

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

Intro (out of CP video)

- Well, that’s bittersweet. We send our best. Sometimes being at this church feels like trying to hug a parade as we do that.
- But that’s ok--we know we’ll all be able to rejoice and be together forever in heaven.
- 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. (We judge our success not by seating capacity, but sending capacity)
- That’s 5 domestic church plants for the year: 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 awesome places.”
- We’re sending 2 Summit College staff to lead the college ministry at the Myrtle Beach plant and several other Summit members.
- Each of these has stepped out in faith to plant in the midst of a lot of uncertainty.
- BTW, these 5 churches put us at 75 domestic plants (and 460 total)...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

Fake RayBans / Ordered from a clearance website that was offering a deal that if you bought 3 pair, you could get for \$25 ea. That should have been my first clue, 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 by a mule from deep in mainland China, which should have been my second clue something was amiss. But they looked good. In fact, in some ways, I like the color and design better than this genuine pair. But after I wore them a few times, 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. A little engraved sketch on the left lens, it’s hard because they don’t want to scratch the lens or obstruct the view, so it’s very subtle.¹ And, when counterfeiters try to fake it, they either scratch the lens or it’s too superficial and rubs out. And sure enough, upon closer investigation, I confirmed that these are fake and I had wasted \$75. The good news is that PayPal, whom I paid through, reimbursed me, so 3 cheers for them.

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

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

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 conclave, 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. There were distinctive Christian sports leagues and of course Christian music styles, and hair styles, and dressing styles. The more isolated from the world you were, the more faithful. The weirder, the more spiritual.

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:

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 Apostles spend the majority of their time *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? Neb-u-chad-nezz-ar. I feel like 1/3 of this sermon just saying his name. And what mom chooses that name for their baby? How do you look at a little baby in a crib and call it "Neb-u-chad-nezz-ar. Oh, look at lil' Nebuchadnezzar, isn't he cute?" So, henceforth: Neb; Nebbie; the Nebster.) 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 today that uses these broad categories that can always, in some sense, be true: "Today you should avoid people who drain you," or "Your patience will one day be rewarded," 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, **“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: 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--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 of everything? Won’t death just take us all in the end? Yes. But. There’s a God in heaven.
- You’re disappointed in politics. Dismayed by our leaders. Democrats disappoint us. Republicans disappoint us. Newsflash: If you were put in power, you’d disappoint us, too. 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 statue, 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: **In Babylon, God often validates his message supernaturally.** 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”? And all the religious leaders were like, “You’re a fake.” 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. 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.”
- The ultimate miracle that proved Jesus’ power was the Resurrection. Jesus rising from the dead validates what he said, whether or not the wise men of our age agree with it. Right? When you are in an argument with somebody and one of you dies and rises from the dead, he wins.

- Furthermore, God validated the writings of the Apostles through miracles. The writer of Hebrews explained it this way: “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. He told the Corinthians: “My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words 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.’” A few weeks ago I told you how my wife, when she went to college, was wandering from God. She’d decided to walk away from the faith. She got invited by a friend to go on a Christian ministry retreat. She said she’s not even sure why she went, she’s pretty sure she got tricked into going: Hey, come with us to the beach. What do you know, there’s a speaker and a band here! Well, at the end of the one of the talks, the subject of which she can’t even remember, she said, the speaker asked the attendees to pair up and pray for one another. My wife had never met the girl who prayed for her, but this girl began to pray out exactly what was going on in her life. She verbalized, in prayer, Veronica’s fears, questions, sins. She then prayed the love of God into her life. Veronica said she felt completely exposed; she knew that God was confronting her, revealing her brokenness, and speaking his love to her. Supernatural validation.
- **Still today, I will tell you, God sometimes validates the message through supernatural dreams and visions.** Nothing 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. I’ve told you about a few of them, like Fajar...
- James in the NT 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 how God distinguished his prophets from counterfeits all throughout the Bible: When Solomon dedicated the Temple, he said, “Lord, you will hear the prayers prayed toward this place, “...so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.” (1 Kings 8:43)
 - 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. (Acts 6: prayer is the ministry!) What we do up here at the end might be the most important thing we do.
- One more: Spirit-fueled changes in your life validate this gospel is from God. The Apostle John said that the proof the Spirit is in us is that he makes changes in us that no man-made religion can make: he produces in you a genuine love for God, a craving for his word, a love for his people; and a hatred of sin.
- Paul said, “If any man is in Christ...” The change it makes in your life is the 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.**

(Part 2)

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**:²

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 90 miles, and in places was 375 ft high.
 - And why gold? Historians say Neb was kind of obsessed with it. The historian Herodotus, for example, 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.³
- **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.
 - 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.
 - There were several rulers in this Empire--it lasted for about 200 years--but the most note-worthy was Cyrus the Great. The prophet Isaiah prophesied extensively about the impact of Cyrus on Israel⁴, even using his name 100 years before Cyrus was even born.
 - It was during the Medo-Persian empire that Esther and Nehemiah wrote their books.
- **Next, we have the belly and thighs made of bronze.** (Now, at this point, we leave direct identification in the text, and so I would never give the same weight to my interpretation of these prophecies as we do the words of Scripture, but I think we're on pretty good footing here). Most scholars say this represents Greece, the superpower that conquered Medo-Persia around 220 B.C.
 - This Kingdom was led by Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world from the West side of Europe to the Southern tip of India and down into Africa. Alexander did all this by his early 30's, btw, and then he died.
 - **You may wonder, btw, why 'Bronze'** for this part of the statue? Scholars say it was because 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.
- **Then we have the legs of iron,** which represent Rome, the Kingdom that conquered Greece in 63 B.C.
 - Some scholars say the 2 legs represent the East and West divisions of the Roman Empire; the Byzantine part in the East, headquartered in Constantinople; and the Western Roman Empire headquartered in Rome.

² 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.

³ Cf. Isa 14:4

⁴ 44:24, 28; 45:1-4

- Now, you see iron and you say, “That’s not as cool as gold.” Yeah, but iron was considered in those days to be the strongest of all the metals. “Legs of iron” was supposed to predict 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 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. In fact, some scholars say the length of the legs in relation to the other parts of the body is supposed to indicate the length of their rule.
- Finally, we have **feet made of a mixture of iron and clay. The Romans 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 that some of you literally just geeked out trying to figure out which nations those are going to be but let me encourage you not to go there--or, at least, if you do, don’t spend long there. Kirk Cameron will explain it to us all in time.
- BTW, I got to check something off of my bucket list. I got to meet Kirk Cameron the other day. He was a great guy, I’m going to tell you a story about him here later on. It was no Nicolas Cage meeting, mind you, but I was still pretty pumped.

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 of iron and fired clay, 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, and this kingdom will not be left to another people. 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. This was a prophecy about Jesus.⁵ We know that because Jesus specifically applied it to himself in Matthew 21:42.

The stone would be made without human hands. Like this stone, Jesus would be “made” without human agency. He was born of a virgin. Interesting, the stones of the Temple had to be made without human hands. That was to show that no part of God’s salvation on earth would come by human agency. God would do it all.

The Rock is the least valuable substance in the dream--less valuable than gold or silver or bronze or iron--yet, it’s what contains the power of God. This was a picture of how Jesus’ kingdom would not come with all the bling and shine that the world values. He was born poor, lived for a while as a refugee. Never owned a home, never had children--but this rock contained the power of God.

Furthermore, 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 (**Matt 13:31–32**): He said the Kingdom starts small like a seed but eventually multiplies so that it covers every part of the earth.

Listen, Jesus did not establish his kingdom with gold or military might like Nebuchadnezzar or Alexander or even Mohammad. He amassed no fortune, and y’all, when he left, you could put all of his followers into one

⁵ This imagery used in other places of the Old Testament too, btw. (Ps 118:22)

Upper Room. Yet, eventually, this movement, like this rock in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, spread over the whole earth. Today, there are more Christians in the world than from any other religious movement in history.

And don't just think America. The places the gospel is growing the fastest today is in the Global South, and by that I mean Africa, Asia, and Latin America. $\frac{2}{3}$ of all self-identifying Christians today live in either Latin America, Africa, or Asia. By 2050, that number will likely near 80%!⁶

- Get this, today, there are more practicing Christians in Africa than in all European countries combined. On any given Sunday, more Christians attend church in Kenya than in Canada; and more believers worship together in Nagaland--one of the states in India--than in all of Norway.
- Right now, over 60% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa identifies as Christian. Uganda has more Anglican Christian than Great Britain, Canada and the United States combined (and Anglican literally means 'English.') The same is true for Kenya, Tanzania, and Nigeria. This Sunday there are more Presbyterians at church in Ghana than in Scotland. Brazil now sends more overseas missionaries than does 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 the faculty lounge at UNC-CH. BTW, you Christian professors at UNC, thank God for you.
- **Or consider 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 equals the number in the United States. And experts predict that, based on current rates, China will be a majority-Christian country by 2050.⁷
- The largest church in Korea has more people present for a single worship service than are at Canada's ten largest churches combined.
- The looming explosion of Christians is in the Muslim world, where 2/3 of all the unreached peoples currently live. People say, "Christianity is a Western thing that Americans shouldn't try to impose on everyone." Be real. Christianity is not a Western thing; it's never been a Western thing. If anything it's a Middle Eastern thing that has to the West and is now headed around the world, and it won't stop until it's finished.⁸ I love how Bob Roberts says it: "Christianity began as a Jewish movement to God; it will conclude as a Muslim movement to Jesus."

And that leads us to the substance of our core message to Babylon--What we're here to witness to, to testify to: There is a God in heaven; he sent a Rock to earth called Jesus, and he will destroy every false kingdom made by man; he'll bring down every tower erected in wicked independence from him.

You choose whether you'll build your life on that Rock or be crushed by it. Charles Spurgeon compared it to a fly trying to resist the coming of a locomotive. If a fly gets onto a locomotive, he moves across the country with unstoppable force. But if he decides to set up camp on the railway in defiance of the train, the train will run over him like he's not even there: "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

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*

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.”

You can't resist the locomotive, but you can get onto it! Jesus said that the Rock from heaven that the builders rejected has become for others the chief cornerstone of their lives, the foundation of a life of meaning and significance that lasts forever.

What are you going to do? You see, Jesus, this Rock, didn't come to crush you; he came to save you. He wants to be the Rock you build your life on. Eventually, everything else in your life will CRUMBLE. You'll be like all the kingdoms in that statue, where Daniel prophesies, “...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” Dan 2:35

But if you build your life on Jesus, you'll get not only joy in the present, but security for eternity.,

Kirk Cameron, whom I referred to earlier, said that when he was about 14 years old he was recruited to play the oldest brother, Mike Seaver, on “Growing Pains,” which almost instantly became a hit show. How many of you watched it?

He said, “I had everything that I wanted. I had as much money as I wanted to spend. I was traveling around the world meeting famous people. I was a famous person. It was all I'd ever dreamed of.”

“But,” he continued, “when I was about 17 years old, I followed a good-looking girl to church. Not because I wanted to learn about God, but because I wanted to be with this girl. It was there I heard the gospel for the first time. I kept going. One afternoon, I was sitting in my sports car thinking about the fact that I could die at any moment. And I knew that if there was a God and a heaven, I wouldn't be going. I decided that I needed to be saved. I asked God, if he was real, to reveal himself to me.”

“My heart had been changed... As I began reading his Word, I saw my need for his forgiveness, and I began to desire to live my life in a way that pleased him.

“Almost immediately my life began to change. My language on set changed. The things that I was willing and not willing to do on Growing Pains changed. [He got into all this controversy because he didn't want to play in a scene that portrayed his unmarried character having sex with a girl.]

He said, “You may not think it's that big of a deal, but when you make a decision, like, 'I'm not comfortable saying that line or doing that scene,'... well, that meant that 11 writers had to come up with a new scene. And it meant that the other actors and actresses in that scene had to learn new lines. Tabloids grabbed onto that and said, ‘Kirk Cameron goes off the religious deep end!’ But it was nothing more than a 17-year-old kid finding something that was worth more than all the celebrity in the world, and wanting to live his life as a living “thank you” to the God who had saved him from hell and adopted him into his family.

“My main identity is no longer ‘an actor’. I am a follower of Jesus Christ. If that means I continue in acting, great! I'd love that. But if it means I need to change professions because I can't provide for my family this way, well, that's what I'll do. Sure, I've lost a few jobs because I'm a Christian. But that's irrelevant. I can

honestly say that of everything I have, of everything I've experienced, nothing compares to the joy of knowing Christ."

I put before you a choice. Build your life on the Rock. Submit to him. End this foolish opposition to him. Here's how history ends: "The pride of mankind will be brought low, and human loftiness will be humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted on that day," Isaiah 2:17

You going to be with him or against him?

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