ezekiel used a very similar picture to describe Assyria just a few years before Nebuchadnezzar had this dream. (See Ezekiel 31:3-17.)

Even though this imagery must have been very clear to any Hebrew, it may not have been familiar to the Chaldeans. (But it was clear enough to Nebuchadnezzar that he was terrified by it.)

Another reason why the king's other wise men could not interpret the dream is that God may have kept the Chaldeans from understanding it so that Daniel would be chosen to explain it to the king.

But I think the most likely explanation is that the Chaldeans understood exactly what the dream meant but they were too cowardly to explain it to the king. Rather than give the king bad news, they opted to give him no news. Daniel, as we will see, will opt instead to proclaim the whole counsel of God to Nebuchadnezzar (which is yet another good lesson for us from the book of Daniel!).

Daniel 4:19

19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

Even Daniel was reluctant to tell the king what his dream meant. The Aramaic here literally reads "he was stupefied for one hour" but the word used here for "hour" can simply mean a period of time.

This verse gives us an interesting picture of the relationship between these two men. Daniel was not happy in the least about the bad news he had for the king. Daniel's loyalty to the king was genuine.

But maybe Daniel just delayed because he was scared. Could that be it? I don't think so. Knowing what we know about Daniel, I think Daniel's reluctance arose from his feelings for the king rather than from his fear of the king.

Notice the concern of the king for Daniel as well. "Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee."

Calvin argues that Nebuchadnezzar secretly despised Daniel in his heart, which Calvin says is why the king waited so long to ask Daniel for the interpretation, but I think the evidence suggests otherwise. The king may not have wanted to ask Daniel for help, but I don't think the text suggests it was because the king despised Daniel. Their relationship seems to have involved mutual respect and perhaps mutual affection. Their concern for each other seems very genuine.

Daniel had risen very far from his arrival as an exiled Jewish boy. Daniel could have been vindictive against the king who had exiled him and who had destroyed Jerusalem, but he was not. There could have been an additional factor behind Daniel's distress at the bad news for the king. Nebuchadnezzar evidently had treated the Jews well throughout most of his reign. If he were deposed, there would be no guarantee of a like-minded replacement. A ruler could easily arise who knew not Daniel, a parallel of Exodus 1:8.

When Daniel at last begins to speak, he begins by wishing that the dream would apply instead to Nebuchadnezzar's enemies — but Daniel, the king, and the reader all know that such will not be the case. What Daniel is about to say will apply to the king.