Evidently Nebuchadnezzar was one of those people who had to learn the hard way.

The man was blessed with an absurd amount of revelation. I doubt that there was any king on earth who the Lord spoke to more than Nebuchadnezzar. Yet, it wasn’t until he hit rock bottom that he took things to heart.

That’s what we have here in this passage. The Lord has spoken to Nebuchadnezzar in dreams and appeared physically before him. The Lord has blessed Nebuchadnezzar with prophetic dreams and a physical encounter. But Nebuchadnezzar’s head is just too thick. So extreme measures are necessitated. Nebuchadnezzar needs to hit rock bottom before any real change comes to his life.

That’s what we have here. We have the story told to us 3 times. We have the dream recounted, the dream interpreted, and the dream lived out. And it’s all how Nebuchadnezzar goes from mighty emperor to grass eating beast and back.

And as we read this text, we can’t help but see that there are some great lessons here for us. Nebuchadnezzar’s loss, you might say, is our gain. Because this chapter helps us gain some good understanding about God’s ways in this world.

Now, there are 4 things that I want you to see in this passage today. The first thing I want you to take note of is the absolute and undeniable sovereignty of God over the nations.

1. **The absolute and undeniable sovereignty of God**

This story is a record of how God took the mightiest man in the entire world and made him eat grass. He turned this powerful emperor—who had to be an absolute genius. You don’t get this kind of empire by being a buffoon. And this man was turned into a deranged lunatic. He who roamed the palace was made to wander about fields and woods like a wild goat or some sort of barnyard animal.

You’ll notice that the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar is played up. In previous chapters he was the head of gold in the statue. He was the most magnificent part of the statue. And here in this dream we see that there is a similar theme. He is represented as a gigantic tree that reaches to the heavens. It’s leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant. This is talking about the kingdom of Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar’s hand, became a nothing less than a grand empire.

But he got chopped down.

And verse 17 brings it out in the most simple, yet profound way. “The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.”

This was not just a lesson in submission to Nebuchadnezzar. This is just another reminder to the people of God that no power is too great for the Lord.

We see in our nation things that baffle us. We see the rise of pagan thought. We see more and more control being exerted by the government. We hear stories of places like China and Russia and how all these different nations are vying for super power status.

Not only do we see these major military powers, we are seeing the rise of tech companies. Facebook, Twitter, and all the digital kings are becoming behemoths. And we see the power they exert. They are restricting certain sites and promoting other types of information that we might call questionable.

As a matter of fact, there are news stories starting to come out asking if Google is more powerful than the governments of the world. With their ability to collect information and possibly even influence elections, the question is not too off base.

So not only do we have people who have their hand on the trigger of nuclear powers, we have corporations exerting their fair share of muscle as well.

And what’s a guy like you and I to do? What consolation do we have in this world? What could you and I possibly do to make any kind of difference? It all seems far out of our control.

And it is. We have little to no control over these things. But there is a God in the heavens who is greater. He’s able to chop down google and make goats out of national leaders. Make no mistake, He is the Most High God. Our God is sovereign over the nations. He is sovereign over the digital realms. Whether it be the kingdoms of men, corporate powers, or the vast regions of cyberspace, we must know that our God rules. And we have every reason to be perfectly confident in this world. His dominion endures from generation to generation.

Now, the second thing that I think is apparent from this passage regards our understanding of what is often called “mental illness.”

1. **A keen insight into what constitutes mental illness.**

I appreciate what Voddie Baucham says about this passage. He says that if Nebuchadnezzar were living in our day, he probably would have been committed to an institution and drugged in order to help him cope with his delusions.

And there’s no denying the fact that Nebuchadnezzar flew off the rails. He could be called clinically insane. The language that Scripture uses is very clear: his mind was changed from that of a man to that of a beast.

In today’s language we would say that Nebuchadnezzar had a bout of mental illness. But what you need to understand is that there was nothing mental about this. This was spiritual. By all physical accounts, Nebuchadnezzar was perfectly fine.

He didn’t need a dose of serotonin or a dopamine fix. When Daniel came to him, he didn’t say, “O king, Nebuchadnezzar, you should take some “me time” and get yourself together because you’re under a lot of stress.”

When Daniel came to him he said, “You need to break off your sins.” It was all because he would not cease his arrogant ways. Since he was determined to be a selfish, power hungry, oppressive tyrant, that is why he became delirious. To put it more simply, since he was determined to be a beastly brute, he became a brute beast.

Now, there’s no doubt that there was a divine element to this. On the one hand you can say that he came under God’s judgement and that God gave him a reprobate mind. But you can also say that his 7 year hiatus of bizarre behavior came directly as a result of his rebellion and rejection of God’s ways. That’s because it ended exactly when he humbled himself and lifted his eyes to heaven.

Now, I’m not saying that all mental problems are spiritual in nature. There are some problems that can be organic. Biology can certainly be a factor in some instances. For instance, there can be tumors in the brain that cause you to see things, feel things, or do things. There can be physical issues. That’s why we believe in doctors and want people to check ups. That way they can diagnose these things.

But we should also recognize that these organic factors are incredibly rare. Most of the time, people’s problems are not medical in nature; they are spiritual. You have to recognize that guilt can make a person to do bizarre things. Pride can drive you insane. Selfishness and anger can throw you for a loop.

And we need to understand that the thing that is most needed is repentance and a turning to God. Again, it is not a coincidence that Nebuchadnezzar’s reason was restored to him immediately after he lifted his eyes to heaven and acknowledged the Lord.

That’s a lot different than what you will hear today. Most people will want to spin it as mental illness and say that something is wrong with your brain. What is at issue is the worldview from which you interpret these things. Someone who has the worldview of an atheist, secular humanist, or a postmodern is going to come at these things and diagnose them much differently than someone who looks at the problem through a Biblical worldview. They are not going to look at these things in a religious way. They will think that such a perspective is laughable. Since they don’t believe in spiritual things and since they don’t have a right understanding of the moral aspect of humanity, they are going to try and find a different explanation. Since they only see man as a biological creature, they have to have a biological explanation. So they are going to blame it on the brain.

But we know that man is not merely a physical entity. Man has a spiritual component and those spiritual realities will often manifest themselves in the life of a person. And ultimately, when it comes to spiritual issues and issues of the soul, the Lord is key to gaining deliverance.

Nebuchadnezzar’s problem was that he was living in hard rebellion to Jesus Christ. Once that problem was solved—once he bowed the knee and acknowledged the error of his ways, the Lord brought about his deliverance.

Which brings us to our third thing this passage tells us about. It puts before us the absolute sovereignty of God over the nations, it puts before us a right understanding of mental illness, and it puts before us a great hope of redemption

1. **A great hope of a redemption**

Nebuchadnezzar is a changed man after this. It’s taken 3 chapters, but now we find that he’s no longer just giving lip service to the Lord. He’s writing a testimony, a first hand account, of all that has happened. He’s letting it be known to all the world what the Most High God has done in his life and that He deserves our honor and devotion.

This is different from all the other chapters. We’ve seen in the previous chapters that Nebuchadnezzar has made some great proclamations. In chapter 2, after Daniel told him the dream and gave its interpretation, he called him the God of gods. In chapter 3, after witnessing what happened in the burning furnace, he called Him the Most High God.

But each time we’ve seen that those were mere proclamations without any true heart recognition. He went back to his old pagan, power hording ways each time.

But here we have a proclamation going out to all the world that this God is to be acknowledged as the one who’s kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and who does as he pleases.

Think about it this way, what ruler would ever have anything like this written about himself? This is not the kind of public relations campaign that political leaders use. Every power throughout time has either re-written history or wrote it in such a way as to make himself look good.

For instance, we read in the Bible how the Assyrian king Sennacherib came up against Hezekiah. He laid siege to Jerusalem. Hezekiah was worried that the kingdom would fall right then and there. So he cried out to the Lord and the lord answered. 2 Chronicles tells us how the Lord sent an angel to cut off the mighty warriors. We don’t know exactly what happened, but Sennacherib suffered a significant blow.

Well, Sennacherib tells the story a little differently. He puts a pretty good spin on the whole ordeal. There’s an artifact that was found in Israel left by Sennacherib, and it recounts this same episode that was in 2 Chronicles. But this one reads like this: I, Sennacherib, had Hezekiah caged like a bird for six months. You’ll notice that it doesn’t mention any kind of defeat or blow to his armies. It puts the best possible spin on things so that Sennacherib sounds like a powerful warrior.

And here we have an incident with Nebuchadnezzar that is just embarrassing. He lost his mind? He ate grass? It’s just not the kind of thing you publish.

It’s a testimony to his having a humble attitude before the Lord. It’s not about him anymore; it’s about the Lord. It’s now about the Lord’s power and the Lord’s kingdom.

That’s been the issue right? The initial dream Nebuchadnezzar (chapter 2) had expressed that God’s kingdom would last forever. But Nebuchadnezzar (chapter 3) believed he could make his kingdom last forever (thus the golden statue). Now we see that Nebuchadnezzar has been humbled and rightly recognizes the sovereignty of God over him. He recognizes the complete dominion of God and that His kingdom is supreme.

This is good news. This is a message to all people who are lost in this world. This is a testimony to anyone who has been proudly resisting the Lord and ignoring his gracious revelation of himself that you too can have a part in God’s everlasting kingdom. You are not outside the pale of God’s saving grace.

As a matter of fact, this would speak to the Israelites of Daniel’s day. God had chopped down Israel, so to speak. And now they were a people who were just as lost as Nebuchadnezzar had been. Despite the fact that God had come to them and revealed himself over and over. He had sent prophets to warn them and call them to repentance, but they ignored it and pursued other gods.

So here hope is held out even for them in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. This story of a fall and restoration was a reminder that the Lord receives those who repent and turn to him.

And that same message is declared here to us. You might be a wayward son. Maybe you have even been in the church and had the truth of Christ proclaimed to you, but you have never responded. Maybe you’ve been a bit of an animal yourself: You’ve not lost your mind or wandered around like some sort of deranged cow eating grass, but you have been stubborn as an ox. You’ve proudly resisted the Lord and not acknowledged his Lordship over our life.

The good news is that there’s hope even for you. There’s hope of restoration and redemption. Nebuchadnezzar is a testimony of how God deals graciously with people. And even though he might discipline and chastise his people, he is always ready to pardon their sins and cover their offenses.

You can have that right relationship and be restored to fellowship with God; you can be a partaker of his everlasting kingdom, if you repent of your sins and turn to him.

And with that we come to our fourth and final point. And it is that King Jesus will have the ultimate rule.

1. **An reminder of Christ’s Victorious Kingdom**

I want to come back to verse 17. We didn’t draw everything out of it. We talked about the first part, which says that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of men and gives it to whom he will. But we didn’t touch on the latter part of it. It goes on to say, “He sets over it the lowliest of men.”

Now what in the world is that talking about? When it comes to world powers, you don’t see a lot of men who might be considered humble. I like to say that this is a prophetic utterance. It speaks of Christ. I personally believe that this is a statement to Nebuchadnezzar that a humble one would eventually rule the earth.

And I think Jesus refers to this as well. Because he tells a story that kind of parallel’s Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. It’s the story about the mustard seed that grew to be the biggest of all the garden plants. And like Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, it was a lush plant, and birds came and made their homes in it.

The only difference between these two images was that Jesus’ parable was much more humble. A mustard plant is more like a shrub. It’s a much more humble depiction.

It’s not humble in terms of the scope of the kingdom though. The phenomenal growth is what is in view. But it is a humble expression of the nature of the kingdom.

And this is why Christ rules. He is the humble one. In him there is not a drop of pride. As a matter of fact, though he was in the form of God, he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What we find in the New Testament is that the lowliest of men has been set over the kingdoms of men. And now, as the gospel spreads throughout the world the kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. There’s no stopping the advance of Christ’s kingdom. The Nebuchadnezzar’s of this world are impotent to it because it is a kingdom without boarders. It advances not with the pride of artillery or technology, but it spreads through the humblest of means (the preaching of the gospel).

And it is through his humiliation that his exaltation and kingdom power comes to dominate. The Lord works in the complete opposite way that the Nebuchadnezzars of this world do. He turns everything on its head. His dominion comes through humiliation.

And that is why we can have great confidence. For we are a people who are always in exile and finding ourselves in great humiliation. But this humiliation is the means to the Lord’s dominion. And we do not have to lose heart though it seems that we are always on the weakness or loss.

Ultimately we know that it was in the cross that Christ brought victory. And we know that while we live under the cross and in the pain of the world’s domination that Christ is bringing about his greater dominion in this world. And in the end we know that the church of Christ will be triumphant.

**Conclusion:**

It was fun to see that Alistair Begg had an article posted at The Gospel Coalition website this past week. It was an article based on Daniel 2 and the vision of the statue that was dashed to pieces. Begg sought to encourage his readers with the fact that the kingdom of Christ will not end. Despite what seems to be the increase of secularism and its hostility against the church, he offered words of consolation.

The title of the article was, “Welcome to Exile; It’s Going to be Okay.” And in the article he said this about our present experience in America, “Christians are increasingly going to be seen as different, and not in a good way. We are increasingly going to have to choose between obedience and comfort. The next decades will not bring apathy to the gospel, but antagonism.”

But despite the antagonism and the dangers that may loom, he recognized the fact that the kingdom of Christ will not end.

He also told a story about Lord Reith, the founder of the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). The BBC was founded in the 1920’s and in the 60’s secularism was sweeping through Britain. A young producer stood up in a meeting and said to Lord Reith that the world was changing, and that the BBC did not need to continue with its religious programming. People were no longer interested in religion, he said, and the church was becoming increasingly obsolete.

Lord Reith, who was 6’6″, told this young man to take his seat. Then he stood up and said: “The church will stand at the grave of the BBC.”

That’s our consolation. Our God is sovereign. And the kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. No matter the opposition, our Lord will be the humble victor.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

1. The ultimacy of it
2. The necessity of it
3. The satisfaction of it
4. The manifestation of it