

Daniel 4

Main Idea (from Exalting Jesus in Daniel): *Because God is supremely glorious, he will not allow others to steal his glory, and he graciously humbles all who proudly trust in themselves.*¹

Outline (Adapted from the Outline Bible)

TWO MEN AND A TREE (4:1–37): This chapter records the second of Nebuchadnezzar’s three dreams. Daniel interprets this dream also.

- I. **The prologue** (4:1–3)
 - a. *The proclamation* (Daniel 4:1): Nebuchadnezzar issues a special announcement throughout his kingdom.
 - b. *The praise* (Daniel 4:2–3): The king testifies of God’s awesome power.
- II. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (4:4–18)
 - a. He sees a large tree spreading out (4:4–12).
 - b. He sees the tree struck down (4:13–18): A messenger, a holy one, cuts down this tree and says it represents a man who will lose his mind and will live like a wild animal for seven years.
- III. Daniel’s interpretation (4:19–27)
 - a. His explanation (4:19–26): Daniel identifies the tree as Nebuchadnezzar, who will suffer from a divinely caused insanity due to his pride. However, in seven years, after he acknowledges God’s power, his kingdom will be restored.
 - b. His exhortation (4:27): Daniel urges the king to repent and thus avoid this terrible judgment.
- IV. *The king is corrected through insanity* (4:28–37).
 - a. The pride (4:28–30): Refusing to repent, the king remains arrogant, boasting to all about his building of Babylon.
 - b. The punishment (4:31–33): As predicted, the king is given an animal’s mind for seven years.
- V. The postscript (4:34–37): Upon receiving his right mind and being restored to the kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar worships, praises, honors, and glorifies Daniel’s God.²

Interesting regarding verse numbers: NET

Beginning with 4:1, the verse numbers through 4:37 in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Aramaic text (BHS), with 4:1 ET = 3:31 AT, 4:2 ET = 3:32 AT, 4:3 ET = 3:33 AT, 4:4 ET = 4:1 AT, etc., through 4:37 ET = 4:34 AT. Thus Dan 3:31–33 of the Aramaic text appears as

¹ Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 42.

² H. L. Willmington, *The Outline Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Da 4:1–37. *BHS Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*

ET English Text

ET English Text

ET English Text

ET English Text

ET English Text

*Dan 4:1–3 in the English Bible, and the corresponding verses of ch. 4 differ accordingly. In spite of the division of the Aramaic text, a good case can be made that 3:31–33 AT (= 4:1–3 ET) is actually the introduction to ch. 4.*³

CSB:

*These verses come at the end of chap. 3 in Aramaic rather than at the beginning of chap. 4. As an introduction to chap. 4, the miracles and wonders include the dream in chap. 4 and its aftermath.*⁴

Intro:

*Nebuchadnezzar has another dream, and Daniel again is the only one of his officials able to interpret it. This dream concerns Nebuchadnezzar's own need to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the one who rules the affairs of mankind, and through humiliation Nebuchadnezzar learns the lesson.*⁵

*Nebuchadnezzar tells his dream to his wise men, but they cannot interpret it. Finally he asks Daniel, who shows respect and kindness to the king by explaining that the dream threatens him with humiliation if he does not acknowledge that God is supreme.*⁶

Verse by verse:

- I. **The prologue (4:1–3)**
 - a. *The proclamation (Daniel 4:1): Nebuchadnezzar issues a special announcement throughout his kingdom.*
 - b. *Daniel 4:1 (NASB95) Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound!"*
 - c. *This is following the fiery furnace from the previous chapter.*
 - d. *What is the timing of this event?*
 - e. *Moody:*
 - f. *The text does not indicate when the events of Dn 4 took place nor is it significant to the interpretation of the passage. Nevertheless, King Nebuchadnezzar most*

ET English Text

³ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Da 4:1.

chap. chapter

chap. chapter

chap. chapter

chap. chapter

⁴ Michael Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1331.

⁵ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1592–1593.

⁶ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1593.

*likely had his dream (see v. 5) about ten years before the end of his 43-year reign. Then, God in His grace allowed the king **one year to repent followed by seven years of madness**. Once he came to his senses, the king lived approximately two to three years before dying in 562 BC.*⁷

- g. ESV SB:
- h. *The narrative begins at the end of the story, with the letter of praise to God that Nebuchadnezzar wrote after his recovery. The letter is addressed to **peoples, nations, and languages**, the same group summoned to bow down to the golden image (see 3:7). The “signs” and “wonders” the Lord has performed certainly include the fiery furnace, yet the key difference is that now Nebuchadnezzar speaks of **signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me** (cf. note on 3:28). From being a persecutor of the faithful, Nebuchadnezzar has himself become a witness to the faith.*⁸
- i. Notice that this chapter is a letter from the king to his people. Daniel still adds information.

Moody:

*Daniel has included this chapter as a formal letter sent by Nebuchadnezzar himself to his empire. No doubt, the king did indeed write the letter, but it is Daniel, as author of the book, who chose to include it. It would be unlikely that the king would switch from writing about himself in the first person (4:1–27, 34–37). Yet Daniel, as the author of the book and personal confidante of the king, was uniquely aware of the king’s experience. Therefore, he most likely wrote the section that speaks of the king in the third person (vv. 28–33) and records his time of mental illness. The chapter is structured in three sections: (1) a prologue in which the king praises the true God (4:1–3); (2) a narrative body (4:4–34a), which recounts (a) the king’s dream, (b) Daniel’s interpretation, (c) the king’s illness and repentance; and (3) an epilogue in which the king declares his own recognition of the sovereignty of the true God (4:34b–37). Of course, the chapter is written from the perspective of the king looking back at **the signs and wonders which the Most High God had done for him** (4:2). Therefore, this prologue reflects what the king had already come to understand by the end of the chapter—that God’s **kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation**.*⁹

IVP BBC OT

royal proclamations. *A proclamation such as this would typically be recorded on a stele and set up in a prominent place. Sometimes copies would be made to be circulated, as was done with*

v. verse

BC before Christ

⁷ Michael A. Rydelnik, [“Daniel,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1290.

⁸ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1593.

vv. verses

⁹ Michael A. Rydelnik, [“Daniel,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1290–1291.

*Darius' Behistun Inscription. Many of the elements of this proclamation are common to royal inscriptions or to Aramaic letters, though it is unusual for a king to be so vulnerable as here.*¹⁰

j. *The praise* (Daniel 4:2–3): The king testifies of God's awesome power.

Daniel 4:2–3 (NASB95)

2 *"It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for 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.*

k. He writes that it seemed good to him to declare these signs and wonders...

l. Notice he is giving credit to the Lord with what follows.

m. He says, the Lord, Most High...

n. Then, verse 3- How great are His signs...

o. Wow!

p. Praise!

q. How mighty are His wonders!

r. Notice he writes about the Lord's Kingdom being everlasting.

II. Nebuchadnezzar's **dream** (4:4–18)

a. *The story covers a period of eight years, beginning with the dream, the year afterward, and then the seven-year period of mental illness.*¹¹

b. He sees a large tree spreading out (4:4–12).

Daniel 4:4–12 (NASB95)

The Vision of a Great Tree

4 *"I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.*

5 *"I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.*

6 *"So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.*

7 *"Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me.*

8 *"But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying,*

¹⁰ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 4:1–2.

¹¹ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1291.

- 9 'O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.
- 10 'Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great.
- 11 'The tree grew large and became strong
And its height reached to the sky,
And it was visible to the end of the whole earth.
- 12 'Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant,
And in it was food for all.
The beasts of the field found shade under it,
And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches,
And all living creatures fed themselves from it.

- c. This is written by Nebuchadnezzar.
- d. Let's break it down.
- e. He was at ease in his house.
- f. He was relaxing...
- g. Verse 5: a dream...
- h. Once again, we see a dream.
- i. The dream alarmed him.
- j. It made him fearful.
- k. There were visions.
- l. The visions alarmed him.
- m. Verse 6: Again- bring the wise men...
- n. Verse 7: the various people could not interpret the dream
- o. *Nebuchadnezzar called the four classes of wise men to interpret his dream. Unlike the dream of Dn 2, the king **told them the dream**. But similarly **they could not make its interpretation known to him.***¹²
- p. Recall from Moody: Throughout the book of Daniel, there occur six different expressions for the king's counselors.
- q. The first two, used here, are
 - i. **magicians and conjurers.** The word *magician* comes from a root that means "engraver" and refers to those who engraved Babylonian religious activities and astrological movements of the stars onto clay tablets.
 - ii. The word *conjurer* refers to those who used spells and incantations to communicate with the spirit world. No wonder then that Daniel and his friends, by avoiding such occult practices and instead seeking wisdom from the true God, were wiser than the king's pagan counselors.¹³

¹² Michael Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1331.

¹³ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1284.

- r. Chaldeans are master astrologers... or highly educated people.
- s. Again, they could not interpret the dream.
- t. Verse 8: enter Daniel.
- u. Notice that he shared Daniel's name Beteshazzar and he says "according to the name of my god..."
- v. He also says that Daniel has "the spirit of the holy gods."
- w. Moody: *Daniel finally came before the king—perhaps he was away from the palace when the previous wise men appeared before the king or maybe he was only brought to deal with problems beyond the ability of the ordinary wise men. No matter, the king recognized that **a spirit of the holy gods** was in Daniel. This translation reflects the perspective of a pagan king but since the king is relating this from the perspective of a chastened king who knows that God alone can reveal what is hidden, it might be better to translate the phrase "the spirit of the Holy God is in him."¹⁴*
- x. Further- *Beginning in this verse and throughout the chapter, Daniel is most frequently called by his Babylonian name **Belteshazzar**, likely because it was written from the perspective of the Babylonian king, not a Hebrew exile.*¹⁵
- y. Verse 9: he calls him chief of the magicians:
 - i. Look at all the credit the king gives to Daniel-
 - ii. "a" spirit of the "holy" gods is in you...
 - iii. So, he credits that Daniel has a special spirit.
 - iv. He calls the gods, "holy." Yet, it is "a" spirit. He also is clearly polytheistic.
 - v. Further-
 - vi. No mystery baffles you...
- z. He wants Daniel to tell him the vision and interpretation.
- aa. It seems he wants Daniel to tell him the vision and its interpretation, but he tells him the vision beginning in the next verse...
- bb. ESV SB:
- cc. *Daniel's wisdom and ability to interpret dreams is like that of Joseph (Gen. 41:38). Daniel serves to mediate divine wisdom to Nebuchadnezzar, and so prefigures the unique mediation of Christ, who is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:3).*¹⁶
- dd. Verse 10:
- ee. Great tree
- ff. Verse 11:
- gg. The tree grew large and strong, visible to the end of the earth
- hh. Verse 12:
 - ii. Beautiful foliage

¹⁴ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1291.

¹⁵ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1291.

¹⁶ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1593.

- jj. Abundant fruit
- kk. Food for all
- ll. Animals had shade under it
- mm. Birds of the sky hid in its branches
- nn. All living creatures fed themselves from it...
- oo. **Good summary of the next few verses from Moody:**
- pp. *Nebuchadnezzar related his dream to Daniel, describing what he saw as **a tree ... great and which grew large and became strong And its height reached to the sky**, a figure for an exceptionally tall tree. A similar expression was used in Gn 11:4 for the tower of the city of Babylon, the top of which was to reach “into heaven.” The tree provided **food** and shelter for all the **creatures** of the earth. The king also saw an angel, here called a **watcher, a holy one**.¹⁷*

Extra interesting info:

world tree. *The concept of the cosmic tree in the center of the world is a common motif in the ancient Near East. It is also used in Ezekiel 31. The roots of the tree are fed by the great subterranean ocean, and its top merges with the clouds, thus binding together the heavens, the earth and the netherworld. In the Myth of Erra and Ishum Marduk speaks of the meshu tree whose roots reach down through the oceans to the netherworld and whose top is above the heavens. In the Sumerian epic Lugalbanda and Enmerkar the “eagle- tree” has a similar role. In Assyrian contexts the motif of a sacred tree is also well known. Some have called it a tree of life, and some also associate it with this world tree. It is often flanked by animals or by human or divine figures. A winged disk is typically centrally located over the top of the tree. The king is represented as the human personification of this tree. The tree is thought to represent the divine world order, but textual discussion of it is lacking.¹⁸*

- qq. He sees the tree struck down (4:13–18): A messenger, a holy one, cuts down this tree and says it represents a man who will lose his mind and will live like a wild animal for seven years.
- rr. Daniel 4:13–18 (NASB95)
- 13** *‘I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.*
- 14** *‘He shouted out and spoke as follows:
“Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,
Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;
Let the beasts flee from under it
And the birds from its branches.*

¹⁷ Michael A. Rydelnik, [“Daniel,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1291.

¹⁸ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 4:10–12.

- 15 *“Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground,
But with a band of iron and bronze around it
In the new grass of the field;
And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,
And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.*
- 16 *“Let his mind be changed from that of a man
And let a beast’s mind be given to him,
And let seven periods of time pass over him.*
- 17 *“This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers
And the decision is a command of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind,
And bestows it on whom He wishes
And sets over it the lowliest of men.”*
- 18 *‘This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell
me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make
known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’*

ss. Verse 13:

tt. “angelic” is not in the original Hebrew.

uu. It seems like this is some type of supernatural, but not GOD being.

vv. *The watchers are a well-known class of supernatural being in a wide range of the intertestamental literature, especially the books of Enoch, as well as in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Though the term is often used in that literature in reference to fallen angels, it is not limited to that group. There is so far no attestation of the term being used in this specialized way prior to the third century B.C., but the Mesopotamians did recognize a variety of protecting spirits and demons. Perhaps the closest parallel would be found in the occasional references to the seven ancient sages as watchers. Additionally, they are sometimes portrayed as caretakers of the sacred tree, so they would fit well in this context.¹⁹*

ww. This “watcher” shouted out to chop down this world tree.

xx. Strip its foliage

yy. Scatter its fruit

zz. Everything scatters.

aaa. Verse 15: leave the stump and roots... interesting verse- IVP BBC OT: *It is difficult to determine whether it is a part of the tree that is bound with iron, or whether it is the king. If it is the tree, the text indicates that its taproot should be bound (not the stump). While trees are sometimes gilded with metal bands in ancient*

¹⁹ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 4:13.

Mesopotamia, there is no case of treating a stump that way, much less a taproot.²⁰

bbb. NET: The function of the *band of iron and bronze* is not entirely clear, but it may have had to do with preventing the splitting or further deterioration of the portion of the tree that was left after being chopped down. **By application it would then refer to the preservation of Nebuchadnezzar's life during the time of his insanity.**²¹

ccc. ESV SB: however: its **stump** was to remain in the ground for **seven periods of time** (the text does not explain the length of time, but "seven" signifies completion and most ancient and modern scholars have argued it was "seven years"), bound in **iron and bronze.**²²

ddd. Moody: *The tree plainly represents a man (the king) because the angel declared that his mind would be changed from that of a man to that of a beast's for seven periods of time or for seven years.*²³

eee. IVP BBC OT: **dew of heaven.** *In Babylonian texts, dew was considered to come down from the stars of heaven and was sometimes seen as the mechanism by which the stars brought either sickness or healing.*²⁴

fff. **We can see the rest of verse** 15 and verses 16-17: this is dealing w a man living like an animal.

Daniel 4:16–17 (NASB95)

16 "Let his mind be changed from that of a man
And let a beast's mind be given to him,
And let seven periods of time pass over him.

17 "This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers
And the decision is a command of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind,
And bestows it on whom He wishes
And sets over it the lowliest of men."

ggg. This is about the Lord's glory.

hhh. Verse 18 sums up- this is the dream...

²⁰ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 4:15.

²¹ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Da 4:15.

²² Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1593.

²³ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1291.

²⁴ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 4:15.

iii. Again, he gives credit to Daniel and asks for an interpretation. Others could not interpret it.

III. Daniel's interpretation (4:19–27)

Daniel 4:19–27 (NASB95)

Daniel Interprets the Vision

- 19 *“Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’ Belteshazzar replied, ‘My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!*
- 20 *‘The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth*
- 21 *and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged—*
- 22 *it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.*
- 23 *‘In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, “Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,”*
- 24 *this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:*
- 25 *that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.*
- 26 *‘And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.*
- 27 *‘Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.’*

- a. His explanation (4:19–26): Daniel identifies the tree as Nebuchadnezzar, who will suffer from a divinely caused insanity due to his pride. However, in seven years, after he acknowledges God's power, his kingdom will be restored.
- b. Verse 19: Notice how the passage continues to say, “Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar...”
- c. Daniel was appalled.
- d. The king encourages him to share the dream.

- e. Think about it, how do you tell the most powerful person you know that he is going to become like a wild animal?
- f. Daniel responds, "If only the dream applied to the king's enemies and the dream's interpretation to the adversaries."
- g. Daniel calls the king "lord," but it is only a title of respect.
- h. It is Aramaic. It is like saying, "sir."
- i. Verse 20 begins the explanation:
- j. Verses 20-22: the tree is the king. He has become great and strong; his dominion has reached the ends of the earth. His majesty has also become great and grown strong.
- k. His dominion has reached the ends of the earth.
- l. Great
- m. Grown strong
- n. Majesty: This literally means greatness
- o. Dominion: this has to do with powers/empires
- p. Verse 23: We see this angelic watcher again.
- q. The Christian Standard Study Bible has a good summary:
- r. *The **tree** represented King Nebuchadnezzar, who would be struck with a mental illness that would cause him to live outdoors **with the wild animals** (or animals of the field) **for seven** years until he repented of his pride and acknowledged that **the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms**.*²⁵
- s. Verse 25 is more specific about the interpretation. See the summary above.
- t. Verse 26: the stump and roots show that the kingdom will remain.
- u. *This is the only place in the OT where **Heaven** is used as a euphemism for God.*²⁶
- v. NET: *The reference to heaven here is a circumlocution for God. There was a tendency in Jewish contexts to avoid direct reference to God. Cf. the expression "kingdom of heaven" in the NT and such statements as "I have sinned against heaven and in your sight" (Luke 15:21).*²⁷ Moody: *This usage became commonplace in intertestamental literature, the NT, and Rabbinic literature.*²⁸
- w. *Nebuchadnezzar's insanity has features that are associated with the mental disorder known as **boanthropy**, in which the person so afflicted imagines himself to be an ox or a similar animal and behaves accordingly.*²⁹

²⁵ Michael Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1332.

OT Old Testament

²⁶ Michael Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1333.

²⁷ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Da 4:26.

NT New Testament

²⁸ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1291.

²⁹ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Da 4:23–25.

- x. His exhortation (4:27): Daniel urges the king to repent and thus avoid this terrible judgment.
 - i. Notice: sins- break away from them.
 - ii. How?
 - iii. Doing righteousness
 - iv. Break from iniquity
 - v. How?
 - vi. Showing mercy to the poor
 - vii. In case- the prosperity may continue
 - viii. *Daniel (a Jew who believed in the one true God) was willing to tell Nebuchadnezzar (a pagan king) that he should conform to moral standards that Daniel had learned from God.*³⁰
 - ix. *Even pagan rulers are accountable to the God of the Bible (cf. notes on Ps. 82:1–4; Prov. 31:1–9; Mark 6:18; Acts 24:25).*³¹

*The Ishtar Gate was built by Nebuchadnezzar II around 575 BC. It was named for the Babylonian goddess of love and war. It served as the main entrance to Babylon. It was one of the initial Seven Wonders of the World.*³²



IV. *The king is corrected through insanity (4:28–37).*
 Daniel 4:28–30 (NASB95)

The Vision Fulfilled

- 28** *“All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.*
- 29** *“Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.*

³⁰ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1594.

³¹ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1594.

BC before Christ

³² Michael Rydelnik, *“Daniel,”* in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1332.

30 *“The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’*

- a. The pride (4:28–30): Refusing to repent, the king remains arrogant, boasting to all about his building of Babylon.
- b. Verse 28: despite the warning. He is thinking of all that he had done.
- c. Nebuchadnezzar was merely an instrument of the Lord.

Jeremiah 27:6–8 (NASB95)

- 6 *“Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him.*
- 7 *“All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant.*
- 8 *“It will be, that the nation or the kingdom which will not serve him, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine and with pestilence,” declares the LORD, “until I have destroyed it by his hand.*

Jeremiah 25:9 (NASB95)

- 9 *behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.*

1 Cor. 4:7: *For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*

1 Corinthians 1:26–31 (NASB95)

- 26 *For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;*
- 27 *but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,*
- 28 *and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,*
- 29 *so that no man may boast before God.*
- 30 *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,*
- 31 *so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”*

- d. Nebuchadnezzar’s building projects in Babylon were magnificent. The Euphrates was channeled into a number of canals that passed through the city. His palace, on the north side of the city near the Ishtar Gate, was luxuriously appointed with

all the finest materials. The palace gardens were terraced and gained international reputation, eventually being named one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was a parklike enclosure with an arboretum of exotic trees. Additional building projects included the temples and the streets.³³

- e. The view from **the roof of the royal palace of Babylon** (v. 29) included numerous ornate temples, the hanging gardens (one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world), **which he had built for his wife, and the outer wall of the city, wide enough for chariots driven by four horses to pass each other on the top.**³⁴

Lengthy but good extrabiblical references to Babylon:

According to Herodotus (a Greek historian who died c. 425 BC), Babylon was the most glorious city of the ancient world. He recorded that Babylon's outer walls alone were 56 miles long, 80 feet wide and 320 feet high. Nebuchadnezzar was a great builder and expanded the city to six square miles. He also beautified it with magnificent buildings, temples, and palaces. Within the city there were some 53 temples to various gods, many containing massive gold statues. The main sacred procession street passed from the famed Ishtar Gate to the Temple of Marduk, with its adjacent ziggurat rising 288 feet into the sky. A 400-foot bridge spanned the Euphrates River and united the eastern and western halves of the city. On the northwest corner of the king's primary palace sat one of the **Seven Wonders of the World, the famed Hanging Gardens of Babylon.** Built on terraces, it more properly should be called overhanging gardens. Whether the ancient historian exaggerated or gave a precise depiction, the city of Babylon was indeed the largest, most populated, and greatest city in the known world at that time. Perhaps it was on the roof of the Hanging Gardens with a view of his glorious city that Nebuchadnezzar became filled with pride.

The king's overwhelming pride is evident in his exclamation: **Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built ... by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?** (italics added, v. 30). **Note Nebuchadnezzar's emphasis on himself and his failure to give God the credit and the glory for giving all of this to him. Many years later, Paul would upbraid the Corinthians for their pride by asking, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1Co 4:7).** Herein lies the problem with pride: it takes credit for what God alone has done.³⁵

- f. The punishment (4:31–33): As predicted, the king is given an animal's mind for seven years.

Daniel 4:31–33 (NASB95)

³³ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 4:28.

³⁴ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1594.

c. circa

BC before Christ

v. verse

³⁵ Michael A. Rydelnik, ["Daniel,"](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1292.

- 31 *“While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you,*
32 *and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the*
beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time
will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of
mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’
33 *“Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven*
away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with
the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’
claws.

- g. Verse 31: This happened immediately.
- h. God speaks.
- i. *In Mesopotamian myths, this is consistent with descriptions of hell.*
- j. *This would be how a Babylonian understood hell.*
- k. *Think of Howard Hughes*³⁶
- l. He loses his sovereignty.
- m. For seven years, he will live like an animal.
- n. He must recognize God’s sovereignty.
- o. Regarding verse 33: The words “feathers” and “claws” are not present in the Aramaic text, but have been added in the translation for clarity.³⁷

Extra interesting info:

Nebuchadnezzar’s condition. *Interpreters seeking illnesses to which these symptoms might apply have identified conditions such as lycanthropy, a depressive illness in which the patient thinks of himself as a beast. But the characteristics also coincide with the typical description of primitive or primordial man, who lacks good sense (compare NIV: “sanity” vv. 34, 36) and has an animal-like nature and habits (v. 16). In older myths this condition is characteristic of precivilized man. It later is applied to Enkidu, the uncivilized creature of the Gilgamesh Epic. It is then used of those who are driven away from civilization after their city has been destroyed. From the early texts about the Sumerian adventurer Lugalbanda to the late texts concerning the Assyrian courtier Ahiqar, individuals are also described as having developed some of these characteristics while cut off from society. As a result, it is possible that at least some of Nebuchadnezzar’s symptoms describe not a psychological illness but exile from civilization (only food gathered wild, no home, no personal hygiene). A fragmentary cuneiform text suggests the possibility that Nebuchadnezzar had some problem that caused him to become disengaged from his responsibilities for a time, during which his son, Amel-Marduk, was perhaps in control. But the text is too uncertain to draw any firm conclusions.*³⁸

³⁶ Dr Horton; White Horse Inn; 08.14.2022

³⁷ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Da 4:33.

³⁸ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Da 4:33.

More from Moody:

One modern case of boanthropy resulted in the patient growing long matted hair and thickened fingernails, much like Nebuchadnezzar, whose hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws (Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1116–17).

Critics contend that secular history has no record of Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness, thereby challenging the historicity of this account. **However, it is questionable as to whether an ancient Near Eastern despot would place his bout with insanity into official court records. Moreover, Eusebius, the church historian (d. AD 339), citing Abydenus, a third-century BC Greek historian, referred to a time, late in Nebuchadnezzar's life when he was "possessed by a god" (Praeparatio Evangelica IX, 41, cited by Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973], 121–22), a possible secular reference to the events of Dn 4. Also, third-century BC historian Berossus possibly referred to these events when he spoke of an illness that befell Nebuchadnezzar just prior to his death (Wood, *Daniel*, 122).**

Critics have questioned whether the Babylonian Empire could function while mental illness incapacitated its king. Yet, excellent administrative leadership, such as provided by Daniel, would certainly have kept the kingdom intact.³⁹

- V. The postscript (4:34–37): Upon receiving his right mind and being restored to the kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar worships, praises, honors, and glorifies Daniel's God.⁴⁰

Daniel 4:34–37 (NASB95)

34 "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

35 "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And among the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can ward off His hand
Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

36 "At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me

AD in the year of our Lord

BC before Christ

BC before Christ

³⁹ Michael A. Rydelnik, "[Daniel](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1292.

⁴⁰ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Da 4:1–37.

out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

37 *“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”*

- a. He continues his writing.
- b. He was still able to have reason...
- c. Or, he experienced healing.
- d. He praises God-
- e. He calls God Most High
- f. Look at verse 34:
- g. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation.
- h. It seems as though he is recognizing the supremacy of the Lord.
- i. Verse 35: all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing---
- j. I believe this is in proportion to the Lord...
- k. → Do we realize this? We are nothing compared to the Lord.
- l. The Lord does His will.
- m. No one can question Him.
- n. Verse 36: His reason returned to him.
- o. He is back in leadership, and the counselors seek him out.
- p. Verse 37:
- q. Nebuchadnezzar praises and exalts the “King of Heaven.”
- r. The NET Bible is good:
- s. *The very last sentence of the chapter summarizes the message of this story: God is able to humble those who walk in pride. **Although some have disputed that the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar actually did come to a saving knowledge of the true God, it appears that he did.** In his 40-year journey of faith, Nebuchadnezzar accepted the God of Israel into the panoply of gods (2:47), recognized Israel’s God as the Most High God (3:26), and ultimately repented of his pride and submitted to the God of Israel’s sovereignty over the world and his own life (4:34–37). Therefore, near the end of his life, Nebuchadnezzar experienced salvation when he came to know and follow the God of Israel.*
- t. *Too often, people take credit for their own skills, status, or success. It would be wise to learn the lesson of Nebuchadnezzar and acknowledge that all these come from the Sovereign of the universe, not ourselves.⁴¹*
- u. *The great and mighty persecutor of Israel, the destroyer of Jerusalem, was humbled by God’s grace and brought to confess God’s mercy. He **blessed the***

⁴¹ Michael A. Rydelnik, [“Daniel,”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1293.

Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever. God used Daniel's faithfulness to bring light to this Gentile.⁴²

Swindoll:

DAWSON TROTMAN, founder of the Navigators, an organization discipling and mentoring ministry leaders around the world, drowned while saving a swimmer from certain death. Eyewitnesses tell of the tears and helpless disbelief in the faces of those who now looked out across the deep blue water of Schroon Lake. Everyone's face except one —Lila Trotman. Dawson's widow. As she arrived a close friend shouted, "Oh, Lila, he's gone. Dawson's gone!" She replied in calm assurance the words of Psalm 115:3:

*Our God is in the heavens,
and he does as he wishes.*

Does the young widow's response seem strange? Honestly, do you think God's control over us is total . . . or partial? His Word speaks on this deep subject:

What sorrow awaits those who argue with their Creator. . . . Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, "Stop, you're doing it wrong!"

ISAIAH 45:9

I am God, and there is none like me. . . . Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.

ISAIAH 46:9-10

Patiently, repeatedly, God's Word makes the point. Accept it or not, God's calling the shots. Either He's in full control, or He's off His throne.

It was a glorious day when I realized that nobody expected me to have all the answers . . . least of all God. If I could figure it all out, I'd qualify as His adviser, and Scripture makes it clear He doesn't need my short-sighted, insignificant counsel. He wants my unreserved love, my unqualified devotion, my undaunted trust —not my feeble analysis of His ways . . . and certainly not my approval!

One of the marks of spiritual maturity is the quiet confidence that God is in control . . . without the need to understand why He does what He does. Lila Trotman bore such a mark as she faced the unsearchable ways of God. What do you need to place in His hands?⁴³

⁴² Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1595.

⁴³ Charles R. Swindoll, [Good Morning, Lord . . . Can We Talk? A Year of Scriptural Meditations](#) (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2018).