

Daniel 4:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Daniel's response to the dream interpretation reveals his character: he's 'astonied' (Hebrew דָּחַם/daham, stunned/appalled) for 'one hour' (brief period), and his thoughts 'troubled him.' This distress isn't due to interpretive difficulty—God had revealed the meaning—but to the message's severity. Daniel must tell the king who had honored and promoted him that devastating judgment approaches. The king, perceiving Daniel's distress, reassures him: 'let not the dream or the interpretation thereof trouble thee.' This shows Nebuchadnezzar's regard for Daniel and desire to hear truth even if unfavorable. Daniel's tactful response—'My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies'—expresses genuine wish that this judgment might fall on the king's enemies rather than the king himself. This reveals Daniel's compassion even for a pagan ruler, echoing Jeremiah's instruction to exiles to 'seek the peace' of Babylon (Jeremiah 29:7).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern court culture made Daniel's position precarious. Bearers of bad news to kings risked death—tyrants regularly executed messengers announcing military defeats or unfavorable omens. Daniel's year-long troubled

state shows his awareness of this danger and genuine care for the king. Nebuchadnezzar's reassurance ('let not the dream...trouble thee') reveals his development since chapter 2, when he nearly executed all wise men. Decades of Daniel's faithful service had built trust. This historical context heightens the scene's dramatic tension: will Daniel speak truth risking royal anger, or soften the message to preserve position? His choice to interpret honestly demonstrates prophetic integrity.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does Daniel's distress before delivering judgment teach about balancing prophetic truth-telling with pastoral compassion?
2. How does Daniel's wish that the judgment might fall on the king's enemies rather than the king himself demonstrate Christian love for adversaries?
3. Why is speaking difficult truth an act of love, even when it risks personal consequence?

Interlinear Text

כִּשְׁעַת הַאֲשַׁתּוּם בְּלֹטְשָׁאצָר

Then Daniel H1768 whose name H8036 Belteshazzar H1096 was astonished H8075 hour H8160

הַיְלָדָה כִּי-זֶה-וְיֶהָ וְעַיִן-הַיְלָדָה

for one and his thoughts thereof trouble answered him The king and said

H2298 H7476 H927 H6032 H4430 H560

לֹא-יְבָלֶל הַיְלָדָה וְפָשָׁר הַיְלָדָה

Belteshazzar the dream or the interpretation let not thereof trouble answered

H1096 H2493 H6591 H409 H927 H6032

לְשָׁנָא יְהִי הַיְלָדָה כִּי-זֶה-וְיֶהָ

Belteshazzar and said My lord the dream be to them that hate

H1096 H560 H4756 H2493 H8131

וְפָשָׁר הַיְלָדָה

or the interpretation thereof to thine enemies

H6591 H6146

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 8:27 (Kingdom): And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

Daniel 7:28 (Parallel theme): Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Jeremiah 4:19 (Parallel theme): My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

1 Samuel 3:17 (References Lord): And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.

Daniel 4:24 (Kingdom): This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:

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