

“Validated.” // Daniel 2 // *Shining in Babylon #2*

Intro ([out of CP video](#))

- Well, these kinds of moments are bittersweet. We’re committed at TSC to send out our best, in pursuit of our God-given assignment to plant 1000 churches in our generation. And that means sending out some of our best. And that means sometimes being at this church feels like trying to hug a parade, but that’s ok--we know we’ll all be able to rejoice and be together forever in heaven.
- Listen, if you’re new to TSC, we judge our success as a church not by how many we seat on the weekend, but by how many we send out into the mission. Sending capacity, not seating capacity.
- Well, this year, we have 5 domestic church plants you see represented behind me in their leadership: 2 in Orlando, 1 in Myrtle Beach, 1 in DR, and 1 in St Louis (BTW if you detect a pattern in where we sense God calling us to plan... I can’t deny we gravitate toward awesome places). Like we say, “God and people who need Jesus are everywhere. So let’s go to the awesome places.”
- We’re sending 2 Summit College staff to lead the college ministry at the Myrtle Beach plant and several other Summit members in all of these. Each of these has stepped out in faith to plant in the midst of a lot of uncertainty and we want to pray for them.
- BTW, these 5 churches put us at 75 domestic plants (and 460 total). Almost halfway there! (We actually realized that some of our plants had helped plant churches that we didn't know about. Pretty cool to see the multiplication happening.)

Pray: STAND AND EXTEND HAND

Amen. Put your hands together one more time....(maybe don’t seat people just roll video?)

(DANIEL BUMPER)

DANIEL 2. I have up here a pair of fake **RayBans** and a pair of real ones. You prob can’t tell the difference; i look dumb in both. They both look the same from a distance. I ordered these (fake ones, I didn’t know they were fake) from a clearance website that was offering a deal that if you bought at least 3 pair you could get for \$25 ea. That should have been my first clue something sinister was afoot, but the site looked legit so I ordered. They took like 3 months to get to my house and when they arrived they were in a box that looked like it had been dragged through China by a mule, which should have been my second clue. But when I opened the box they looked good. In fact, in some ways, I like the color and design better than this genuine pair. But when I put them on, they just didn’t feel right. The metal feels brittle, the view isn’t as clear. I’m sure an expert could pick these up and tell in a millisecond that they are fake. But, I’m not an expert, so I did some research about how to tell fake RayBans from real ones. It’s a little engraved sketch on the left lens. It’s hard to produce because they don’t want to scratch the lens, so it’s very subtle, but it’s got to be deep enough that you can’t

Works consulted:

The Daniel Dilemma, Chris Hodges

“Cultivating Babylon,” sermon, Bryan Loritts

Preaching Christ from Daniel, (commentary), Sidney Greidanus

“The Rise and Fall of the Word, Part 1,” sermon, John MacArthur

“Kingdom Down #2 - God is in Control of Who is In Control: Daniel 2,” sermon, Mark Driscoll

The Dream of the Kingdom, sermon, Tim Keller

rub it out.¹ Counterfeiters have a really hard time getting it right. And sure enough, upon closer investigation, I confirmed that these are indeed fake and I had wasted \$75. The good news is that PayPal reimbursed me, so 3 cheers for them. But if you get a pair of RayBans from me as a gift anytime soon, you should probably be suspect.

What you're going to see today are how God distinguishes his kingdom from counterfeit ones. To remind you, we've titled this series "Shining in Babylon." It comes from a phrase in Daniel 12:3, "Those who have wisdom will shine like the bright expanse of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever"). Unlike most other Old Testament books, Daniel wrote his book outside the confines of Israel. Most of it, in fact, is in Aramaic--the language of Babylon, not Hebrew, the language of Israel. The book is about how to live wisely in a place where God is not respected; in a culture where everyone around you lives by different values and sees you as not just odd but an enemy of--a threat to--the current regime. And the book is about how to not just survive in that kind of environment, but how to be a witness there, how to lead many to righteousness, like Daniel 12:3 says.

You see, when it comes to living in a hostile culture, many Christians choose either *assimilation* or *separation*. Assimilation means you gradually look like everyone else. Their values become your values; your lifestyle imitates theirs. Separation is the opposite. You see the world as evil so "come out from among them and be ye separate!" Growing up in my little independent Baptist school, we had a Christian version of *everything*. We had these little things called "Shepherd's Guides," which was basically a catalogue of all the Christian-owned businesses in the community so we could shop there. We had Christian sports leagues. Christians were expected to listen to their own kind of music--no drums; to style our hair a certain way (long hair on boys was a sign that demons were at work in his heart), and to dress in distinctive ways--boys in ties and girls in culottes. The idea was that the more isolated you were from the world, the more faithful. The weirder, the spiritual...ler.

Interestingly, real quick, this was a controversy in Daniel's day, too. Let me give you a little background. Stay with me. The exile actually happened in 2 stages. In Stage 1, which took place around 597 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar carried off about 10,000 people, mostly the elite—military leaders, scholars, teachers, community leaders, etc. Daniel and his friends.

In Stage 2, about 10 years later, Neb brought everybody else. Well, in between those two phases, a bunch of false prophets rose up in Israel saying, "Look, we've got to resist this exile. Babylon is bad. So stay away from it. If you have to live there, keep to yourself. And if you pray anything about Babylon, pray *against* it, that God would destroy it." The prophet Jeremiah, by contrast--who was a true prophet--said the opposite: he said that God's will for the Israelites at this moment was not to stay separate from the culture of Babylon, but to infiltrate it and influence it. In fact, he wrote a letter to all of the exiles in Babylon recorded in Jer 29 that we quote here a lot. He said:

¹ <https://www.sportrx.com/blog/are-my-ray-bans-real/#:~:text=Ray%2DBan%20places%20one%20prominent,place%2C%20or%20even%20scratch%20off.>

This is what the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles...: "Build houses (in Babylon) and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce. Have sons and daughters... Multiply there; do not decrease. *Seek the wellbeing of the city to which I have deported you. Pray to the Lord on its behalf, for when it thrives, you will thrive.*" –Jeremiah 29:4–7

We use this verse a lot at Summit, because like Daniel, we live as exiles in a hostile culture. (That's literally what the Apostle Peter calls us!) We're not supposed to be huddled up in small groups singing Kum-ba-yah, waiting on Jesus to come back and rapture us off of this trailer park of a planet. We are to be in Babylon, *seeking the wellbeing of our city*, praying for it. For as it thrives, we thrive.

Most Christians, like the Jews in Daniel's day, think the options are either **assimilation** or **separation**. But there is a third option: **transformation**. We're not called to assimilation or separation. We're called to TRANSFORMATION. So Daniel and his friends take on Babylonian names; speak the Babylonian language, work in the Babylonian palace. But they do so as faithful servants of God.

The reason we end every service here by saying, "You are sent" is because we believe this. We gather in here as God's community for a few hours here each week, in Israel, so to speak, and then most of you go back out there, to Babylon. Except for me. I stay in here. But you go back out to work in, and pray for, BABYLON. The church is supposed to feel like a spiritual tornado--you get drawn in here for a few hours only to be flung back out. It's what we see happening in Acts--the majority of stories in Acts take place *outside* the church! I've told you before, of the 40 miracles in Acts, 39 happen *outside* of the church. That's where God wants to demonstrate his power today--in the neighborhoods and the businesses and the hospitals and the jails.

So that's the context we bring to chapter 2.

Chapter 2 opens with King Neb (BTW, is that ok for me to shorten his name? I feel like 1/3 of this sermon could be spent just working through his name. Neb-u-chad-nezz-ar. What if we just went with Neb; Nebbie; the Nebster. And while we're talking about this: What mom chooses a name like Nebuchadnezzar for their baby? How do you look at a little infant in a crib and say, isn't lil' Nebuchadnezzar so cute?) This chapter opens up with Neb *waking up in cold sweat. He's had that dream again!* Not a dream, a nightmare! And every time he has it, he gets more and more upset: **2:1 In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams that troubled him, and sleep deserted him. 2 So the king gave orders to summon the magicians, mediums, sorcerers, and Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. When they came and stood before the king, 3 he said to them, "I have had a dream and am anxious to understand it."**

So they replied, **4 "May the king live forever. Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation."** /You see, Babylonian wise men had this little book with this interpretive key that explained what each element in a dream meant. (A cow meant this; and a bird meant this; Puff the Magic Dragon meant this, and appearing before the royal court in nothing but your underwear meant this). And so he'd tell them his dream and they'd look up the images in their little book and BOOM: DREAM INTERPRETATION. And, of course, they'd give their interpretations in these generalized terms, like a horoscope or fortune cookie today

that uses these broad categories that can always, in some sense, be true, like “Your patience will one day be rewarded,” or “don’t trust friends who gossip about you,” or something like that. And then they’d get paid the big bucks.

But ol’ Neb had started to suspect this was all a bunch of malarkey. And so he said, v 9, “I don’t trust you. Prove you have the power of God by telling me first what the dream WAS, and then I’ll know that you also have the power to interpret it.” Pretty smart, Neb. 10 The Chaldeans answered the king, “No one on earth can make known what the king requests... And no king, great or small, has ever asked anything like this of any medium. 11 What the king is asking is so difficult that no one can make it known to him except the gods, whose dwelling is not with mortals.” 12 Because of this, the king became violently angry and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. / Oh, there is trouble in Camelot. The problem, of course, is that Daniel and his friends--S, M, A--are counted among the wise men. So they’re going to be killed in this purge, also.

17 Then Daniel went to his house and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (that’s S, M, A by their Hebrew names) about the matter, 18 urging them to ask the God of the heavens for mercy concerning this mystery, so Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of Babylon’s wise men. 19 The mystery was then revealed to Daniel in a vision at night, and Daniel praised the God of the heavens 20 and declared: May the name of God be praised forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to him 21 He changes the times and seasons; he removes kings and establishes kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. 22 He reveals the deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him.

And so, Daniel asks to see the king. And 26 The king said to Daniel, whose (Babylonian) name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to tell me the dream I had and its interpretation?” 27 Daniel answered the king, “No wise man, medium, magician, or diviner is able to make known to the king the mystery he asked about. 28 But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries...

Could we park there for just a minute on that phrase, **“But there is a God in heaven”**? That’s really the question behind all this, right? Is there a God in heaven, and has he said something to us here on earth? Is there a God in heaven, and is his power available to us? **You see, sometimes, like Nebuchadnezzar, you get to a point where all human strategies fail.** And I feel like my first role in here is just to proclaim to you: **But there’s a God in heaven.** There. Is. A. God. In. Heaven! Wouldn’t that change how you saw your problem?

- **You’ve tried to make the relationship work.** You’ve tried to fix what is broken. And it’s all failed and you feel like there is no hope. Friend, I’ve got good news--**BUT THERE IS** a God in heaven. And his power starts where yours ends.
- **You’ve tried to make the kid turn out right.** You’ve told them everything you know to tell him and you tried everything you know to make him choose what’s right. There’s nothing left you know to do. Yes, but there’s a God in heaven.
- You’ve tried to **overcome that addiction.** You’ve tried to find that missing piece. And you’ve failed so many times you’ve started to think, “There is no point!” But! And that’s a huge but. There’s a God in heaven.

- **Death and disease seem so total, so final.** And this year they've taken things from you that you feel like you can never get back. What's the point? Won't death just take us all in the end anyway? Yes, But. There's a God in heaven.
- **You're disappointed in politics.** Dismayed by our leaders. Democrats disappoint. Republicans disappoint. Newsflash: If you were put in power, you'd disappoint us, too. Yes, but there's a God in heaven.
- **And speaking of disappointments, let's talk about you.** For some of you, no one has disappointed you more than you. No one has lied to you, let you down, or broken promises to you more than you. And you have no confidence to go forward and create a better future than today. Yes, but. There's a God in heaven.
- **Do you believe that?** Wouldn't that change everything! There is a God in heaven.

And, Daniel continues, he told me what your magicians could not. And Daniel tells Nebbie what his dream was (PIC)--"King Neb, you saw a giant statue², and his head was made of gold and the chest and arms were silver and the belly was bronze and the legs were iron and the 10 toes of the feet were made of a mixture of iron and clay. And while you were admiring this statue, a rock came out of heaven and shattered the statue in pieces!" And Nebuchadnezzar said, "That was it!"

And then Daniel gives him the interpretation, which we'll get to in a second, but first, let me highlight the significance of how this went down because it gives us another important principle for shining in Babylon: **God validates his message supernaturally in Babylon.** Supernatural confirmation is how God distinguishes his kingdom from all the *fake ones*. (*RayBans*).

Here, that happened through the supernatural revelation of a dream. But think of all the other ways this happens in Scripture:

- **Do you remember Mark 2, where Jesus said to the crippled man, "Your sins are forgiven"?** All the religious leaders were like, "You're a fake. Nobody can forgive sins by God." What did Jesus point to as the proof that he had power to forgive sins? After all, *anybody* could just walk around saying they forgave sins, and we'd never know if they were telling the truth, just like any old wise man in Babylon could fake a dream interpretation. **Jesus said, "The proof that I have the power to forgive sins is that I can make this lame man walk. If I have the power to make a lame man walk, then that proves I have the power of God to forgive sins, too."** Of course, the ultimate miracle that proved Jesus' power was the Resurrection. That was something no other religious guru or wise man had ever been able to do.
- **This supernatural verification continued on into the ministry of the Apostles.** The writer of Hebrews explained that God validated the writings of the **Apostles through signs and wonders:** "The gospel was declared to us at first by the Lord (Jesus), and then it was attested to us by those who heard him (the Apostles), God bearing witness with them through signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit." (Hebrews 2:3)
- **Today, our experience of this is a little different, because we have a completed Bible,** but the Apostle Paul still points to supernatural power at work in our preaching that validates this message is from him. Paul said, for example to the Corinthians: "My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words

² John MacArthur's sermon, "The Rise and Fall of the Word, Part 1," was helpful to me in this portion about the statue.

of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not be based on human wisdom but on God's power. (1 Cor 2:4) In 1 Cor 14:25, Paul talks about an unbeliever coming into a church setting where believers begin to use the gift of prophecy to call out and pray for what is going on in his heart. And as they do that, "The secrets of his heart will be revealed, and as a result he will fall facedown and worship God, proclaiming, 'God is really among you.'"

- **Still today, I will tell you, God sometimes validates the message through supernatural dreams and visions.** There's nothing in the Bible that says God has ceased that. Listen, if you have spent any time overseas among Christians who work with Muslims, you will be inundated with stories of Muslims who have come to faith in Christ through dreams and visions. It's almost spooky, but it's so consistent that it's difficult to dismiss it all as made-up. For me, 4 of 6 Muslims have come through some kind of dream. Let me share just one. Really quick: when I lived in Southeast Asia, a Muslim I'd never met, a friend of a friend, asked to meet with me. He told me about a dream he had in which he was walking through this expansive field for days. He felt lost and alone, when suddenly, a man in radiant white clothing with a face, he said, that shone like the sun, appeared behind him, calling his name. This man handed him a copy of the Gospel and told him this was the only thing that would get him out of this field of emptiness and loneliness. After telling me about this dream, he said, "My friend tells me you are expert at Gospel. Can you tell me what my dream means?" Now, as I noted earlier, I was raised in a really conservative Baptist context, and dreams/visions and the interpretation thereof were not part of our spiritual repertoire. But I am happy to tell you, in that moment, I knew exactly what to say. I said... Hey, let me tell you, that makes evangelism easy!
- The NT writer James tells us that God validates his messengers through answers to prayer:
 - He points to the example of Elijah. When Elijah wanted to prove to Israel who the true God was--was it God (Jehovah), or Ba'al--do you remember the test? It was which God answered prayer. "And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord, and the God who answers... he is God." 1 Kings 18:24
 - **This is one of the reasons we believe prayer should define our ministries at the Summit Church.** We don't just pray in preparation for the ministry--prayer is the ministry. It is part of the validation of our message. What we do up here at the end might be the most important thing we do.
 - **One of our church planters shared this story with me this week:** I got to see a Hindu background Indian man come to faith in South Africa after he lost everything in a bad business deal. When we met him, he articulated that this might be happening because God was trying to communicate with him. Over the next couple of days he struggled with suicidal thoughts and the idea that God could be all good and all powerful and let this happen to him. Nevertheless, I felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to share with him the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. I then asked him if I could take a week to pray that in a similar way God would reveal himself to this man to be the one true God. He said yes.

The next day I prayed that the Lord would meet his tangible need for clothes. I then got an email from a church asking if we had any ministry needs because they had set some money aside for us. I went back to meet this man and told him about what God had done in providing clothes for him

through this church. I took him to the mall to pick out his clothes and then we sat and I explained the gospel to him.

I asked at the end if I could pray for him. I prayed the gospel over him and when I said amen, he asked if he could pray also. He proceeded to pray, "God, over the last week you know that I have yelled at you and not believed in you and thought about ending my life. But today you have proven to me that you are real and that Jesus is your Son and I want to say thank you."

- One more: Spirit-fueled changes in your life validate this gospel is from God. Paul said, "If any man is in Christ..." When you get born again, God gives you a new heart--a love for God, his word--a desire to be close to him; he gives you a love for his people and a hatred for sin. Those are things that can't be produced by religion. That's proof it is from God. BTW, if that change hasn't happened, that's a good indication you've never actually experienced God-

The point: God intends to make you shine in Babylon; to distinguish the truth of his message from the counterfeits all around you, by supernatural outpourings of power. Are you experiencing this? Do you even look for it? Friends, he's still ready to do this today. **Summit, let's ask him for it. PRAY**

(The Interpretation)

OK, now, let's use our remaining time to consider the dream itself, because it's an important piece of prophecy, and--it reveals the core substance of our message to Babylon. This begins in vs. **31**.³ Neb sees a gigantic human statue (**PIC**), and each part of the statue is made of a different substance.

- **The head is made of gold:** This, vs. 38, Daniel says, represents the Babylonian Empire, which lasted from 626 B.C. to about 539 B.C. Daniel says to Neb, "**You are that head of gold.**" (vs. 38)
 - Babylon was, to note, the world's first superpower, and it was mightier than anything the world had ever seen; impressive even by today's standards. Nebuchadnezzar, for example, built a wall around Babylon that stretched for 56 miles, and in places was over 80 ft wide and 300 ft high.⁴
 - And his Empire, historians say, was laden with gold. Herodotus, for example, a contemporary historian, visited Babylon and wrote that never in his life had he seen such an abundance of gold. It was on the buildings. On the signs. Neb's throne was made of solid gold.⁵
- **After that, we have the chest and arms made of silver.** This represents the Medo-Persian Empire, which conquered Babylon. We'll actually see that happen in Daniel 5.

³ Help from Mark Driscoll, "Kingdom Down #2 - God is in Control of Who is in Control: Daniel 2," sermon Preached at The Trinity Church, January 19, 2020.

⁴ Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605-562 BCE) built three walls around Babylon at heights of forty feet and so broad at the top that chariots could race around them. The Ishtar Gate in the wall of Nebuchadnezzar II's Babylon was claimed by some to be greater than any of the listed Wonders of the Ancient World. **The Greek historian Herodotus claimed that "Babylon surpasses in wonder any city in the known world" and specifically praised the walls which he said were 56 miles (90 kilometres) long, 80 feet (24 metres) thick, and 320 feet (97 metres) high.** Although it is generally believed that Herodotus exaggerated the majesty of Babylon, other ancient writers have also noted the magnificence of the walls. <https://www.worldhistory.org/wall/>

⁵ Cf. Isa 14:4

- Here we see two body parts, the chest and arms, representing the two kingdoms Media from the North and Persia from the East, that united to overthrow Babylon in 539 B.C.
- **Next, we have the belly and thighs made of bronze.** Here we venture out a little on our own, because the text was really clear about what these first couple parts of the statue represented. After that, the historical parallels aren't directly mentioned. I'm interpreting this the way many scholars do, but the point isn't, 'Who exactly are the toes of this statue?' The point is what God is saying to all human kingdoms. We on the same page, here? (I can see some of you got your charts out ready to start identifying which politicians are the anti-christ. Don't do that.). OK, here we go... Most scholars believe this represents Greece, the superpower that conquered Medo-Persia around 220 B.C., led by Alexander the Great.
 - **Interestingly, btw,** Alexander's armies pioneered the use of bronze in weaponry. Greek soldiers wore bronze helmets; their chariots were made of bronze; their shields and even their swords--which might explain bronze being the metal that symbolized this dynasty.
- **Then we have the legs of iron,** which likely represents Rome, the Kingdom that conquered Greece in 63 BC
 - Why iron? Well, iron was considered to be the strongest of all the metals. This was supposed to prophesy something about Rome's strength. And, sure enough: Scholars say Rome took military strength to a new level, shown by the fact that they held their Empire for several centuries. Think about it: Babylon's rule lasted only 70 years; the Medo-Persian one about 200 and the Greek one about 200. But the Roman Empire lasted for more than 500 years in the West and more than 1500 years in the East.
- **Finally, we have feet made of a mixture of iron and clay. The Roman Empire would** eventually be shattered into different kingdoms and nations. The fullness of this hasn't happened yet, btw; we know that because these 10 kingdoms are mentioned again in Revelation as a part of a future event.
 - And I know all of this wants to make some of you geek out trying to figure out which nations those are going to be, and whether or not the Covid vaccine is the mark of the beast--which, by the way, I am not a medical expert and so won't speak on the medical ramifications of taking it, but I can 100% assure you that that vaccine is not the mark of the beast--but talk of prophecy makes you want to really try to figure all this out, but let me encourage you not to go there--or, at least, if you do, don't spend long there. The ambiguity in the Bible is intentional. If God had wanted us to know more specifics, he'd have given them to us.

So, that's the statue. But the most important part of the dream was not the statue itself; it was what happened to it: 34 As you were watching (Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar), a stone broke off without a hand touching it, struck the statue on its feet and crushed them. 35 Then the iron, the fired clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were shattered and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors. The wind carried them away, and not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

44 "The great God has told the king what will happen in the future... In the days of those kings, the God of the heavens will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed... It will crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself endure forever."

OK, so the rock is the kingdom of God. The text directly says that. And when Jesus showed up, he made clear in Matthew 21:41 that this Rock coming from heaven was a picture of him.

Think about it: The stone was made without human hands. It came about with no human agency. Interesting, did you know the stones of the Temple had to be made without human hands? That was to show that no part

of God's salvation would come about by human agency. No hand touched it, God would do it all. So, like this stone, Jesus would be "made" without human hands. He was born of a virgin.

Second, the Rock is the least valuable substance in the dream--granite is much less valuable than gold, silver, bronze or iron--yet, this Rock came with the power of God, and so it shattered into dust those more expensive metals. This represented how Jesus would not come with all the bling and shine of the world--he was born poor; he never owned a home, he never raised an army; he was no head of gold--yet he came with the death-defying power of God.

Third, in this dream, the ROCK started small, but eventually grew into a gigantic mountain that filled the whole earth. That's the same thing Jesus said about his kingdom in Matthew 13: his Kingdom would start small, like a seed but eventually multiply so that it covered every part of the earth.

You know, when Jesus left, you could put all of his followers into one Upper Room. He didn't leave an army or a fortress like Nebuchadnezzar or Alexander or Mohammad. Yet that small movement has today swelled into the largest religious movement in history. It literally covers the face of the earth.

I've told you: the places the gospel is growing the fastest today is in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Did you know, 2/3 of all self-identifying Christians today live in Latin America, Africa, or Asia? And by 2050, experts say that number will near 80%!⁶

- Get this, today, there are more practicing Christians in Africa than in all European countries combined. More Christians will attend church in Kenya this weekend than in all of Canada.
- Uganda has more Anglican Christian than Great Britain, Canada and the United States combined (and Anglican literally means 'English.')
- Ghana has more Presbyterians than Scotland, where Presbyterianism started. Brazil now sends more overseas missionaries than either Britain or Canada. (We talk about the villager in Africa who has never heard about Jesus! Statistically, you're more likely to run into a born again Christian in a village in Africa than you are in Montreal)
- **And don't even get me started about Asia:** In 1970 there were no legally functioning churches in all of China, but it is estimated that today the number of practicing Christians in China exceeds that of the United States. Experts predict that by 2050 China will be a majority-Christian country.⁷
- People say, "Christianity is a Western thing that Americans shouldn't try to impose on everyone." But, Christianity is not a Western thing; it's never been a Western thing. If anything it's a Middle Eastern thing that came to the West for a while and is now headed around the world.⁸ Just like Neb predicted.

And that leads us to the substance of our core message to Babylon--what we're here to witness to, to testify to: God sent a Rock to earth called Jesus who will destroy every false kingdom erected by man, whether those are large geopolitical kingdoms in the world or the independent little kingdom of your own life.

Now, the irony is, that's not really why Jesus came. He came first to save. He came not to judge us but to die on a cross to save us; to be a rock of salvation we could build our lives upon. But if we won't do that, then that Rock will crush us.

⁶ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2396939319880074#:~:text=By%202050%20it%20is%20expected,will%20continue%20into%20the%20future.>

⁷ Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*

⁸ Mark Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity*

That's the choice I put in front of you today. Do you see what this dream is telling you will happen to you if you oppose Jesus? Again, let me read **Dan 2:35**. When this Rock strikes the kingdoms in that statue, "...they became like chaff from the summer threshing floors. The wind carried them away, and not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

MUSIC

That's your choice: receive Jesus and have a life that lasts forever or be crushed by him. 2500 years ago a pagan king's dream tells you the end of history. Receive Jesus as the rock of salvation or be crushed by him. What you can't do is resist him. Charles Spurgeon compared that to a gnat trying to resist the coming of a locomotive: "He who would place himself in front of a fast moving railway car will be crushed and would be no more foolish than you who are opposing the gospel. Who are you to attempt to stand against it? You will be crushed. But let me tell you, when the railway car runs over you the wheel will not be raised even an inch by your size. For what are you? A tiny gnat, a creeping worm, which that wheel will crush to less than nothing and not leave you even a name as having ever been an opponent of the gospel. Let (everyone) in the world know assuredly that the gospel will win its way, whatever they may do. Poor creatures... their efforts to oppose the gospel are not even worthy of our notice. And we need not fear that they can stop the truth. **They are like a gnat who thinks he can quench the sun. Go tiny insect and do it if you can. You will only burn your wings and die. Likewise there may be a fly who thinks it could drink the ocean dry. Drink the ocean if you can, O fly! More likely you will sink in it and it will drink you.**"

That's the message of this dream. But I remind you again: that's not why Jesus came. He came to save. Jesus said that the Rock that the builders rejected became the chief cornerstone for those who put their hope of salvation in him. The choice is yours. A life of meaning and purpose, built upon a rock, or a temporary kingdom that will be crushed into powder.

It's not why he came

Prayer CUT VIDEO

End the sermon by **calling for prayer teams and sending.**

