

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Rise and Fall of the World, Part 3

Scripture: Daniel 2:44-49

Code: 27-09

Tonight, before we come to the Lord's Table, I want to draw your attention back to our study of the Book of Daniel and sharing in the thoughts in the second chapter of Daniel, use them if I might to lead into our time around the Lord's Table tonight. For there is a wonderful and glorious connection as I think you'll see.

Daniel 2. We've been studying the whole chapter and I'm not going to for time's sake go over all of the review and everything. But just come in at some point to refresh your thinking and then pick up the closing portion of the chapter.

Hardly a day goes by in our world when at least one time or other you don't read in the newspaper about the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been a focal point for the attention of the world for many years now. And I suppose that even the unknowing world and the world of people that don't understand its significance can't help but be amazed by the fascination that the world has with this marvelous and ancient city. If you know anything about the Bible, you know Jerusalem is a very, very special place. There's no city like it in the world. Throughout history, it has been the focal point for the drama of redemption center stage.

In the Book of Daniel, as we pick up the scene, the Jewish people have been taken from Jerusalem. They've been made captives in the land of Babylon to the east. And according to Psalm 137:5-6, this is their cry. "If I forget thee, oh, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Even in captivity, they longed for the city of Jerusalem. Even in captivity, they said that they would rather sacrifice anything than lose their great love for Jerusalem. Was it the ground? Was it the bricks and the mortar that made the walls and the building? What was it? Why Jerusalem? Why the hungering heart for that city? Why 70 years later was it such a major issue with Nehemiah that he go back and rebuild the walls of this ancient city? Why in our own modern times have Jews been immigrating back to that land of Israel to live in that city of Jerusalem?

Well, I guess the first time Jerusalem was ever mentioned in the Bible it was mentioned in Genesis 14 and that makes it pretty old. And it says, "From Jerusalem, there was a priest of the most high God." Only it doesn't call the city Jerusalem. It calls the city Salem. Salem. Peace. Most likely an ancient name for a city which became Jerusalem.

The first specific reference to Jerusalem is found in the 10th chapter of Joshua. "As the children of Israel were coming out of the Egyptian captivity and being led into the Promised Land by Joshua, they came to the knowledge of this particular city of Canaan known as Jerusalem. And Jerusalem stood like other cities, such as Ai and Jericho, in the path of the conquering Israelites." That's where we first meet it and from then on it dominates Biblical teaching.

God marvelously sets his affection on that city. God has great plans for it even yet in the future. Jerusalem is an amazing place. Jerusalem is on a plateau. The plateau moves up out of the surrounding area. And on three sides, Jerusalem is surrounded by valleys 3 to 400 feet deep. Only one side is level and that's the north. So the only effective way to attack the city is from the north and thus it becomes easy to defend Jerusalem because there's only one way in which the enemy could be coming. In other words, it was an ideal setting for a city, a natural fortress.

It became the possession of the Israelites who came into the land of Canaan. But not much was said of it after that. It just was kind of there. Well, if you go back far enough, there was a famous mountain in the middle of that city called Mount Moriah. And Abraham actually prepared to sacrifice Isaac on that mountain when God provided a ram. Fitting that before the city had even become what it was to become, God had marked it out as a place of sacrifice.

When David became king, he reigned in Hebron. And Hebron is about 30 miles south and a city of the plain that would be very difficult to defend. And David reigned in Hebron for about seven years. And then he decided to move the capital city to Jerusalem and he did that according to 2 Samuel 5, "And Jerusalem became the royal capital where David reigned for 33 years." And from then on Mount Zion, which is a hill in the middle of Jerusalem, became identified as the royal seat.

From David on, then, Jerusalem is the royal capital, the political center, the economic center, the religious center, the cultural center, the social center of Jewish life. And may I add, it is the center of God's redemptive plan. It was just down the road from Jerusalem the Messiah was born. It was just outside the wall of Jerusalem that He died. It was equally just outside the wall of Jerusalem that He rose again. It will be outside the wall of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives where He will descend. And then finally, He will enter the city of Jerusalem and establish His throne. Jerusalem is a focal point of God's plan.

But as we come to the Book of Daniel, this marvelously blessed city, this city which God above all other cities had marked out for a place in redemptive history, this incredible place that lingers still not in the memory but in the plan of God yet to be unfolded, this city had departed from God. And while the people in captivity were great in remembering Jerusalem, they were not so great in remembering what made Jerusalem great. While remembering their love for the city, they had forgotten the place of God. They were loving the city without loving the God whose city it was. And so God took them

out of that city.

An invader came along by the name of Nebuchadnezzar. And Nebuchadnezzar, this powerful monarch who for all intense and purposes established the Babylonian Empire, the greatest empire of the world of its day, this Nebuchadnezzar sat, destroyed, plundered, pillaged, and made captive of the people of Jerusalem.

In Jeremiah 52:12 it says, "Now in the fifth month and the tenth day of the month which was the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard who served the king of Babylon into Jerusalem and burned the house of the Lord and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burn he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldeans that were with the captain of the guard broke down all the walls of Jerusalem round about. Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, carried away captives certain of the poor of the people and the residue of the people who remained in the city and those who fell away, who fell to the king of Babylon and the rest of the multitude."

All he left were a few vinedressers and farmers to make sure they got some product out of the land. They wiped the place out. Smashed all the houses. Crushed the temple of God. Destroyed the palace of the king. They obliterated the city. Nebuchadnezzar did that.

He had two great objectives in mind. First his objective was to destroy the house of God. Why? He wanted to break the back of their religion. Secondly, he destroyed the palace. That was to break the royal house, the political order. He wanted to destroy their religion and their politics and thus render them impotent. And in 586 B.C., he succeeded. And it was an end of a great era.

At that particular point in history, there began a time which our Lord Jesus calls the times of the gentiles. And in Luke 21:24, the Lord said that, "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the gentiles until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled." Now Jerusalem was initially trodden down by the gentiles when Nebuchadnezzar came and destroyed it. And Jesus said in Luke 21:24 that it would stay that way, "until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled." So there would be this tremendous period of history in which gentile power would hold sway in the city of Jerusalem.

I believe Jesus reiterated this very same judgment in Matthew 23:37. He said, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. Thou that kill us the prophets and stone us them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and you would not?" Now listen. He said, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate for I say unto you ye shall not see me henceforth 'till you shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

In other words, the Lord is saying this. Jerusalem will be desolate until you recognize who I am and then you will see me and then will come the end to the desolation of Jerusalem. Christ was

reiterating then that Jerusalem would be desolate until He returned, until He came to set up His kingdom. And He would not do that until they recognized Him for who He was.

The point is this. The times of the gentiles then must end with the coming of Christ. And Christ cannot come until the Jews see Him for who He was, until Issacharia puts it, "They look on Him whom they have pierced and mourned for Him as an only son. Until they say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

That's why we believe that prior to Christ coming and establishing His kingdom, during the period known as the great tribulation there will be a tremendous revival among the Jews and Israel will be redeemed. Revelations 7:14 tells us that. So beginning with Nebuchadnezzar, there came this time of the gentiles when Jerusalem was trodden down by the gentiles and it will exist until the return of Jesus Christ.

You say well, aren't there periods of time when the Jews were in Jerusalem? Yes. Right today is one of them. The Jews went back to Jerusalem 70 years after the Babylonian captivity and tried to rebuild it. But they never had the freedom and the autonomy they had before. They were oppressed by the nations around them. They were living really on thin ice.

No sooner had they rebuilt their city than it came - not only was it under the control of the Medo-Persians at that time, but it came under the control of the Greeks. And even though they had a little bit of liberty to live there and to dwell there, the Greeks assigned a man who was a raving maniac by the name of Antioch _____ who used to rule over them.

It was then followed by Roman rule and the Romans took charge of them and they were vassals really to the Romans. Even their Idumean kings, the Herods, were nothing but the servants of Rome. And so there have been times while they have been there, they have not yet had the autonomy that they should have and the absolute freedom and right to rule their own land that God had promised them in the beginning.

You'll remember that in 70 A.D., Titus, the son of Vespasian, brought his Roman legions into Jerusalem and he destroyed it again. In fact, some Bible scholars tell us that they probably killed 1,100,000 Jews in that one massacre in 70 A.D.

And after the destruction of 70 A.D., an interesting thing happened. There were some remaining Jews. And they wanted to pray for the restoration of their city as they had prayed through all the times of the gentiles that God would give them back their city and all their land to rule freely without any intervention by anyone else, any gentiles.

And they wanted to pray about this and so they began to congregate in a place where the temple originally stood. And they would meet there in the morning and in the noonday, and in the afternoon, and in the evening. And they would always seem to be meeting at the same place, the last remnants of the temple. And it became such a familiar place of prayer that it got a name, the Wailing Wall. It was the place where they went to pray that their city would be restored and that it would no longer know gentile dominion. They would weep and they would wail as the psalmists said, praying for the peace of Jerusalem, praying for God to send a deliverer, praying that God would break gentile dominion so they could rebuild their temple and repossess their city.

It was controlled by all different kinds of people, Arabs, Turks, even the British. The Persians had it for a while. They never got it. Not until 1948 when they became a nation did they even get a piece of much of anything. But still, they didn't get the Wailing Wall, the place where they had prayed so often for the peace of Jerusalem.

On Wednesday, June 7, 1967, they broke through the Arab resistance, do you remember it, in the Six Day War and they arrived at the Wailing Wall. And they begin to pray. And they begin to shout. One of them said, "For 2,000 years our people prayed for this moment." They stood in the old city and they said, "It is now ours."

And some people said, "Ah ha. The times of the gentiles is over. There's no more gentile dominion in the land, and the nation, and the city of Jerusalem." Oh? Do you think that's true? The times of the gentiles doesn't end when the troops get the Wailing Wall. The times of the gentiles ends when the Messiah returns.

You can ask any thinking Jew in Jerusalem today if the Jews have absolute and free autonomy in their land or if they feel the burden of gentile oppression and you'll get the same answer. They feel the burden of gentile oppression. You know where it comes from? It comes from the United Nations, for one thing. It comes from the international imposition that other nations have put upon them. More than anything, it comes from the presence of the mosque and the Dome of the Rock that sits right on the very place where the temple is supposed to be and they can't do a thing about it without starting a Middle East war that would be a holocaust.

They've done a lot of amazing things like the raid at Entebbe and other things that they've done. But they've never laid a hand on those places. And there they are occupying their city with this great big round thing representing gentile intrusion. It faces them every day. And the one thing you see when you look at Jerusalem is the Dome of the Rock. It's the only thing in the whole city that's got a gold top on it.

You know you can't even build anything in Jerusalem today unless you use Jerusalem stone? You can't bring anything in it at all. It has to fit the code. Everything in there looks the same. It's all that

same white stone except the Dome of the Rock and the mosque of Omar. The dome is gold, the mosque is silver, and it sits on the temple ground.

And there's a sign outside the temple ground for all the orthodox Jews. And it says, "Do not enter here." And it's signed by the chief rabbi. And the reason is you might inadvertently step on the holy of holies because they're not too sure where it was.

It's still under gentile dominion. They've never really had their own self-rule and dominion that they lost when Nebuchadnezzar came. And in the future, people, there is going to be a gentile invasion of that land like nothing that's ever happened in the past.

Zachariah 12:2 it says, "I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the peoples round about when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem." There's gonna come a siege against that city in the end time. It says in Zachariah 14, "The day of the Lord will come and I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. And the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished, and half of the city shall go forth in captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the earth. And then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall split in the middle toward the east and toward the west."

That's the coming of Christ, isn't it? But prior to that coming, there's gonna be a gathering of nations to Jerusalem. There are four fronts where the battle of Armageddon will be fought. One is in Jerusalem, south of Jerusalem, north of Jerusalem, and at the plain of Megiddo. And the blood will be as deep as the horse's bridles for 200 miles in a straight conflagration.

Now listen. The peace of Jerusalem has not yet come. Not at all. And so the peace of Israel awaits the peace of Jerusalem.

Now we have been studying in the last two Sundays the flow of gentile history from the Babylonian Empire, to the Medo-Persian Empire, to the Greek Empire, to the Roman Empire. And last time, having looked at the dream received, the dream recalled, the dream revealed, we focused particularly, and I want you to look back at this now, on the final phase of this world empire. I'm not gonna take a lot of time with it tonight. But I just want to point a couple of things out to you.

The final phase is indicated in verse 34 - verse 33, I'm sorry. "The legs are of iron that speaks of Rome, but the feet are part iron and part clay." Part iron and part clay. Now go down to verse 40. "And the fourth kingdom," and there's the explanation of that, "shall be strong as iron for as much as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things and as iron that breaks all these it shall break in pieces and crush." But it doesn't end there. "And whereas thou saw us the feet and toes part of potter's

clay," that's tile like materials, "and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided. There shall be in it of the strength of iron for as much as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part iron and part clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not adhere one to another even as iron is not mixed with clay."

Now watch. The final world empire was Rome, right? But it appears in two phases. The first part is all iron, the two legs, the east and the western empires of Rome. But the final phase changes and it's a mingling of iron with clay. It has an inherent weakness. It is more diverse than it has ever been because the weakness, the tile, represents the seed of men. The final form of the Roman Empire will be a diverse situation trying to mingle strength with weakness and they cannot coexist anymore than you can connect iron to clay. You can't do it. "The final form will be partly strong and partly brittle."

Now remember what I told you last week. The Bible doesn't see the period in between. The Bible sees world as the final world empire, strong and then weak. Rome was never conquered by any other world empire. Charlemagne couldn't do it. Hitler couldn't do it. Napoleon couldn't do it. Russia can't do it. The United States can't do it. We're not ruling the world in those terms. No nation has ever taken Rome's place.

Did you know that no nation ever conquered Rome? In the eastern part of the empire, it took 1,500 years before they finally kind of faded out. I believe the Bible tells us they went into an abeyance. Their head was wounded as if they were dead only to rise again in the future.

And I believe we're seeing that in the European coalition, the European economic community known as the Common Market. The Common Market now has ten member nations. And Daniel says, "The final phase of the revived Roman Empire will be ten toes." Interesting coincidence? No, that's prophetic. You say what if they get more nations? Well, that doesn't bother me. What if a few drop out? That doesn't bother me, either. What if the whole thing collapses? That won't bother me, either, because that'll just mean it will have to come again and have ten when the Lord gets here. But it's interesting to see that happening. We went into that in detail last time.

The Roman Empire simply disintegrated, but its influences are still here through the papacy, the Roman Church, which stretches all across Europe and other parts of the world, and through Roman thought and Roman law. And it doesn't see the period in between, the church age. But that isn't surprising because the Old Testament never did see the church age.

That's why in Ephesians 3, Paul says, "This is a mystery. This is a mystery. I'm a preacher of a mystery. God has given me a message to give to you that is a mystery. The dispensation of the grace of God to me is to preach the mystery." The mystery was hidden. A mystery is something hidden that is now revealed.

The Old Testament never saw the church age. And so we're not a bit surprised when we find an interval in the New Testament era that isn't discussed in the old. For example, you have passages in the Old Testament that prophesize things about Christ half of which are of His first coming, half of which are of His second coming. And yet the Old Testament puts no time period in there. Why? Because it doesn't see that mystery period known as the church age. That's the mystery. That's that which was hidden and is revealed in the New Testament.

So there will be a final phase of the Roman Empire involving a European confederacy that involves ten nations territorially occupying what was once the Roman Empire. We're seeing that very exact thing right now. How does it end? It doesn't take long. Verse 44. "This Roman coalition will come together in the end time." And it says, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever." Stop right there.

Now listen. All students of the Scripture that I know anything about and that have ever read all agree that this is the founding of the kingdom of God. Now they may have differences as to just exactly how it comes to pass, but it's clear that this is the God of heaven setting up a kingdom.

But I want you to notice something fascinating here. Verse 44. "And in the days of these kings." Now listen to me. "In the days of these kings." What kings? What are you talking about? There aren't any kings mentioned here. The only king mentioned in the whole place here in laying out history is Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold. What do you mean in the days of these kings? There doesn't seem to be an antecedent for that. What kings?

Those who do not believe in an earthly kingdom of Christ, those who do not believe that Jesus Christ is gonna come and reign for 1,000 years, they use the term amillennial, they deny a millennial. They say this is referring to the spiritual kingdom of Christ. And that the spiritual kingdom of Christ will be set up in the hearts of men during the times of these four kings. In other words, during Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in the hearts of people during those kingdoms.

That doesn't really make it. In the first place, those are kingdoms, not kings. And the word kings, mulchia in Aramaic, is far different from kingdoms, which is mulquata. It isn't even talking about the same term. And not all of them are even designated as references to kings, but rather kingdom. What kings?

Well, that's really easy if you look at it. And you go back and you'll find the kings can be none other than the toes of the feet. In other words, the ten toes represent ten kings in the final form of the Roman Empire. The toes of the feet. He starts talking about them in verse 42. And then he says

that, "In the days of these kings." And there, Daniel absolutely interprets the picture. The toes represent kings. You shouldn't be too shocked about that.

In Revelation 17, listen to this. Revelation is the Daniel of the New Testament, giving us the picture of the future. It says, "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings." And here he's talking about the same imagery of ten kings. Only this time, it's ten horns.

If you go over to Daniel 7, look in the very same book, you'll find that at the end of verse 7 that there were ten horns. And we'll see the imagery here in the future. But it says in verse 7 at the end that it had ten horns. If you go further in the chapter down to verse 15 and then you can begin to read the whole thing, you'll see more about the ten horns. Verse 20, the ten horns are mentioned again. Verse 24, "The ten horns," and here's the key I want you to see. "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise." Do you get it?

Daniel sees this gentile world power finalizing itself in a ten king confederacy. And that is precisely what Daniel means when he says in the days of these kings. "At the time of the ten kings, God will set up His kingdom."

Now if you make it mean the other four kingdoms, it doesn't make sense. Did God set up His kingdom during the time of Babylon? Did God set up his kingdom in Medo-Persia? Did God set up his kingdom in Greece? Did God set up His kingdom at the time of the Roman Empire? Of course not. God's kingdom as yet has not been established on the earth.

And since the whole of the image is a political picture, and since the whole of the image is actual history, whatever final kingdom is entered in must also be actual, historical, political, and earthly. You see? You can't have a spiritual thing introduced into a very physical, historical, actual set of images. The kingdom of heaven was not set up in those times, not in its political earthly form.

And so in the days of those final ten when that Roman confederacy gets itself together. Folks, that gets a little bit close to home, doesn't it? You look at Europe and you see the economic community together now in a ten nation confederacy and you see the world with the attitude it's got right now toward God, I tell you, there's only one thing that has to happen before Christ can come. And that's the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God and we're gone. And that happens instantaneously when He comes.

What happens further in verse 44, "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom." What kind of a kingdom will it be? "It will be a kingdom that will never be destroyed." It won't be like the other kingdoms. It will be one that's never destroyed. The others were all destroyed. "And the kingdom shall not be left to other people." It's not gonna be the kind of a thing that fades and somebody else takes over. "But it'll break in pieces and it'll consume all kingdoms and all the residue of all the

kingdoms that are left at the time and it shall stand forever."

Some people have actually thought that this was the church. That's foolish. That's absolutely foolish. This can't be the church. In the first place, the Roman Empire went on for centuries after the church was begun. The church didn't destroy a ten king confederacy in Rome. That's ridiculous. The Roman Empire went on and on and on a long time. In fact, do you know the Roman Empire went on longer after Jesus than the other empires had gone from Nebuchadnezzar to Jesus? So the church didn't bring a dramatic end to anything. There's no evidence at all for that.

It's not the church. It's the actual literal kingdom of Christ on earth. The church isn't even a political entity. We don't even fit the imagery here. The church doesn't, like it says in verse 45, "For as much as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it broke in pieces, the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, the gold, that great God hath made known to the king which shall come to pasture after and the dream is certain and the interpretation of it sure."

Remember the stone it said earlier in the chapter came and smashed the image and it blew away in dust and the stone filled the earth? The church didn't cataclysmically destroy all the nations of the earth. The church didn't end the times of the gentiles. The church was born and then came 70 A.D. and the gentiles really took over Jerusalem. It cannot be the church.

The church has never overcome gentile world power and the church never will. The church doesn't come and instantaneously fill the whole earth and take over. The church rose quietly and perceptively, not violently, catastrophically in a destruction. This is not the church. The church has never broken in pieces the world's kingdoms.

This is a literal, physical, earthly, kingdom that God sets up and the times of the gentiles ends. It is a political kingdom and you can read all about it in the Old Testament. It is a physical kingdom. The Old Testament says Jerusalem will be rebuilt. Israel will be restored to the land. The curse will be lifted. There will be abundance of food. There will be health. There will be healing. There will be a high birth rate. The topography will change. A new temple will be built. And on and on and on. It's a literal, physical kingdom. It certainly will have spiritual reality to it. But it's a physical kingdom.

Now we need one more thought, then we'll close this section. It says back up in verse 34, "If thou sawest the stone cut out without hands which smote the image on its feet that were of iron and clay and broke them to pieces, then were the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, the gold broken to pieces together and became like the chafe of the summer threshing floors and the wind carried them away that no place was found for them and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." The only thing left is to find out who the stone is. The stone comes and obliterates all of this and then fills the earth.

Well, I know who it is and so do you. Because Jesus said, "You'll never, ever see the end of the times of the gentiles. Your house will be desolate until you look at Me and say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'" He's the only one that can end the times of the gentiles. He's the only one that can destroy the governments of the world. And Isaiah said it, "The governments shall be upon His," what? Shoulder.

He's the only one that has the right to rule. When in Revelation 5 they were searching heaven to find somebody who could open the scroll and in came the lamb. And the lamb could open the scroll. Why? Because he had a right to open the scroll because the scroll was the title deed to the earth. And he and he alone had the right to possess the earth.

It's Christ. It's Christ Himself who is the stone. In fact, I love it. In Genesis 49:24, God is called the stone of Israel. In Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders rejected the same has become the head of the corner." And Peter quotes that and it refers to Christ. Jesus used that of Himself. He said, "I am the stone that the builders rejected, but I have become the head of the corner."

God said to the prophet Isaiah 28:16, "I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation stone." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:4, that rock was Christ. Christ is the stone. "And I believe it is at the coming of Jesus Christ that he smashes gentile dominion."

"His feet," as Zachariah 14 says, "land on the Mount of Olives." There's a cleavage in the mountain from the east to the west. He splits it wide open. And into that valley called the Valley of Decision come the gentiles from all over the globe. And they are judged with the judgment of God. And from then on, when judgment has been brought to bear upon them, God sets up His kingdom through Christ in the city of Jerusalem and reigns for 1,000 years and then on into eternity.

What does it mean that He was cut out without hands? I believe, first of all, it is a reflection of His virgin birth. This stone was not a manmade stone. Secondly, I believe it is a reflection on His resurrection, that there was no human agency involved in His resurrection. His own power brought Him from the grave. Without a human agency in the normal manner He was born. And without a human agency at all, He was raised from the dead.

And notice when the stone comes, it doesn't hit the head, the shoulders, or anything like that. But it smashes the final portion, the weakest part, the feet, and the entire gentile tower comes down.

You know when you start to study Jesus as a stone, boy, do you get into some fascinating truth. The Bible says He is a crushing stone. He comes to crush. A shattering, smiting stone. But at the same time, He is a restoring stone. For no sooner does He smash and crush but that He fills the earth.

Now listen to this. You say Nebuchadnezzar had this strange dream. Did he really understand it? Listen. Nebuchadnezzar's chief God, according to the archaeologists who have found a lot of things about that time, Nebuchadnezzar's chief God was a God that he called Bel-Merodach. Now Bel-Merodach we found in archaeology. He had a very special name. His name was Shadu Rabu. Do you know what that means? That means the great mountain.

Nebuchadnezzar thought Shadu Rabu, Bel-Merodach was the great mountain. But Daniel said to him, "That stone that hit that image filled the whole earth and became a great mountain." Your God is replaced. And he used His own terms, God did, so he'd understand.

And Daniel says, "There's only one Shadu Rabu and you haven't seen him yet." The title meant the all-powerful God. And when Daniel used this in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, believe me, he understood it. He understood it.

And Nebuchadnezzar had worked with stone. He was one of the greatest builders in ancient history. And he would have understood what it was to be a stone cut out without hands because he would have known the incredible effort necessary to cut out stones by hand. And here was one that just happened.

Then it says, and I love this. It says in verse 35 that, "The wind came along and after all this image was smashed to pieces, the wind blew it away." The wind just blew it away. I believe this pointed again to Nebuchadnezzar's system of theology.

Bel-Merodach got in a battle with Chiamat. And Chiamat, you may have read about him, was the dragon of chaos. And the way that Bel-Merodach defeated Chiamat was to send a hurricane, and then it says a wind, and then a four fold wind, and then a seven fold wind, and blew the dragon away. And Daniel was saying when it comes to blowing, you ain't seen anything. You see, God gave Nebuchadnezzar a vision in his own terms so he would understand.

How does the story end? Well, I love this, too. Verse 45. By this time, somebody might be saying, "Boy, I've heard some things in my time. But this takes the cake." This is the wildest thing ever dreamt up by the imagination of some person who tried to push it off as if it were true. Crazy image, ridiculous story, with an incredible, fanciful interpretation. And just in case that's where you are, there's a little P.S. at the bottom of verse 45 that's meant to nail you to the wall. It says this, "And the dream is certain and the interpretation of it sure." Don't mess with this. There are no mistakes. It's sure and it's certain. We've seen the dream received, the dream recalled, the dream revealed.

I'm just gonna read this to you, the dream rewarded. Look at verse 46. "Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and worshipped Daniel. He believed it." You say what's he doing

worshipping Daniel? Well, he doesn't know Daniel's God, so he figures the only way to get to Daniel's God is through Daniel.

"And he commands that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him. The king answered unto Daniel and said, 'Of a truth, it is that your God is the God of Gods, and the Lord of kings, and the revealer of secrets seeing thou couldest revealed this secret.'" He says, "Your God is the God of Gods. Your God is the Shadu Rabu. Your God is the Lord of the Wind. Your God is the revealer of secrets."

I want you to know folks, this is a short conversion. It's the emotion of the moment because he bails out as we'll see very soon in the very next chapter. But in this moment, he is literally overwhelmed at the display of God's power through Daniel. "Then the king made Daniel a great man and gave him many great gifts and made him rule over the whole province of Babylon and chief of the governors over all of the wise men of Babylon." Now that folks is known as a promotion from being the bottom guy on the totem pole to running the show. He was the prime minister of the Babylonian Empire.

And I like this. When Daniel got his new position, he figured he'd use it. So he requested of the king and he sent Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over to the affairs of the province of Babylon, but Daniel sat in the gate of the king. He said, "I got three guys I'd like to be my vice regents," and he brought his friends into strategic places to be used by God.

Some people have denied the whole book of Daniel on this one basis. I read some critics of Daniel who denied the entire book on one basis. Kings don't bow to their captives. Therefore, this is a forgery. You want to know something? Kings do bow to God. This is not a forgery.

You never have to work to get what you want in this world. If you just obey God, He'll put you beyond what you ever dreamed. Isn't that true? Now Daniel would have sat in his little place over there in Jerusalem and said, "Now I got to figure how I can get to be the prime minister of Babylon. First I got to go to the right school. Then I got to meet the right people. I got to marry the right girl. Strategy."

No, Daniel said, "I don't care what the king says, I'm not eating that stuff." And you would have said, "Oh, Daniel, that is not the strategy." And Daniel became the prime minister of Babylon 'cause God put him there. And if he didn't put himself there, he didn't have to worry about staying. Because it wasn't something he wanted anyway. It was what God gave him. And as long as God gave it to him, God would let him keep it until his time was done. Don't seek things. But God gives them to you as you obey His will.

Bow your head with me for a moment as we approach the Lord's table. The end of this wonderful prophesy is that the kingdom of Christ, I want you to hear this, fills the whole earth. It fills the whole earth. That is so deserved by our Lord. It's time for Him to reign and rule. And as I look forward to

that kingdom, I can't help but be thrilled. I'm gonna be there and so are you and all those who love Him.

But there's one thing that He said that's gonna be very special about that kingdom. These are the words of Jesus. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take eat. This is my body." And He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "Drink ye all of it for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." And then He said this. "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

That's one little part of the kingdom that I look forward to having the Lord's table with the Lord. Isn't that a great thought? Having Him there? Maybe we can talk about His cross. And so beloved the Lord's table, listen now, doesn't just look back to the cross, it looks forward to the kingdom. Do you see? When we do it with Him there, oh, bless His name. I know He eagerly awaits that day. I trust we do, as well.

Prepare our hearts, Lord, this moment. Prepare our hearts to receive from you that special grace, that special encouragement that comes as we break bread at your table. And even as we look backward, Lord, and remember the cross, we also look forward and see the kingdom when we'll do this with you, together.

While your heads are bowed for a moment, would you just open your heart to the Lord to prepare yourself for His table? I believe that Paul is giving us very pertinent instruction when he says that we ought to prepare our hearts so that we do not partake unworthily. And so just in this time, it's needful for you to prepare your heart in just a word of prayer. If there's anything that stands between you and the Lord, ask Him that it be removed.

Maybe I can help you to think through this prayer by sharing with you some things that you might express. Just pray this prayer silently in your heart. Merciful Lord, I confess all my sins of this day, this week, this year. All the sins of my life. Sins of omission and commission. Sins of morose, peevish, and angry temper. Sins of life, love, lip, and walk; of hard heartedness, unbelief, presumption, and pride; of unfaithfulness to the souls of men. Sins of want of bold decisions in the cause of Christ. Sins of deficiency and outspoken zeal for His glory. Sins of bringing dishonor upon thy great name. I confess sins of deception, injustice, untruthfulness in my dealings with others. Sins of impurity in thought, word and deed, of covetousness. Sins of substance unduly hoarded, squandered, not consecrated to your glory. Sins in private and in the family. Sins in study and recreation. Sins in the study of thy word and in the neglect of it. Sins in prayer irreverently offered and coldly withheld. Sins in time misspent. Sins in yielding to Satan's wiles, in opening my heart to his temptations. Sins in being unwatchful when I knew he was near. Sins in quenching the spirit. Sins against light and knowledge, against conscience and the restraints of the spirit. Sins against thy

love. I confess all my sins known and unknown, felt and unfelt, confessed and not confessed, remembered or forgotten, knowing good Lord that you forgive. Prepare our hearts, Father, for your table in Jesus' name. Amen.

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