

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL 4

This chapter was written by Nebuchadnezzar himself; and was either taken out of his archives, or given by him to Daniel, who under divine inspiration inserted it into this work of his; and a very useful instruction it contains, showing the sovereignty of God over the greatest kings and potentates of the earth, and this acknowledged by one of the proudest monarchs that ever lived upon it. It begins with a preface, saluting all nations, and declaring the greatness and power of God, (<sup>2041</sup>Daniel 4:1-3) then follows the narrative of a dream the king dreamed, which troubled him; upon which he called for his wise men to interpret it, but in vain; at length he told it to Daniel, (<sup>2041</sup>Daniel 4:4-9): the dream itself; which being told, astonished Daniel, the king being so much interested in it, (<sup>2040</sup>Daniel 4:10-19), the interpretation of it, with Daniel's advice upon it, is in (<sup>2040</sup>Daniel 4:20-27) the fulfilment of it, time and occasion thereof, (<sup>2043</sup>Daniel 4:28-33). Nebuchadnezzar's restoration to his reason and kingdom, for which he praises God, (<sup>2044</sup>Daniel 4:34-37).

**Ver. 1.** *Nebuchadnezzar the king*, etc.]. This and the two following verses are annexed to the preceding chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and in the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions; as if the author of the division of the chapters thought that Nebuchadnezzar proposed by this public proclamation to celebrate the praise of the Lord, on account of the wonderful deliverance of the three Jews from the fiery furnace; whereas they are a preface to a narrative of a dream, and an event which concerned himself, and most properly begin a new chapter, as they do in the Syriac and Arabic versions. The edict begins, not with pompous and extravagant titles, as was the manner of the eastern monarchs, and still is, but only plainly "Nebuchadnezzar the king"; for he was now humbled under the mighty hand of God; whether his conversion was real is not evident; yet, certain it is, he expresses himself in stronger language concerning the divine Being and his works, and under a deeper sense of his sovereignty and majesty, than ever he did before. This proclamation is directed

*unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth;* belonging to his kingdom, as Aben Ezra; and these were many; besides the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans, also the Medes and Persians, the Egyptians, the Jews, and the nations round about them; and also the Spaniards, Moors, and Thracians, with others: but there is no reason to limit this to his own subjects, though first designed; for it was his desire that all people whatever in the known world might read, hear, and consider, what the grace of God had done unto him, with him, and for him, and learn to fear and reverence him:

*peace be multiplied unto you:* a wish for all kind of outward happiness and prosperity, and an increase of it; thus it becomes a prince to wish for all his subjects, and even for all the world; for there cannot be a greater blessing than peace, nor a greater judgment than war. This phrase is borrowed from the common salutation in eastern countries, and is used often in the New Testament for spiritual and eternal peace.

**Ver. 2.** *I thought it good,* etc.] Or, “fair”<sup>f143</sup> and beautiful, highly becoming me, what was my duty, and what might be profitable and beneficial to others, and make for the glory of the great God of heaven and earth:

*to show the signs and wonders the high God hath wrought toward me;* to declare by writing the wonderful things God, who is above all, the most high God, had done unto him, by giving him a wonderful dream, exactly describing his future case and condition, and then as wonderful an interpretation of it, and which was as wonderfully fulfilled, and, after all, in a wonderful manner restoring him to the exercise of his reason, and the administration of his kingdom, after both had departed from him.

**Ver. 3.** *How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders!* etc.] They are great, very great, exceeding great; so great that it cannot be said, nor even conceived how great they are, what a display of wisdom, power, and goodness is in them; they are wonderful beyond expression and conception; and so strong and mighty as not to be resisted and made void by all the powers of nature, earth, or hell; and if this may be said of his works of providence, and his miracles of that, how much more of his works and miracles of grace!

*his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom;* Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, though a long one, had an end, and so have all others; but the kingdom of God is for ever; the kingdom of providence, and also of grace; the kingdom of his

Son, the Messiah, as in (<sup>2704</sup>Daniel 2:44) from whence Nebuchadnezzar had learnt this:

*and his dominion is from generation to generation*; or, “with generation and generation”<sup>f144</sup>; it goes along, and continues with all generations, and will do so to the end of time.

**Ver. 4.** *I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house*, etc.] Being returned from his wars, and having obtained victory over the Egyptians, and other nations, and made himself an universal monarch; and now was in entire rest from all his enemies; enjoying himself in his family, and among his courtiers, and nothing to disturb him from any quarter. Josephus<sup>f145</sup> says this was a little after the history of the former chapter; but it must be many years after that: he reigned forty five years; one year after this dream, it came to pass; it was seven years fulfilling, and he lived after his restoration a year or two; so that this must be about the thirty fifth year of his reign. Bishop Usher<sup>f146</sup> and Mr. Whiston<sup>f147</sup> place it in the year of the world 3434 A.M., and before Christ 570; and so Dr. Prideaux<sup>f148</sup>. Mr. Bedford<sup>f149</sup> puts it in the year 569:

*and flourishing in my palace*: in health of body, in rigour of mind, abounding with riches; indulging himself in all sensual pleasures; adored by his subjects, caressed by his courtiers, and in fame throughout the whole world: a new palace was built by him, of which (<sup>2708</sup>Daniel 4:30), being, as Dr. Prideaux<sup>f150</sup> says, four times as large as the old one; eight miles in compass; surrounded with three walls; and had hanging gardens in it, he made for his wife.

**Ver. 5.** *I saw a dream which made me afraid*, etc.] Things were represented to his fancy in a dream, as if he saw them with his eyes, as the tree, its leaves and fruit; the shaking and cutting it down to the stump, etc.; and though he did not understand the meaning of it, yet he thought it portended some evil, which threw him into a panic; he was afraid that something bad would befall him, though he knew not what: thus God can make the minds of the greatest men uneasy amidst all their glory, pride, and pleasure:

*and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me*; the thoughts that came into his mind while he was upon his bed dreaming, and the things which were represented to his fancy in his brain, he remembered when awake, gave him a great deal of trouble and uneasiness, what should

be the meaning of them, and what would be the issue and event of these things.

**Ver. 6.** *Therefore made I a decree*, etc.] Published a proclamation; signifying it was his mind and will

*to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before him*; all together, supposing that one or other of them, or by consulting together, would be able to explain things to his satisfaction, and make him more easy:

*that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream*; for though they could not tell the interpretation of his former dream, because he could not relate to them the dream itself; which, if he could, they promised him the interpretation; but now he could remember it, and therefore might expect they would make known the interpretation of it to him.

**Ver. 7.** *Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers*, etc.] (see Gill on “<sup>2000</sup>Daniel 2:2”),

*and I told the dream before them, but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof*; because they could not; before they pretended, if the dream was told, they could give the interpretation of it; but now, though it was told, they could not do it; which shows the vanity of their art, the falsehood of their pretensions, and that they were but jugglers and impostors.

**Ver. 8.** *But at the last Daniel came in before me*, etc.] Whether sent for or no is not clear; the reason why he came not with the rest might be because he did not associate with them; nor did they care he should be among them, and present at this time; and it may be the king had forgot the knowledge he had of dreams; or, however, did not choose to send for him until he had tried all his wise men; and so it was ordered by the providence of God, and which is the chief reason of all, that he should come last, that the skill of the magicians might appear first to be baffled, and that Daniel, or rather Daniel’s God, might be more known, and might be glorified:

*whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god*; so called by him and his courtiers, after the name of his god Bel, with which this name of Daniel begins; (see Gill on “<sup>2000</sup>Daniel 1:7”):

*and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods*: meaning either the holy angels, as Saadiah or speaking in his Heathenish manner, having imbibed the notion of many gods, some holy, and some impure; or it may be, speaking in the dialect of the Jews, he may mean the one true God who is holy, and from whom alone is the spirit of prophecy or of foretelling things to come; which he knew by former experience Daniel had:

*and before him I told the dream, saying*; as follows:

**Ver. 9.** *O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians*, etc.] So he called him, either because he excelled them in knowledge, and was greater than they, as Jacchiades; though not of their rank and order, which Daniel would have scorned to have been among, and reckoned of; so that this would have been no compliment, but a grief unto him; or because he was appointed by the king chief over them, and even over their governors; (see Gill on “<sup>2048</sup>Daniel 2:48”):

*because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee*; (see Gill on “<sup>2048</sup>Daniel 4:8”);

*and no secret troubleth thee*; any ways perplexes thy mind to find it out; it is easy to thee to come at; it gives thee no manner of trouble to get knowledge of it; there is no secret hidden from thee; all is plain before thee, and with the utmost facility canst thou reveal it:

*tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen*; that is, the meaning of them; for the king remembered this his dream, and afterwards tells it very particularly:

*and the interpretation of it*; it may be rendered, “that is, the interpretation of it”<sup>f151</sup>; for that only was what the king wanted.

**Ver. 10.** *Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed*, etc.] So things appeared to my fancy thus; they ran in my head or brain in a dream in my bed, as if I saw them with my eyes, as follows; for so I thought,

*I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth*; an emblem of a powerful prince well settled, and strongly supported in his power and government; so the Assyrian monarch, (<sup>2608</sup>Ezekiel 31:3-9) and here Nebuchadnezzar himself, as it is afterwards explained; who was well established in his monarchy, the metropolis of which was Babylon; and which stood pretty much in the midst of the then known world:

*and the height thereof was great*; taller than trees in common; denoting the superiority of the Babylonian monarch over all kings and kingdoms of the earth.

**Ver. 11.** *The tree grew, and was strong*, etc.] Grew higher and broader, taller and thicker, increased in boughs and branches, and became strong and stable, that no winds nor storms could move it: this shows the increasing power of Nebuchadnezzar, the enlargement of his dominions, and the stability of his empire:

*and the height thereof reached unto heaven*; higher than any on earth; expressive of his dominion over all nations and people of the earth; or of his ambition of deity itself; and so Saadiah illustrates it by (<sup>2344</sup>Isaiah 14:14). “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds etc.”:

*and the sight thereof to the end of the earth*: being so high, it was seen afar off; the fame of this great monarch reached to the ends of the earth; the eyes of all were turned to him; some looking upon him with wonder, others with envy.

**Ver. 12.** *The leaves thereof were fair*, etc.] Or “branches”<sup>f152</sup>, as some; and design either the provinces belonging to his empire, which were very large and flourishing; or the governors of them under him, as Saadiah, who made no small and contemptible figure; his princes were altogether kings:

*and the fruit thereof much*; great revenues from all parts of the empire were brought to him:

*and in it was meat for all*; the produce of the several countries, and the trade carried on in them, brought in a sufficient livelihood to all the inhabitants:

*the beasts of the field had shadow under it*; the inhabitants of the several Heathenish nations under him, and even those that were most savage, were protected in their lives and properties by him; so princes should be a screen, a protection to their subjects:

*and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof*; which Saadiah interprets of the Israelites, in opposition to the foreign nations, comparable to the beasts of the field:

*and all flesh was fed of it*; all his subjects shared in the good things his victorious arms brought into his empire; all enriched, or however made

comfortable, and had a sufficiency of food and raiment; so that there was no reason to complain of him as oppressive to his subjects.

**Ver. 13.** *I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed*, etc.] The king goes on to relate what other things presented themselves to his imagination in his dream, concerning this tree which signified himself:

*and, behold, a watcher*: which Saadiah interprets of Bath Kol; but Aben Ezra, Jarchi, Jacchiades, and Ben Melech of an angel; so called because incorporeal, ever watches, and never sleeps, and is always attentive to, and observant of, the commands of God so the angels in the fragment of Enoch are called “egregori”, watchers; and the same word is here used in the Alexandrian copy. Some<sup>f153</sup> render it “an enemy”, “an holy one”: according to the sense of the word in (<sup><0286></sup>1 Samuel 28:16), and produce it to show that angels are called enemies:

*and an Holy One*; one of the holy angels that never sinned, nor left their first estate, but continued in it; in which they are established by Christ, and are impeccable; are perfectly pure and holy in their nature and actions: such an one came down from heaven; the place of their abode, as it seemed to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream.

**Ver. 14.** *He cried aloud*, etc.] Or, with strengths;<sup>f154</sup> being a mighty angel, and that he might be heard far and near:

*and said thus, hew down the tree*; remove this mighty monarch from his throne; take away his government from him: this is said to fellow angels employed in the affairs of Providence, and the execution of them, to bring about an event so momentous:

*and cut off his branches*; take away his provinces, each of the parts of his dominion, from him:

*shake off his leaves*: cause his deputy governors to shake off their allegiance to him:

*and scatter his fruit*; the revenues of his vast empire, and let others take them:

*let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches*; those that have either voluntarily betook themselves to him for protection; or have been carried captive by him, and have lived under his shadow, whether of the more barbarous nations, or more civilized, as the Jews; let

them take the opportunity of withdrawing from him, and returning to their own lands; (see <sup><2510></sup>Jeremiah 51:9).

**Ver. 15.** *Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth*, etc.] Let him not be utterly destroyed, or his life taken away; but let him continue in being; though in a forlorn condition, yet with hope of restoration; for a tree may be cut down to the stump, and yet revive again, (<sup><18147></sup>Job 14:7-9) and let his kingdom remain:

*even with a band of iron and brass*; which some think was done to preserve it and to show that his kingdom remained firm and immovable; but that is meant by the former clause, (<sup><2703></sup>Daniel 4:26), rather the allusion is to his distracted condition afterwards related; it being usual to bind madmen with chains of iron or brass, to keep them from hurting themselves and others, as in (<sup><4004></sup>Mark 5:4):

*in the tender grass of the field*; where his dwelling should be, not in Babylon, and in his fine palace, living sumptuously as he now did; but in the field, grazing there like a beast, and like one that is feddered and confined to a certain place:

*and let it be wet with the dew of heaven*; suggesting that this would not only be his case in the daytime; but that he should lie all night in the field, and his body be wet all over with the dew that falls in the night, as if he had been dipped in a dyer's vat, as the word<sup>f155</sup> signifies; and Jarchi says it has the signification of dipping; and not be in a stately chamber, and on a bed of down, but on a plot of grass, exposed to all the inclemencies of the air:

*and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth*; instead of feeding on royal dainties, as he had all his days, let him eat grass like the beasts of the field, as it seems he did.

**Ver. 16.** *Let his heart be changed from man's*, etc.] Not as to the substance, but as to the quality:

*and let a beast's heart be given unto him*; from a human heart, let it be changed into a brutal one; let him be deprived of the use of reason, and have no more exercise of it than a brute has; let him be wholly governed by the animal senses, and behave and act as a beast does; be as senseless, stupid, and savage, as that: and such a heart Nebuchadnezzar had; not that his rational soul departed from him, then he must have died; but the powers of it were sadly vitiated and depraved; his understanding, imagining himself



to be a beast, not a man; his judgment, in not distinguishing the actions of a beast from those of a man; his memory of things past utterly failed; he forgot what he had been, and was; his will, inclination, and fancy, were towards brutal things, and ran upon deserts, fields, and grass; and he shunned the society of men:

*and let seven times pass over him:* while in this condition; let him remain so long in it; not seven months, as Abarbinel, and others; nor seven half years, or three years and a half, as some in Theodoret; dividing the year into two parts, summer and winter; and suppose, that seven of these seasons passed over him before he recovered; but seven years are meant, as Jarchi, Saadiah, and Jacchiades, as the phrase is used in (<sup><2072></sup>Daniel 7:25 12:7), so many years the temple of Solomon was building, which Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed, and so long this madness must remain upon him: no notice is taken of this affair by Heathen writers, only Abydenus<sup>f156</sup> says, that being under a divine afflatus, he foretold the destruction of the Babylonian empire by a Persian mule (meaning Cyrus), and by a Mede, and immediately, **ηφανιστο**, he disappeared; which some have understood of this time of his madness, which quickly followed upon this dream.

**Ver. 17.** *This matter is by the decree of the watchers,* etc.] That is, the cutting down the tree, and what is signified by it, was with the advice, consent, and approbation of the watchers, by whom is generally understood angels; not that they were the authors of this decree, but approvers of it; and were ready, not only to subscribe it, but to execute it; it being against a wicked man, and an oppressor of the Lord's people: they are represented as assessors with God; called into a consultation with him; alluding to the manner of kings and princes, who have their privy council, whom they advise with on occasion; though, properly speaking, nothing of this nature is to be attributed to God, only after the manner of men; (see <sup><1229></sup>1 Kings 22:19-22)

*and the demand by the word of the Holy Ones;* the same as before, in other words; watchers and Holy Ones being the same, the holy angels; (see Gill on "<sup><2043></sup>Daniel 4:13"): and the decree and the demand the same; or the request<sup>f157</sup>, or petition; which shows what concern they had in the decree; they only requested it might pass, or be carried into execution; though some understand this of saints on earth, who, in their prayers and supplications, requested for the judgments of God to come down upon this

proud monarch: though, after all, it may be best to interpret the whole of the three Persons in the Godhead, who are perfectly pure and holy, essentially and inderivatively; and may be called watchers, because they watch over the good, to bring it upon the Lord's people; and over the evil, to bring it upon their enemies: and to them well agree the decree and the demand; and the rather this may be thought to be the true sense, since this decree is called the decree of the most High, (~~27021~~ Daniel 4:24), and who is expressed in the next clause:

*to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men*; though men have kingdoms on earth, and multitudes subject to them, yet they are not absolute sovereigns; there is a God that is higher than they, at whose control they are, and does whatsoever he pleases in their kingdoms, of which the event signified in this dream was a proof; and would be brought about on purpose to make it appear that those that live on earth (for, as for the dead, they know nothing what is done on it), both princes and people, might be sufficiently convinced of the truth of it:

*and giveth it to whomsoever he will*; that is, the kingdom; he takes it from one, and gives it to another; pulls down one, and sets up another, as he pleases; (see ~~27021~~ Daniel 2:21):

*and setteth up over it the basest of men*; or, "the lowest of men"<sup>f158</sup>; men of the meanest and lowest rank and condition of life, as David was taken from the sheepfold, and made king of Israel; perhaps respect is had to Nebuchadnezzar himself; not to his person, as Saadiah, who says he was short, and low of stature; but to his later state and condition, when he was taken from among the beasts of the field, and restored to his throne and kingdom.

**Ver. 18.** *This dream I King Nebuchadnezzar have seen*, etc.] So things were represented to him by a vision in a dream:

*now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof*; at once, directly; as he was well assured he could, by what he had already done; having both told him his dream when forgotten by him, and the meaning of it; and therefore doubted not but he could interpret his dream, being told him:

*forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation;* he had sent for them, even all of them; he had told them his dream, but they could not interpret it; (see <sup>2046</sup>Daniel 4:6,7):

*but thou art able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee;* he not only knew his ability from former experience, but for the reason here given; of which he might have more proofs than one, that the Spirit, not of impure deities, of the gods and demons of the Heathens, but of the one true, living, and holy God, who knows all things, dwelt in him; (see <sup>2049</sup>Daniel 4:9).

**Ver. 19.** *Then Daniel (whose name was Belteshazzar) was astonished for one hour,* etc.] Not at the difficulty of interpreting the dream, which was plain and easy to him; but at the sad and shocking things he saw plainly by the dream were coming upon the king: and though he was a wicked prince, and justly deserved such treatment; and thus he continued for the space of an hour like one thunder struck, filled with amazement, quite stupid, dumb, and silent:

*and his thoughts troubled him;* both about what should befall the king, and how he should make it known to him:

*the king spake and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee:* he saw by his countenance the confusion he was in, and imagined there was something in the dream which portended evil, and made him backward to relate it; and therefore encouraged him to tell it, be it what it would:

*Belteshazzar answered and said, my lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies;* which is as if he had said, I could have wished, had it been the will of God, that what is signified by the dream might have befallen not the king, but his enemies; this he said, not merely as a courtier, but as one that heartily wished and prayed for his peace and prosperity; and to show that he had no ill will to the king in the interpretation of the dream, but was his hearty faithful servant and minister; and yet suggests that something very dreadful and distressing was intended for him; and hereby he prepared him the better to receive it.

**Ver. 20.** *The tree which thou sawest, &c.]* In these two verses is related part of the dream, which respects the flourishing estate of Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom; (see Gill on "<sup>2040</sup>Daniel 4:10"), (see Gill on "<sup>2041</sup>Daniel 4:11"), (see Gill on "<sup>2042</sup>Daniel 4:12").

**Ver. 21.** (See Gill on “<sup>2040</sup>Daniel 4:20”).

**Ver. 22.** *It is thou, O king, that art grown, and become strong*, etc.] Here begins the interpretation of the dream: the tree was an emblem of King Nebuchadnezzar, of his greatness, and growing power and strength:

*for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven*; he overtopped all the kings of the earth, exceeding them in honour and power, and aspired to deity itself; (see Gill on “<sup>2041</sup>Daniel 4:11”)

*and thy dominion to the end of the earth*; as far as Hercules’s pillars, as Strabo<sup>f159</sup> says he came. Grotius interprets it, as far as the Caspian and Euxine sea, and the Atlantic ocean.

**Ver. 23.** *And whereas the king saw a watcher, and an Holy One*, etc.] Here is related another part of the dream, which respects the cutting down of the tree, or the miserable condition the king should be brought into; (see <sup>2043</sup>Daniel 4:13-16).

**Ver. 24.** *This is the interpretation, O king*, etc.] Of this part of the dream, namely, what follows in the two next verses:

*and this is the decree of the most High*; called before the decree of the watchers, (<sup>2047</sup>Daniel 4:17), and is no other than the decree of that sovereign and absolute Being, whose purposes are unfrustrable:

*which is come upon my lord the king*; the decree had passed concerning him, and would be most certainly fulfilled: and, because of the certainty of it, it is represented as if it was; for it would shortly and surely come upon him, exactly as it was determined, and by the dream signified.

**Ver. 25.** *That they shall drive thee from men*, etc.] From conversation with men, as unfit for it; from his court and palace, from his nobles and princes. Saadiah interprets this of the angels: it may be rendered impersonally or passively, as in (<sup>2048</sup>Daniel 4:33), “thou shalt be driven from men”<sup>f160</sup>; not by his family, his wife and children; or by his nobles, who are afterwards said to seek him; but by the most high God, and to show his power over him; and it may be by means of his ministering angels; or he was driven by his own fancy and imagination, which was suffered of God to prevail over him, judging himself not a man, but a beast; and so it was most agreeable to him to live with beasts, and not men:

*and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field*; in the open air, or in some den and cavern, instead of being in his court, and among his nobles; a strange change of condition indeed! and in which he was preserved by divine Providence:

*and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen*; imagining himself to be a beast, he should choose this sort of food, and eat it, and feed upon it with a gust, as if he had really been one; and besides, having no other food, would be obliged to eat this, as well as his degenerate and depraved imagination led him to it:

*and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven*; strip him of his clothes, and leave him naked; so that he should have nothing to shelter him from the dew and rain, and other inclemencies of the heavens; and this his frenzy might lead him to do of himself:

*and seven times shall pass over thee*; which some understand of weeks, others of months, others of the seasons of winter and summer; but it is best to interpret it of seven whole years; (see Gill on “<sup>27016</sup>Daniel 4:16”):

*till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*; this was done, as for the instruction of men in general, so of Nebuchadnezzar in particular; that his proud heart and haughty spirit might be brought down, and be made to acknowledge that there was a God higher than he, that judgeth in the earth, and that rules and overrules, and disposes of all things in it according to his will and pleasure; (see <sup>27017</sup>Daniel 4:17)

**Ver. 26.** *And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots*, etc.] That is the watchers and the Holy Ones; or it was commanded: this was the order given by the most High:

*thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee*; signifying that another king should not be set up in his place; and though the kingdom and administration of it would depart from, him for a while, yet it would be restored again, and be firm and stable:

*after that thou shall have known that the heavens do rule*; that is, that God, who is the Maker of the heavens, and dwells there, is known and acknowledged by thee to rule on the earth; from the government of which he was desirous of excluding him, and taking it to himself; (see <sup>21518</sup>Luke 15:18).

**Ver. 27.** *Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee,* etc.] Since this is the true interpretation of the dream, and such evils are like to befall thee according to it, permit me, though thou art a king, and I am thy minister or servant, to give thee some advice; and let it be taken in good part, as done with a good design, and a hearty concern for thy welfare:

*and break off thy sins by righteousness;* this advice carries in it a tacit charge of sins, and a reproof for them; which shows the faithfulness of Daniel: these sins probably, besides pride, intemperance, luxury, and uncleanness, were tyranny, rapine, violence, and oppression of his subjects, to which righteousness is opposed; and by which, that is, by a course and series of righteous living, by administering public justice, and giving to everyone their due, he is advised to break off his sinful course of life; to break off the yoke of his sins upon his neck; to cease from doing evil, and to learn to do well:

*and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor;* to his poor subjects, and especially to the poor captives the Jews, Daniel might chiefly bear upon his mind, whom the king had ill used, shown no compassion to, and had greatly distressed; but is now counselled to relieve their wants, and give generously to them out of the vast treasures he was master of:

*if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity;* peace or prosperity; perhaps by such a conduct there may be a reprieve for a while, the evil portended and threatened by this dream may be deferred for a time; and though the decree of the most High cannot be altered, yet the execution of it may be protracted, and prosperity be lengthened out. Daniel could not assure the king of this; but as there was a possibility, and even a probability of it, as in the case of Nineveh, and others, whose ruin was threatened, and yet upon repentance was prolonged; it was highly advisable to try the experiment, and make use of such a conduct, in hope of it; and the rather, since the humiliation of princes, and their reformation, though but external, is observed by the Lord, as in the case of Ahab. Aben Ezra, Jacchiades, and Ben Melech, render it, “if it may be an healing of thine error”; that is, the pardon of thy sins, that they may be forgiven thee; (see ~~4182~~ Acts 8:22).

**Ver. 28.** *All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.*] All that was signified in the dream, his madness, the removal of him from the administration of government, and the brutal life he lived for seven years; for this was not a mere parable or fiction, as some have thought, framed to describe the state and punishment of a proud man, but was a real fact;

though it is not made mention of by any historians, excepting what has been observed before out of Abydenus<sup>f161</sup>, (see Gill on “<sup>2046</sup>Daniel 4:16”), yet there is no reason to doubt of the truth of it, from this relation of Daniel; and is further confirmed by his observing the same to Belshazzar his grandson some years after it was done, as a known thing, and as an unquestionable matter of fact, (<sup>2051</sup>Daniel 5:20,21).

**Ver. 29.** *At the end of twelve months*, etc.] After the dream, and the interpretation of it; which, according to Bishop Usher<sup>f162</sup>, Dean Prideaux<sup>f163</sup>, and Mr. Whiston<sup>f164</sup>, was in the year of the world 3435 A.M., and before Christ 569, and in the thirty sixth year of his reign: one whole year, a space of time, either which God gave him to repent in, or which he obtained by attending for a while to Daniel’s advice:

*he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon*; or “upon the palace”<sup>f165</sup>; upon the roof of it, which in the eastern countries was usually flat and plain; and so Abydenus<sup>f166</sup>, in the above cited place, represents him, *ως αναβας επι τα βασιλγια*, as ascending upon his royal palace; when, after he had finished his oration on it, he disappeared. From hence he could take a full view of the great city of Babylon, which swelled him with pride and vanity, and which he expressed in the next verse; (see Gill on “<sup>2046</sup>Daniel 4:4”), where also mention is made of his palace, the new one built by him. The old palace of the kings of Babylon stood on the east side of the river Euphrates, over against it, as Dean Prideaux<sup>f167</sup> observes; on the other side of the river stood the new palace Nebuchadnezzar built. The old one was four miles in circumference; but this new one was eight miles, encompassed with three walls, one within another, and strongly fortified; and in it were hanging gardens, one of the wonders of the world, made by him for the pleasure of his wife Amyitis, daughter of Astyages king of Media; who being taken with the mountainous and woody parts of her native country, and retaining an inclination for them, desired something like it at Babylon; and, to gratify her herein, this surprising work was made: though Diodorus Siculus<sup>f168</sup> says it was made by a Syrian king he does not name, for the sake of his concubine; and whose account of it, and which is given from him by Dean Prideaux<sup>f169</sup>, and the authors of the Universal History<sup>f170</sup>, is this, and in the words of the latter:

“these gardens are said to contain a square of four plethra, or four hundred feet on each side, and to have consisted of terraces one above another, carried up to the height of the wall of the city; the

ascent, from terrace to terrace, being by steps ten feet wide. The whole pile consisted of substantial arches up on arches, and was strengthened by a wall, surrounding it on every side, twenty two feet thick; and the floors on each of them were laid in this order: first on the tops of the arches was laid a bed or pavement of stones, sixteen feet long, and four feet broad; over this was a layer of reed, mixed with a great quantity of bitumen; and over this two courses of brick, closely cemented with plaster; and over all these were thick sheets of lead, and on these the earth or mould of the garden. This floorage was designed to retain the moisture of the mould; which was so deep as to give root to the greatest trees, which were planted on every terrace, together with great variety of other vegetables, pleasing to the eye; upon the uppermost of these terraces was a reservoir, supplied by a certain engine with water from the river, from whence the gardens at the other terraces were supplied.”

And it was either on the roof of the palace, as before observed, or perhaps it might be upon this uppermost terrace, that Nebuchadnezzar was walking, and from whence he might take a view of the city of Babylon; the greatness of which, as set forth by him, he prided himself with, in the following words:

**Ver. 30.** *The king spake and said,* etc.] Either within himself, or to his nobles about him; or perhaps to foreigners he had took up with him hither to show the grandeur of the city:

*is not this great Babylon, that I have built;* he might well call it great, for, according to Aristotle<sup>f171</sup>, it was more like a country than a city; it was, as Pliny<sup>f172</sup> says, sixty miles in compass within the walls; and Herodotus<sup>f173</sup> affirms it was four hundred and fourscore furlongs round, and such the “greatness” of it, and so beautified, as no other city was he ever knew; (see Gill on “<sup>25153</sup>Jeremiah 51:58”), though the king seems to have gone too far, in ascribing the building of it to himself; at least he was not the original builder of it; for it was built many hundreds of years before he was born, by Nimrod or Belus, who were the same, (<sup>01100</sup>Genesis 10:10), and was much increased and strengthened by Semiramis, the wife of his son Ninus; therefore to her sometimes the building of it is ascribed; but inasmuch as it might be in later times greatly neglected by the Assyrian kings, Nineveh being the seat of their empire; Nebuchadnezzar, when he came to the



throne, and especially after he had enriched himself with the spoils of the conquered nations, greatly enlarged, beautified, and fortified it: and Berosus<sup>f174</sup> relates, that he not only adorned the temple of Bel therewith, but of the city which was of old he made a new one, and fortified it, built three walls within, and as many without; and another royal palace contiguous to his father's, which greatly exceeded it; and hanging gardens in it, which looked at a distance like mountains, for the pleasure of his wife; and now, because he had done so much to the repairing, enlarging, and fortifying of this city, he takes the honour to himself of being the builder of it: and this was done, he says,

*for the house of the kingdom*; that it might be the seat of the empire, and a proper place for the royal family to dwell in, to have their palace, and keep their court in:

*by the might of my power*; through the great riches he was possessed of, which he employed in many great works, as before related, to the advantage of this city; he takes all to himself, and excludes all instruments, and even God himself; though, unless the Lord build the city, in vain the builders build, (<sup>900</sup>Psalm 127:1):

*for the honour of my majesty*? not so much for the benefit of the city, for the good of his subjects, as for the honour and glory of himself; to show his riches, power, and grandeur, and to make his name immortal to future ages.

**Ver. 31.** *While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven*, etc.] Before the king had done speaking in the above boasting manner, an articulate voice from heaven was heard by him, and all about him, formed by the angels, and much like what the Jews call Bath Kol; (see <sup>422</sup>Acts 12:21-23), so Abydenus<sup>f175</sup>, in the account he gives of Nebuchadnezzar's oration to the people, relates, that when the king had spoke it, *παράχρημα ηφανιστο*, immediately he disappeared:

*saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee*; that is, the administration of it; for he was not deposed, or declared to be no longer king; his office was not taken away from him, and another king set upon the throne; only the administration was taken into other hands, either of his wife or son, or his nobles; he being unfit for it, till such time as his reason returned to him.

**Ver. 32.** *And they shall drive thee from men*, etc.] According to the interpretation of the dream given by Daniel, which this voice from heaven confirms; (see Gill on “<sup>2025</sup>Daniel 4:25”), where the same things are said as here.

**Ver. 33.** *The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar*, etc.] Whence it appears that this was a true history, and a matter of fact; and not a parable or allegory, as Origen thought, describing the fall of Lucifer or Satan; but relates what befell Nebuchadnezzar himself: nor was the change real as to soul and body; for then he would not have been the same person, not Nebuchadnezzar, and so not he himself punished, but the beast into which he was changed: and though there was a strange alteration, both in his body and mind; in some parts of his body, and perhaps in his voice, in his senses of feeling, tasting, and smelling, in his palate, and appetite, and stomach; in his rational powers, understanding, judgment, and memory; so that he acted like a beast, and choosing to live as one; yet so as to retain the essential parts of a man; his case was, that at once he fell raving mad and distracted, when they first bound him with chains, that he might not hurt himself and others, and afterwards turned him loose into the woods among the wild beasts; or perhaps into one of his parks, among the deer, hares, foxes, and such like creatures; whither he might incline to go, fancying himself to be a beast, and delight to be among them:

*and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen*; which he did by choice: so Aben Ezra reports of one in the island of Sardinia, who fled from his parents, and lost his reason, and lived among deer for many years, and went upon his hands and feet like them; and the king of the island going a hunting one day, caught many deer, and among them this man, that was taken for one: his parents came and owned him, and spoke to him, but he answered not; they set before him bread and wine, to eat and drink, but he refused; they then gave him grass with the deer and he ate that; and in the middle of the night made his escape to the deer or the field again.

*And his body was wet with the dew of heaven*: lying all night in the woods or fields without clothing:

*till his hair was grown like eagles' feathers*: thick, black, and strong; the hairs of his head having not been cut, not his beard shaved for seven years: the Septuagint and Arabic versions read, “as lions”:

*and his nails like birds' claws*: the nails of his fingers and toes were hard, long, and sharp, like theirs, having not been cut during this time; this shows that the seven times are not to be understood of weeks or months, but of years. Some have understood all this as a real metamorphosis, and that Nebuchadnezzar was changed into a beast; the upper part of him was the form of an ox, and the lower part that of a lion, as Epiphanius<sup>f176</sup>; so Cyril<sup>f177</sup> says of him, that he was changed into a beast, lived in a desert, had the nails and hair of a lion, ate grass like an ox; for he was a beast, not knowing who gave him the kingdom; and so others; closely adhering to the letter of the text, but wrongly, for reasons before given: nor is it to be ascribed merely to any natural disease of body, or melancholy in him, by which the fancy may be so disturbed, as for a person to imagine himself a beast; for though this was the case, yet not through any diseases, such as is called the lycanthropy; an much less to any witchcraft, or any diabolical art, exercised on him; but to the mighty hand of God, taking away the use of his reason, and throwing him into madness and distraction for the demonstration of his power, and humbling the pride of an insolent monarch; not but that God could, if it had been his pleasure, have changed him into a brute, as he turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt; and as a certain wicked nobleman in Muscovy was turned into a black dog, barking and howling, upon uttering horrible blasphemies against God for some judgment upon him, as Clurerius<sup>f178</sup> relates, who had it, he says, from both ear and eye witnesses of it; but such a judgment was not inflicted on Nebuchadnezzar, not are such things usual. Herodotus<sup>f179</sup> reports, though he himself did not credit it, of some people among the Scythians, that were every year, for a few days, changed into wolves, and then returned to their former shape again; and Pomponius Mela<sup>f180</sup> relates the same of the same people; and the poets frequently speak of such transmutations; but these are all fictions and delusions.

**Ver. 34.** *And at the end of the days*, etc.] Of the time fixed in the dream; that is, at the end of seven years, as Jarchi rightly interprets it; this according to Bishop Usher<sup>f181</sup>, Dean Prideaux<sup>f182</sup>, and Mr. Whiston<sup>f183</sup>, was in the year of the world 3442 A.M., and before Christ 563, in the forty second year of his reign; after which he lived but one year, reigning from the death of his father forty three years, and according to the Jewish accounts forty five; they reckoning from the beginning of his partnership in the kingdom with his father, and his first coming with an army into Syria.

*I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven*: for, during the seven years he ate grass like an ox, his eyes were fixed upon the earth, looking out for his food, and especially if he went on all four, as the beasts do; but now standing upright, in his erect form as a man, he looked upwards; though this phrase does not merely design his looking up to the heavens, and viewing them from his bodily eyes; but his sense and consideration of the divine Majesty in heaven, his praying to him, lifting up the eyes being a prayer gesture, and his devotion towards him;

*and mine understanding returned to me*; his understanding as a man, which he had been deprived of during this time; and so came to know in what state and condition he was, by whom brought into it, and for what reason;

*and I blessed the most High*; the most high God, he whose name alone is Jehovah, the God of gods, who is higher than the highest; him the king blessed for returning his understanding and reason to him, and restoring him to his senses; for which he had just cause to be thankful, for a greater blessing cannot be enjoyed;

*and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever*; the living and true God, the author of life to all that have it, and who upholds in it; who lives in and of himself, and for evermore; which no mere man, even the most exalted and dignified, does:

*whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation*; (see Gill on “<sup>20B</sup>Daniel 4:3”).

**Ver. 35.** *And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing*, etc.] That is, by the most high God, in comparison of him; and that not only the common people, but magistrates, princes, and kings, and even so great a monarch as Nebuchadnezzar; they are like mere nonentities, nothing as to existence, substance, greatness, glory, and duration, when compared with him: for this is to be understood not absolutely as in themselves; for as such they are something; their bodies are something in their original, and especially in their make, form, and constitution, and even in their dissolution; and their souls are yet more valuable, are of more worth than the whole world, being immaterial and immortal; but comparatively with respect to God, in whom they live, and move, and have that being they have, and by whom they are supported in it; al whose glory and grandeur is fading and passing away, and continuance is but very short; and all nothing with God, the Being of beings, whose glory is inconceivable, and with

whom a thousand years are as one day, and who is from everlasting to everlasting: and this meant chiefly of the rational inhabitants of the earth; not of the beasts of the field, the cattle on a thousand hills, and the innumerable reptiles of the earth, which also are the inhabitants of it; but of men, the principal ones, and of all of these, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free; not as in their own account, and that of others; for they are something in their own esteem, and seem so in the eyes of others, who judge according to the outward appearance; but they are nothing in the account of God: and as this is true of them in things natural and civil, it is much more so in things spiritual, or relating to everlasting salvation: in these men are nothing, and counted as nothing; no use is made of them, or any account is had of anything done by them; these have no causal influence in their salvation; they are nothing in God's choice of them to eternal life, which is all of mere sovereign grace; nothing in redemption, which is only by Jesus Christ; nothing in regeneration, which is alone by the Spirit and grace of God; nothing in justification, which is not by the works of the law, but by the righteousness of Christ; in short, they are nothing in their salvation from first to last, which is all of grace, and not of works. Jarchi and Saadiah interpret this of an atom or mote in a sunbeam, which is seen flying about, but cannot be laid hold on, having no substance, and disappears when the sun shines not; (see <sup>23015</sup> Isaiah 40:15,17).

*And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth;* he orders the angels, which are the host of heaven, to stand or go where he pleases; and he disposes of men on earth, and puts them into such stations, and such conditions and circumstances, and appoints them such business and services, as he thinks meet. The angels are "the army of heaven", or the heavenly host; so called for their number, there being legions of them, even an innumerable company; and for their military use, being employed to fight for the people of God, to encamp about them, and protect them: those who formerly belonged to them, that sinned against God, he cast them down to hell, without showing them any mercy; and the rest he chose and confirmed in Christ, and all according to his sovereign will; and these he makes use of according to his pleasure, to minister to the heirs of salvation in life, to convoy their souls to heaven at death, and to gather in all the elect at the last day. The "inhabitants of the earth" are the men of it, as before, with whom he does as he pleases in things temporal and civil, making some rich, and others poor; raising some to great honour and dignity, while others live in

meanness, poverty, and disgrace: and in things spiritual; he loves whom he will; he chooses whom he pleases; he redeems whom he wishes from among men; he regenerates and calls by his grace, of his own will; and reveals Christ, and the great things of the Gospel, to whom it seems good in his sight; he does what he will with his own; he bestows grace and glory on whomsoever he pleases, as free grace gifts, without any merit of the creature, according to his sovereign will and pleasure.

*And none can stay his hand:* stop his power, resist his will, or hinder him from acting, or cause him to cease from his work, which he is bent upon; his will in both worlds is sovereign and arbitrary, and his power uncontrollable. It was so in creation, he said, and it was done; it is so in providence, he does what he pleases; there is nothing done without his knowledge and will, and there is no counsel against the Lord: it is so in his works of grace; in the great work of redemption; no difficulties could discourage or hinder Christ from the performance of that arduous work, he being the mighty God: and in the work of grace upon the heart of a sinner, when God begins to work, none can let; not corruptions within, nor Satan without; nor can anything hinder the carrying of it on; not indwelling sin, nor the snares of the world, nor the temptations of Satan. The purposes of God cannot be disannulled; his hand cannot be held, stopped, or turned back from the execution of them; he will do his will and his work in the world, and in his churches, and on particular persons, maugre all the opposition of men and devils.

*Or say unto him, what dost thou?* what is this thou hast done? and wherefore hast thou done it? why was it not done in another form and manner, and for other ends and purposes? (see <sup><280></sup>Isaiah 45:9), all such like questions are vain and foolish, and are despised by the Lord; he gives no account of his matters unto the children of men. Some may with wonder say, “what has God wrought!” but none ought to say, in a complaining and murmuring way, “what dost thou?” and should they, it is of no avail, he will do what he pleases.

**Ver. 36.** *At the same time my reason returned unto me,* etc.] Or, “my understanding”<sup>f184</sup>; this he repeats, not only to express the certainty of it, but the sense he had of the greatness of the favour, and of which what he said at this time is a full proof:

*and for the glory of my kingdom mine honour and brightness returned unto me:* or “form”<sup>f185</sup>, as the Septuagint; his majestic form, that royal

majesty, that appeared in his countenance formerly, returned again; which graced him as a king, and made for the glory of his kingdom, and the administration of his office. Jarchi renders it, “and to the glory of my kingdom I returned”; and to the same purpose the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions. This whole clause is wanting in the Syriac version. Jarchi interprets “brightness” of the form of his countenance; and Jacchiades of the light of it, the sparkling lustre and majesty of it. A strange change and alteration this!

*And my counsellors and my lords sought unto me*; who very likely had the administration of government in their hands during this time; and as the dream, and the interpretation, were publicly known, and they had seen the first part of it fulfilled in the king’s madness and miserable state, they had reason to believe the latter part also, and therefore waited for the accomplishment of it at the end of seven years; when they sought for him, and sought unto him, very probably by the direction of Daniel, who was at the head of them; and this may be the reason why another prince was not set upon the throne, because they expected his return to it at the expiration of these years; and in the mean while held the reins of government in their own hands, but now delivered them up to him:

*and I was established in my kingdom*; as Daniel had told him, in the interpretation of his dream, that his kingdom should be sure to him, (<sup>2045</sup>Daniel 4:26):

*and excellent majesty was added unto me*; or, more majesty<sup>f186</sup>; he had more honour and grandeur than he had before; more respect was shown him, and homage paid him: his latter end, like Job’s, was greater than his beginning.

**Ver. 37.** *Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven*, etc.] Now he knew that the heavens ruled, and that there was a God and a King there, above all gods and kings; who had brought him low, and raised him up again, and to whom were owing all his present glory and magnificence, and therefore worthy of his highest praises; and which he in the most public manner gave by words before his lords and counsellors, and by writing under his own hand, by this edict and proclamation:

*all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment*: everything he does in providence, and every step he takes therein, are according to truth and

righteousness; he is true to his word, and righteous in his works, as he had been to him:

*and those that walk in pride he is able to abase*; not only that show it now and then, but always, and in everything; in their looks and gestures, in their talk and walk, and throughout the whole of their conversation; in whom it is public, visible, notorious, and constant; but let them carry their heads ever so high, and be as proud and haughty as they will, God is able to humble them; he has various ways of doing it. Such as are proud of their outward beauty, or the strength of their bodies, he can, by sending a disease upon them, make their beauty to consume like a moth, and weaken their strength in the way; such as are elated with their wealth and substance, and with honours conferred upon them, or dignity they are raised to, he can soon strip them of all their riches by one providence or another, and bring down those that stand in slippery places of honour and dignity to destruction in a moment; and such as pride and plume themselves with their wit and knowledge, the natural endowments of their mind, he can take away their reason and understanding from them, as he did from this monarch, and put them upon a level with brutes: such who behest of their own righteousness and good works, and trust in themselves, that they are righteous and holy persons, and despise others; and think to be justified and saved by them, and not to be beholden to any other, but be their own saviours; these the Lord, by his Spirit, can humble, by showing them the impurity of their nature; their impotence to that which is spiritually good; the imperfection of their best righteousness to justify them in his sight; so that they shall appear to be polluted and defiled creatures, who thought themselves very holy; and to be very weak and insufficient of themselves, to do anything spiritually good, who gloried in the power and strength of their free will; and see that their best works are no other than filthy rags, and to be renounced in the business of their justification and salvation: in short, he humbles by showing them that all their temporal good things are owing to the good providence of God, and are dependent on it; and that all they have in spirituals is owing to the grace of God, and not to any desert of theirs; in consequence of which they become meek and lowly, and walk humbly with their God, who before walked in the pride of their hearts, and in the vanity of their minds. And a power to do this is peculiar to God himself; none but God can look upon him that is proud, and abase him, and bring him low; and sooner or later, by one means, or in one way or another, he will stain the pride of all glory: it is his usual way to



abase him that exalts himself, and exalt him that humbles himself; (see ~~<801>~~ Job 40:11,12 ~~<239>~~ Isaiah 23:9) (~~<4232>~~ Matthew 23:12 ~~<241>~~ Luke 14:11), pride being a most hateful sin to him, contrary to his nature and glory, to his grace and to his Gospel; the first sin of angels and men. And of abasement and humiliation of such proud ones, Nebuchadnezzar was an instance in various respects; who was one of the proudest monarchs upon earth, yet was humbled with a witness; but, after all, whether truly converted, is a question.