

THE IMAGE AND THE FUTURE, DANIEL 2:14-45

Well let's turn in our Bibles please to the book of Daniel, chapter 2. Now as you are all aware, we have been preaching consecutively through the book of Revelation, and we have gone most of the way through Revelation chapter 11. And the time has come now to go into the book of Daniel and see how it illuminates and relates to the teaching that occurs in the book of Revelation. So we're preaching in Daniel chapter 2 today, but we're doing it in relationship to Revelation chapter 11, verses 7 through 13, which we studied together last week.

Now Daniel lived during the time when Israel was in captivity in Babylon, from about 606 B.C. until 536 B.C. During those 70 years, Daniel received a number of extremely significant revelations from God, and today we want to begin to discuss two of those revelations that Daniel received from God.

The first of these revelations we're going to be looking at is in Daniel chapter 2, and then next week, God willing, we will be looking at Daniel chapter 7. And what we're going to see is that these two chapters are very parallel with each other. They are teaching on the same subject, but use slightly different imagery to illuminate that subject, and they provide additional and supplemental details to one another.

Daniel chapter 2 and Daniel chapter 7 are kind of like Matthew and Mark and Luke and John, which are parallel books that teach on the same issue and provide additional details and supplemental instruction regarding the life of the Lord Jesus. We don't just have one gospel, we've got four, right? And they all teach about the same thing. In the same way, Daniel chapter 2 and Daniel chapter 7 are teaching about exactly the same thing, just from slightly different perspectives and with additional details supplied and supplemented in each of them.

Now as I said, the reason we're going to focus on these two revelations is because they both depict the same concept. They both depict and set forth is a road map for all subsequent human history, from Daniel's time until the second coming of Jesus Christ. Daniel chapter 2 and Daniel chapter 7 set forth the grand sweep of human history and tell how it will unfold from the time of Daniel until the time when Jesus Christ returns and earthly history ends.

Now this has particular relevance to us at this point in our study in the book of Revelation. And it has particular relevance because of the dramatic parallels between Daniel chapter 2 and Daniel chapter 7, and Revelation 11 verses 7 to 13, which we just got done looking at last week. As we looked at Revelation 11:7 to 13 last week, I was chomping at the bit to take you back to Daniel and show you the relationship between these two, but there was no time to do that. And in fact, we're going to take two complete Sundays to do that—this Sunday and, God willing, next Sunday as well.

Daniel is the book that contains much of the Old Testament material that is referenced in the book of Revelation, both by way of symbolic imagery and also by way of the teaching it

provides. And so you read, for example, about beasts and you read about horns, and these various things in Revelation. Where do those symbols come from? Well, they come from the book of Daniel. And therefore, any study of the book of Revelation must take into account the teaching of the book of Daniel, and that's what we want to begin to do together today. We have a great deal of material to cover, so without further ado, we want to begin to consider together Daniel chapter 2 today, and then next Lord's Day, Daniel chapter 7.

What we want to do then today is look at the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 2. You recall that Nebuchadnezzar had a very troubling dream, but when he awoke, he could not remember its content. So he calls all the wise men of Babylon to tell him first of all what the dream was, and then secondly, what the dream meant. After assembling them, he says to them, Tell me what my dream was, and tell me what it meant. And they said, Well you tell us what the dream was, and then we'll tell you what it meant. He says, No, no, no—you have to tell me what my dream was *and* tell me what it meant, and if you don't, I'll put you all to death. And they said, No one can do that. If you tell us the dream, we can interpret it, but we can't tell you what the dream was.

So the king was going to put all the wise men to death, and of course among them was Daniel, and Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego. So Daniel asks for time, and he was given that time, he went to sleep that night, he had the same dream Nebuchadnezzar had, and God also revealed to him the meaning of it. So Daniel then gets up the next morning and begins this process of revealing to the king his dream and its interpretation.

In the first place then this morning, we want to consider together the revelation of the dream to Daniel. That's our first major point today. We'll pick up the reading at verse 19. Notice it says:

“¹⁹ Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰ Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: ²¹ and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: ²² he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. ²³ I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.”

Now here in verse 19 it says that God has revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel. And in verse 19, Daniel declares what this dream and its revelation means about the God of heaven, and what this reveals about the God of heaven. Notice verse 19 says, “Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.” So this dream and its message is a glorious display of God's transcendent might and God's transcendent power.

Verse 20: “Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his.” And so Daniel begins to offer this psalm of praise and worship to God for

this revelation that God has provided him with, and he says in verse 20 that wisdom is God's; that is, He has the *understanding* to control all the apparent chaos in the world to achieve His purposes therein. Then he says that might is God's; that is, He has the *power* to control all the apparent chaos in the world to achieve His purposes therein. So as he opens in verse 19, he says, this is a glorious display of the God of heaven; verse 20, it displays His wisdom, it displays His might; verse 21, "and he," God, "changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding."

Now when it says here in verse 21a that He changes times and seasons, what Daniel is saying is that God controls the timing of events as to when they begin, how long they go on, and when they come to a conclusion. He says that He sets up kings and He removes kings; that is, He controls the rise and the fall of every empire and every nation and every civil government. And then he says He gives wisdom and knowledge, in verse 21, and in verse 22 that He reveals the deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness and He knows what is in the light.

So as Daniel issues this psalm of praise, he is saying that God is the transcendent God who has all wisdom to control things, and all power to control things. He controls the timing of events, He sets up kings, He takes down kings, He reveals the deep and secret things, He knows what's in the darkness and the light. The point is, God is in control of history. God is the one who knows how history is going to come to pass, because He is the one who determined what it will consist of. So God is the one who reveals previously unknown things, and what God is revealing to Daniel is the previously unknown, unfolding of future human history. He is telling Daniel what the future will consist of until the end of time. Notice verse 23: "I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter."

So as Daniel reflects on this revelation of what God is like—He has might and power—and what God is going to do—He's going to control the times and the seasons of events, He's going to set up kings, He's going to take down kings, He's going to reveal things—he breaks forth into this praise and worship and thanksgiving in verse 23. Daniel now knows the king's dream, and more importantly, Daniel now knows how human history is going to unfold until the end of time, and for this, Daniel gives profound worship and praise and thanks to God.

Now let's read together verses 24 to 30: "²⁴ Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. ²⁵ Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation. ²⁶ The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? ²⁷ Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the

king; ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be”—notice—“in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; ²⁹ As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed,” here it is, “what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee” - notice again - “what shall come to pass.”

So Daniel’s making it very clear to the king that what this is all about, is what’s going to occur in time to come. From this point forward, this is what this dream is about. Verse 30: “But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.”

Here in verses 24 to 30, which I just read to you, Daniel does two things. First of all, he gives glory to God and points the king to God as the one to receive the praise and honor for revealing the king’s dream. Daniel is pointing the king away from himself. He wants no glory for himself for what God has done. He is saying to the king, as we should all say, To God be the glory, great things *He* has done. Don’t think I’m anything special, King. Think of God as being someone special. He is the one who revealed these things to me, and to Him goes the glory. *God* is the great revealer of truth regarding the future. We know nothing unless He reveals it to us.

The second thing Daniel does is, not only does he give all the glory to God and not take any for himself, he then emphasizes that the content of the dream is a revelation from God as to what is going to take place in the future. God knows the future, because God controls the future. And God is making known what will happen in time to come as His plans and His purposes unfold, because God controls everything that occurs. So Daniel is saying that here is a prophecy and a prediction of what the history of the world is going to look like from this point forward. Nebuchadnezzar is going to get to see the future before it actually unfolds.

That brings us then to our second major point this morning. Having seen the revelation of the dream to Daniel, notice secondly, the explanation of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar in verses 31 to 35.

Notice verse 31: “Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. ³² This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, ³³ his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. ³⁴ Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. ³⁵ Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff 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.”

Now this is the revelation of the actual dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. Nebuchadnezzar saw a huge, gigantic statue that was immense in its size. It was extraordinary in its splendor and its impressiveness, and it was intimidating and terrifying in its appearance. It had four distinct sections: the head was of gold; the chest and arms were of silver; the belly and thighs were of bronze; the legs were of iron and the feet, part iron and part clay.

Then a mighty stone was observed, as it were, breaking loose without any human agency from the side of a mountain, and rolling down the mountain until it struck the feet of the statue, causing the entire statue to collapse and be destroyed and vanish away. The stone, then, expanded and grew in size until it filled the entire earth.

So the vision begins with a great statue, verse 31, and the vision ends with a great mountain taking its place, in verse 35. And the result is the statue is no more; not even a particle of it remains. Remember—the wind comes and blows it away like chaff from the threshing floor? That’s the dream.

That brings us then to our third major point. Having seen the revelation of the dream to Daniel, having seen the explanation of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, notice thirdly, the interpretation of the dream.

The interpretation of the dream is in verses 36 to 45. Notice if you will verse 36. Daniel says, “This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.” And what we discover as we proceed through this interpretation is that this great statue represents the rise, the order, and the fall of successive kingdoms in the course of human history.

Notice if you will verses 37 and 38. ³⁷Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. ³⁸And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.”—now here it is—“Thou art this head of gold.” So very specifically, Daniel says that the head of gold on this statue represents the kingdom of Babylon, along with her king.

Verse 39: “And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee.” This is the chest and arms of silver, which represent a second kingdom that will arise after Babylon falls. We know from Ezra and Nehemiah and Esther that this second kingdom that defeated the Babylonian Empire was the Medo-Persian Empire, and it’s one that lasted a much shorter period of time than the Babylonian Empire had lasted, and in that sense, it was inferior to the Babylonian Empire. Even though the Medo-Persians captured Babylon, Babylon had lasted much longer and was much greater than the Medo-Persian Empire, which ruled for a much shorter period of time.

Notice verse 39b: “and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.” Now the belly and the thighs of brass or bronze represent the third world kingdom of Greece. This was the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great. He ruled the entire known world until his

death, when his kingdom was divided between his four generals. And this is all spoken of by name and predicted in Daniel chapter 8, verses 21 to 22, where it specifically says that the Grecian Empire is going to conquer the Medo-Persian Empire. Then the Grecian Empire is going to be broken into four heads, and that's what happened after Alexander the Great died. He had four generals, and his empire was divided up into four pieces, and there was tremendous warfare between the kingdom that was focused in Syria and the kingdom that was focused in Egypt; and you had this warfare back and forth, which is predicted in Daniel 11 and which is all chronicled in the extrabiblical book of First Maccabees during the inter-testamental period, when the Seleucids and the Ptolemies fought back and forth between each other.

So this is predicted, once again, in the Bible. We're not making this stuff up, we're not going and grabbing extrabiblical history and reading it into the Bible. The Bible itself talks about the Persian Empire that took the place of the Babylonian Empire, and the Bible itself talks about the Grecian Empire that took the place of the Persian Empire. That brings us then to verses 40 to 43:

“⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. ⁴¹ And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. ⁴³ And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.”

Now this fourth kingdom receives quite extensive treatment, because it covers the greatest span of time, and takes us clear to the end of the world. This kingdom that is symbolized by the legs of iron with feet of part iron and part clay began in 63 A.D. with the establishment of the Roman Empire, which conquered and consumed the four parts of the old Greek Empire. The Roman Empire had the strength of iron, and we are told of its destructive power in verse 40. Notice verse 40: “And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.” Iron is stronger than gold, it's stronger than silver, and it's stronger than brass.

So this fourth kingdom is going to be a kingdom that crushes and destroys all things under its iron heel. And the Roman legions were well known for their ability to crush all of their enemies under their iron heel and with their iron weapons. But as time went on, the kingdom began to be fragmented and lose its cohesion. Notice verse 41 and 42: “And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. ⁴² And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.”

Now you notice as we're proceeding down the statue, we're also proceeding down the column of time, aren't we? So as we move down to the legs, they occurred later than the thighs, which occurred later than the chest and the head, right? So we're proceeding downward in time through history, and we have these legs of iron, and this is the Roman Empire. But then as we proceed further into time, as time goes on, we see this kingdom begin to be fragmented and to lose its cohesion, and this is represented by the feet made up partly of iron and partly of clay.

Now iron and clay do not fuse together. There is no strength or binding alliance between them. Something of the firmness of iron remains, but something of the brittleness of clay is present, and it's all divided and broken up. There's not continuity. This division and lack of unity is especially seen in the ten separate toes of the statue, which are made of clay and iron. Now the number ten is not specifically mentioned here; it will be mentioned over in Daniel chapter 7, which we'll be looking at next week. But nevertheless, it's clearly the statue of a man, and how many toes does a man have? He's got ten. And the toes are really separate from each other. So this division and this lack of unity is especially seen in the ten separate toes that are also made of clay and iron.

The point is this: As time goes on, the Roman Empire loses cohesion. It becomes brittle and divided, and separate nations like separate toes are formed, and there is only the loosest of loyalties and connections between the nations of the earth as the centuries unfold. The kingdom is partly strong and partly broken, as time and history unfold and as the centuries go by. There are some alliances and treaties between nations to bring those nations together, and thus make them partly strong. And there are some divisions and enmities between nations to divide them apart, and thus make them partly broken, as it says in verse 42.

Even though there are intermarriages between rulers and peoples of various nations, yet even this shall not produce another unified world kingdom of the kind that Babylon was, and Medo-Persia was, and Greece was, and Rome was in the days of their glory. Notice verse 43: "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves" through the instrumentality "of the seed of men," is the idea—the idea of intermarriages between kings to create alliances, or intermarriages among various ethnic groups to try to make a melting pot. Even though they'll try to mingle themselves into this one-world power in this fashion, it says finally in verse 43 that they "shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." And to this very day, there has never been a one-world power ever again.

So this fourth and final kingdom will start out very powerful and strong—that's the legs of iron—but it will evolve into a multitude of nations that have shifting alliances between themselves and who lack cohesion among themselves. The ten toes represent and symbolize the perfect total of all the nations that will descend out of the old Roman world empire, because as you recall, ten is the number that symbolizes totality and perfection. And the ten toes of the image are symbolic of the totality of all of the nations that will follow after the Roman Empire until the end of time. And as we're going to see the ten horns in Daniel 7, here we have the ten toes. These are parallel ideas.

Now this brings us to verses 44 and 45, which describe the meaning of the stone that breaks this great image into pieces and grows to fill the whole earth. Notice verse 44: “And 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 for ever. ⁴⁵ Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.”

Now we’re specifically told that this great stone represents the kingdom of God in verse 44: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.” So we’re specifically told that this stone that shows up is the kingdom of God. And this kingdom of God was, of course, established by Jesus Christ at His first coming, which occurred during the time of the legs of iron, during the time of the Roman Empire. This stone, this kingdom of God, is made without hands; that is, it came into existence not by the agency of men, but by the agency of the invisible God. Now all human kingdoms are made by the hand of men. The Babylonian Kingdom, the Medo-Persian Kingdom, the Greek Kingdom, the Roman Kingdom, and indeed, all earthly kingdoms that follow thereafter were all made by men. But the kingdom of God is made by God Himself. Human agency is not its source, and human agency is not its cause.

Invisible forces are at work in the creation of Christ’s kingdom. The kingdom grows and triumphs over all the kingdoms of the world, and every kingdom that ever rose against it has fallen before it, and yet no one can see how or why that triumph is achieved. In the days of these kings that arose in this fourth empire, Christ came and began His kingdom on earth, unlike all earthly kingdoms that have been destroyed and will be destroyed.

Verse 44 tells us that Christ’s kingdom can never be destroyed; instead, the kingdom of God will grow until it destroys all other kingdoms and fills the whole earth. And this is what has been going on for the last 2,000 years, and this is what will continue to go on until the seventh trumpet sounds, and the end comes, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever over the new heavens and the new earth.

Unlike earthly kingdoms that pass from one group of people to another so that a kingdom, for example, started by the Babylonians is taken over by the Persians, which is then taken over by the Greeks—the kingdom of God will never be taken over by someone else or by other people. It will never change hands. It will never be transferred to others. Verse 44 says, “which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people.” The Babylonians left their kingdom to other people; the Persians left their kingdom to other people; the Greeks left their kingdom to other people. Christ’s kingdom will never be left to others. Instead, it will break in pieces all other kingdoms, and it will completely consume them, and it will stand forever, and in the end it will be the only kingdom there is, and there will not be a trace of any

earthly kingdom left. They will be like chaff driven by the wind that just disappears into nothingness.

In the eternal state, there will be no presence of the Babylonian Kingdom, or the Persian Kingdom, or any other kingdom. They will be utterly destroyed by the kingdom of God. What we saw in history was a succession of kingdoms, one kingdom being conquered by another, which was conquered by another. But that cycle and that process is going to come to an end. A new power comes into the world in the person of Christ the King, and He will end this cycle of an endless replacement of kingdoms one after the other. He will establish the final kingdom and the everlasting kingdom, after which there will be no other kingdom, because it will remain forever.

This is what will occur in the unfolding of human history, and this is what God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know, and this is what God wants us to know as well. And on this victorious note, the interpretation of the dream ends. Daniel asserts in verse 45 that it is an accurate interpretation, and it will certainly come to pass, just as Daniel stated it. He says, "God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter, and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

Now to this very day, men have been trying to establish a world empire and they have failed. Men have tried to take over the whole world. Hitler was going to have his Third Reich, and the emperor of Japan was going to take over the whole world, and the Muslims thought they would have in their Ottoman Empire a worldwide caliphate. In fact, they're after it again now! To this day, men have been trying to establish world empire, and they have failed, because it's just iron and clay. They can never put it all together. It always winds up falling apart.

Christ's kingdom, however, outlasts them all, it outgrows them all, and it crushes them all. And it does so with the hardness of a stone that grows into a mighty mountain, that smashes and overwhelms and crushes them all into utter oblivion. Even Antichrist's short-term, one-world kingdom that appears to defeat the kingdom of God on earth, right at the end of time, will be destroyed by the Rock of our salvation when He returns in all of His glory.

So here is the story that is played out in Revelation chapter 11, verses 1 to 14, that we've been looking at. You remember in Revelation chapter 11, Christ's kingdom, the temple and the Holy City of verses 1 and 2, appear to be trampled underfoot by the Gentile kingdoms of this world. But they cannot stop the witness of the church, represented by the two witnesses. And the kingdoms of this world are defeated by the church in their effort to destroy it, and in fact the church grows, and as it grows, the Gentile kingdoms fall and fall and fall before it.

But right at the very end, Antichrist, the beast that rises out of the abyss, seems to somehow have bound all the iron and the clay together for a moment of time to form a one-world government of all the nations to defeat the kingdom of God, and it seems like he's succeeded, for how long? Three and a half days. That apparent success is a very short term illusion. And Christ returns to

resurrect and rapture His church and to destroy the kingdom of Antichrist and the kingdoms of the world forever. And the seventh trumpet sounds, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.

So Daniel chapter 2 is exactly parallel with Revelation chapter 11. And we're going to see even more striking detailed parallels when we get to Daniel chapter 7 next week. Daniel chapter 7 has dramatic detailed parallels with Revelation chapter 11, in the unfolding of human history that is described there. So, come back for installment number 2. All right, let's pray together.

Father, thank you so much for your word, and thank you that you have enabled us to understand it. Father, our understanding of it is not because of any wisdom in us. We read in Luke 24 that Jesus, regarding the apostles, says "then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." And so, Father, if we have any understanding, it's all glory to Jesus. He opened our understanding, just like He opened Daniel's understanding. And so we give you glory and thanks for exposing to us the plain meaning of these passages and a proper understanding of the symbolism that they contain. To God be the glory, great things He has done in opening our eyes of understanding to the truth. Thank you for that.

And now, Lord, be pleased to give us confidence that as we look at nations jockeying for position and jockeying for power, we see the foolishness of men who go forth conquering and to conquer, who use their wars and inflict famine and death upon the world as they do so—the foolishness of trying to put together iron and clay—and how all of their work always falls to the ground and falls apart, even as we see America falling apart now.

Father, thank you that it is only the kingdom of Jesus Christ that never falls apart, that has as its cohesive principle the person of Jesus, who holds us altogether in one body, so that we make up one temple, one city, one vine. Lord, we're so grateful that the kingdom of Christ is not partly weak and partly strong, but that we are all joined together by the Spirit into one body.

And now, Father, be pleased to help us not stand in awe or fear before this wicked world that strives to shape us into its image and consume us with its power. Thank you that Christ, in the end, will consume them, and is consuming them even now. In Jesus' name. Amen.