

The Table of the King

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Preacher: Cory Brock

[0 : 00] All right, we're going to read together from Daniel chapter 1, the whole chapter. And Jemima is going to come and read from Daniel 1 for us. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his God, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his God.

Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both the royal family and of the nobility, used without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding, learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah.

And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names. Daniel he called Belshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

[1 : 19] But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs. And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord the king who assigned your food and drink. For why should he see that you are in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age?

So you would endanger my head with the king. Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Test your servant for ten days.

Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you. And deal with your servants according to what you see.

So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food.

[2 : 21] So the steward took away the food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables. As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom.

And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. At the end of the time when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

And the king spoke with them. And among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in his kingdom.

And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus. All right, we're working through the book of Daniel this semester.

We looked at chapter one last week, mainly the first seven verses. Each week I'll try my best to make every sermon in this book as standalone as possible, because I know in a church like ours, people are in and out a lot.

[3 : 27] And they're coming at different times, and we have visitors every week. And so, but every single week there has to be at least a little bit of a summary of the previous, because in Daniel, if

you don't know the historical backdrop, it's really hard to understand the book.

And so, in 605 BC, the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, came to Jerusalem, and he attacked it. But he did not seek to destroy the people of Israel, God's people, by violence.

Not really. Instead, he wanted to destroy their religion and their culture in Jerusalem, not by violence, but by assimilation. So he wanted to do annihilation by assimilation or acculturation. He wanted to Babylonize them. He wanted to build an empire by Babylonizing the world, making everybody like him, like this great city of Babylon. And so he takes the professional class, the skilled workers, with him into Babylon to educate them, to turn them into Babylonians, and then build a great city, a better city than he had, and then also to send some of them back to Babylonize the rest of the empire.

So that was his plan. And when you read that in the light of the rest of the Bible, God's people in exile, God's people were in exile. They had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon.

[4 : 49] The rest of the Bible says that the city of Babylon is a symbol. It's a type. It stands for something greater than itself. And you read about that, especially in the book of Revelation.

And the symbol that we learn in the Bible is that Babylon is this image of everything in this world that stands against God and stands against the great city of God that Christ is building, a city that would have been coming out of the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve ever sinned.

And Babylon is this sign, this symbol, this image, this city of any culture, any society, any people group that makes an idol its center and revolves their life around it rather than the real God.

And so to have a Babylonian heart, to be Babylonized, well, actually it's a condition that we all have that we're born into. And it looks something like when you take something in this world, something in our city, something creaturely, and you divinize that thing.

You take anything in this world that God gave us as gifts that are good things and you treat them, you turn them into evil things because you make them into little gods and you center your life around them. So that could be lust, money, power, classic Babylonian idols of the human heart.

[6 : 06] It could be approval, comfort, achievement. It could be alcohol, drugs, or shopping. It could be a million things that we take in this life and we revolve our lives around it.

And we think that it's going to be for us this tower of Babel, the tower of Babylon from Genesis 11, that will reach the heavens, that will save us. And that means that we all are living in exile.

Look, exile is just idolatry. We've been exiled from the city we were made for, the Garden of Eden. And so we're living this life as people struggling with idolatry and therefore in exile.

And then the Bible comes in the New Testament and says to Christians, if you're a Christian today, the Bible in Hebrews and 1 Peter and 1 John 5 says that every single believer in the Lord today is living in exile in Babylon.

Why? Because no matter how great our city is, no matter how much we look at the 17th century in Scotland as the golden age where Christianity was at the center of our institutions, there really is no golden age.

[7 : 12] But idolatry is still at the heart of every city until Christ Jesus comes again. And so we're all still living in exile. And we know today that, of course, our institutions, our culture is very far away from confessing the Lord, from believing in the Lord.

And so we feel that Babylonian reality right now probably more than we have in the last several hundred years here in a place like Edinburgh. And so the question of this book is, how do we as believers live by faith and wisdom and hope in the midst of our exilic lives?

And that's exactly the situation Daniel was in in Babylon. How does he live with faith and wisdom and hope in Babylon, in the heart of Babylon? He's literally working in the king's court. How do we how do we live by faith?

And so Daniel is a wisdom book. And it's teaching us how to live by wisdom until Jesus comes again. And last week we saw the first principle of wisdom that is in here in chapter one, verse one, verse seven, verse 19.

The Lord gave, the Lord gave, the Lord gave. Meaning it looks a whole lot like God's people lost in the story. But then Daniel, the writer, flips it around and says, no, the Lord put you here.

[8 : 30] The Lord gave you to Babylon and gave Babylon to you. And so we as much as we lament the state of our culture, just like Daniel lamented the state of exile in Babylon. Jeremiah 29 turns and God says through Jeremiah, no, seek the peace of the city before the city.

Pursue her good, because as you pursue her peace, you will find peace. Jeremiah said, exiles in Babylon, pray for Babylon. And that means that the first principle we learned last week is that the Lord is in charge.

He's put us here. He's given us to Edinburgh and Edinburgh to us. We are the salt and light. We are to be the blessing to our city. We are to seek the shalom, the true peace of our city and pray for her. So we can never sit back. We can never separate. We've got to be in the world. That was the first thing we saw. But today, the second. The second principle, the rest of chapter one, verses 18 to 21. And we're going to see it through three things. One, the temptation of the table. Secondly, Daniel's resolve. And then finally, the great reversal. So first, the temptation of the table.

[9 : 37] All right. Nebuchadnezzar carted off this professional class. And Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, these Babylonian names they've been given, they were among that class.

And we learn about them in verse three. It says that they were royal. They were nobility. In verse four, it says they were physically impressive, youths without any blemishes.

They were good-looking people. And then in verse four, it says they were intellectually impressive, smarter, more wise than the average person. I think today the kids say that these guys had aura. Is that right? I'm nearing 40, but I can still say things that are cool, I think. They had aura. Today, you know, if Nebuchadnezzar was to come to modern Edinburgh, he would not be taking the ministers to Babylon.

He would be taking the AI, people who understand what AI is. And he would be taking medical doctors and CEOs and CFOs and the top people at the university and software engineers and the best of London, the best of Edinburgh, the smartest people.

[10 : 42] That's who he carted off to Babylon. And his strategy in verse four and five is that he's going to take these guys for three years and he's going to give them his food from his table. And then he's going to immerse them in his language, his literature, his religious text.

And over three years, Babylonize them, ultimately. Full immersion. And so in verse eight, verse seven, I should say, last week we saw he gave each of them Babylonian, Akkadian names that were actually names named after the gods of Babylon, like Nabu, the moon god and others. And that means that this Babylonization was religious. It wasn't just, oh, learn our language, learn our literature. He wanted to make them pagans. He wanted to make them polytheist. He wanted them to bow down at the temple of Marduk, where he had taken the vessels from Jerusalem and placed in the temple of Marduk.

In this book. And so this is a religious issue. But then we learn in verse eight, but Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself. There it is.

The main idea of the text. Daniel resolved he would not defile himself. So the word, it's funny, the word there in Hebrew, the Hebrew text, defile, is the word redeem.

[11 : 54] But it's being used in a negative way here. And it's saying something like to redeem something is to purchase it, to buy it. And it's saying Daniel set his heart apart that he would not be purchased.

He would not be bought by Nebuchadnezzar. In other words, he's saying he would never let his heart be grasped and bought and purchased by this religion that Nebuchadnezzar was promoting. Now, how does he do that? Now, here's the fascinating turn in the passage. And that's that in order to protect his heart, he decides not to eat from Nebuchadnezzar's food.

Not all food. He says, I will take vegetables. I'll take water. He and his friends. But he says, I will not eat the meat or drink the wine of Nebuchadnezzar's table. Now, listen, Daniel learned the literature. That includes religious literature of Babylon. Daniel served Nebuchadnezzar personally at his court. Daniel learned the language of Babylon. He was all the way in.

[12 : 55] He was not out at all. But the one thing was meat and wine from Nebuchadnezzar's table. Why? Now, people don't really know. The commentators speculate a bit.

One obvious answer could be that this food was probably sacrificed to false gods, to idols. And so he doesn't want to break the Levitical law from the Mosaic law.

And so he doesn't want to defile himself. But look, the vegetables were also very probably dedicated to the pagan gods, too. And so I think there's something a bit more going on here in this situation where it's just the meat and the wine that he refuses to drink.

And I think the answer is in realizing, again, that Babylon in the Bible stands for the symbol across the whole of the Bible. When you come to Revelation, it really focuses on this.

In Revelation 18, listen how much it takes Babylon as the symbol. It says, You see, In other words, in Revelation, eating from the Babylonian table, drinking the wine of Babylon, it stands for something far bigger than just drinking wine from Babylon.

[14 : 31] Something more than that. And instead, what's going on here is that in the ancient Near Eastern context, in the first century, we see this in the Gospels, too, that coming to somebody's table is a far more significant event than we see it as.

So we love to come to each other's tables. We love to eat together. We love to go to lunch. Some of you are thinking about the table right now. You're thinking, what am I going to eat for lunch? When is this going to stop? The tables are so important.

They're far more important than the ancient world. And in the ancient world, to come to somebody's table is to really enact publicly a covenant with them and to say, I'm giving my allegiance to you.

And in the Old Testament, eating the meat, drinking the wine is the real sign, especially drinking the cup, is the sign that you said, I will give myself to you fully. It's an act of allegiance.

It's an act of covenanting. And that's what, think about the Gospels. That's why people were so shocked in the Gospels when Jesus would eat with tax collectors and prostitutes.

[15 : 33] And then say, are you covenanting? Are you pledging allegiance to their lifestyle? Going to the table of somebody was so significant in the old world. And that's exactly the issue going on here.

Just think about 1 Corinthians 10, 21. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot come to the Lord's table and come to the table of Satan.

See how it takes the metaphor table to ask, who is your allegiance to? Who have you covenanted with? Right? And so across the Bible, Babylon, the city as a symbol, is the embodiment of Satan's world system.

Satan's table to put pride and idolatry at the center of the culture, at the center of life. And so Daniel knows that this is a symbol. It's an image. It's a representative of where his heart really is and will ultimately land.

Let me give you one more little example or hope, I think, here. And that's that from the time of Genesis 3. You remember Genesis 3? The serpent comes to Adam and Eve in the garden.

[16 : 39] This ancient foe. This great dragon. And what does he do? He says, do you want to be like God, knowing good and evil? And what is the great sin that he tempts them to commit?

To be like God, to self-divinize, to put yourself at the center of all reality is to do what? It's to take and to eat. It's to come to the table. It's to come to Satan's table. And all throughout the Bible, we've got people like Goliath, these little representations of Satan throughout the Old Testament.

Goliath, David and Goliath. Goliath, this giant, when you read carefully the story, it says that Goliath wore armor as scales, dragon scales, serpent scales.

It describes his armor in that way. He's dragon. Pride at the center of the Philistine life. He is the representative of Satan. You come to the Pharaoh story in Exodus and Pharaoh capturing the people of Israel.

Ezekiel 29 says that Pharaoh was the great dragon, the great serpent. He's a little Satan.

Nebuchadnezzar, we saw this last week, Hebrews 4. He stands up in the midst of Babylon and he says what?

[17 : 49] Look at this wonderful city, this powerful city that I built by the might of my glory, my power, for my namesake. And in Isaiah, which prophesies about this story, Isaiah 14, there's this little line about Satan, Lucifer.

And it says, Lucifer, you fell from heaven because you said, look at the might of my glory. I will make myself greater than the most high. You see what's going on here?

Nebuchadnezzar is a representative Satan. He's a symbol of utter darkness. And when Daniel says, I will not eat the meat, I will not drink the wine, he's saying, I will not come to the table of the serpent.

In other words, Daniel is a new Adam. Here he is again facing the temptation of that ancient serpent. But this time he stands up to Satan in a way that Adam never did.

Now look, we all know how true this story is. Okay, let's bring this to our hearts, to what matters for us in 2025. We all know how true this story really is. We all know that when you have an idol in your

life, something that you're centering your life around, some Babylonian thing that you think, this will save me, this will give me meaning, satisfaction, hope, and deliverance.

[19 : 06] How much that idol continues over and over again to come and say, take one little bite, one more bite, and I will give you everything. Take one more bite of the apple, and I will make you great.

Give into that lust one more time, and you will have pleasures forevermore. Come back to that thing over and over and over again. And just think about it.

Look, it's enshrined in all of our literature. Here's a picture, Snow White. What happened in Snow White? The witch came to Snow White and gave her the most beautiful apple, and she said, if you just take one bite, it will give you every beauty, every romance.

You will be great forever. And of course, as soon as she takes a bite, she enters into the death of a sleeping death. You think about not only Snow White, Hansel and Gretel.

It's probably a story you haven't read in a while. How? Hansel and Gretel, when the witch allures Hansel and Gretel, the young children. How? By building a gingerbread house and saying, you can come and eat from this, but there's death on the inside.

[20 : 12] On the inside, as soon as they get there. Every single idol promises you something shiny on the outside, and it says, keep taking a bite, keep taking a bite. That's the Babylonian temptation. That's the table of Nebuchadnezzar.

That's the table of Babylon. And there's a tragic pattern involved in this, and that's that idols promise you everything. They demand everything from you because they say, keep coming for more.

And then they never give what they promise. They never actually deliver. Let me give you an example. You know this. This is simple. But careerism, thinking that it is your success in this city that will save you, that will give you fulfillment.

Careerism promises fulfillment, but what happens? It demands your family. You know, careerism promises that it will make you great, but what does it do? It takes your family from you.

Romance says you'll finally be fulfilled if you can get that person. But it requires that you change who you are, change your identity, mask who you really are. Idols always promise something shiny on the outside.

[21 : 16] They never deliver. They never give you the thing that you're really looking for. My favorite is the Chronicles of Narnia when the white witch comes to Edmund. And remember, and she says, oh, Edmund, I will give you all the Turkish delight.

You come eat at my table. I will give you Turkish delight to the end of your days. But all you have to do is give away your siblings. Become Judas to them. Just one more compromise, and you can have everything.

You can be great. Every single idol, this is what Babylon is. Every single idol wears the same beautiful mask, whispering the same ancient lie, just one more bite, one more compromise, one more time, and then you can save yourself.

Then you can get out of this. And the table that promises to make you like God is the table that pulls you away from God bit by bit every single day until you find yourself to be totally lost.

Now, that's why, secondly, briefly, we need what the new Adam Daniel here has, and that's, what do we learn? Resolve. He says, but Adam resolved that he would not defile himself.

[22 : 24] So, how do you live in our city in a time of idolatry and struggling with the idols in your heart as a believer in the Lord? And we learn here, remember last week, the first principle, the Lord put you here.

Don't separate. The Lord gave you to the city. You are his instrument in this place. Seek the peace of Edinburgh. Pray for her. Don't separate.

Be in the world. But now, today, the second principle of wisdom, and that's that when Daniel went all the way into the world, he said, I resolve. I will not defile myself.

You have to go into the world, but you can never be of it. You've got to set your heart apart. Never separate, but also protect your heart so that you never assimilate. But then here, we learn very specifically what that means, and that means that Daniel's resolve, his resolutions, was to starve his idols to death.

In other words, the second principle of wisdom of how to live in a Babylonian city, in a Babylonian time, struggling, wrestling with the Babylonian ism that's still down in the bottom of our hearts, is Daniel is calling us to say, you've got to be willing to fast from your idols, to starve from your idols.

[23 : 39] And that means actually knowing the idols you struggle with. Do you know the idols you struggle with? Do you know the little gods that are always pulling you back to chase after over and over again? And I think one way to say this is a passage ultimately about spiritual formation and how much consumption matters in the way we're formed.

Look, John, the apostle, puts it so simple in 1 John 5, little children, keep yourself from idols. There's the summary of the passage.

1 Peter 2, 11-12, dear friends, I urge you as exiles, abstain from your sinful desires. There's the passage in brief in the New Testament. And what we're reading about here is that we who are spiritually believers in Christ, we are at the same time being formed in all sorts of ways.

In other words, our formation as human beings is a product of our consumption. You can't expect to be a person with deep resolve that is able to fight the next lust today if you didn't fight that lust yesterday.

Spiritual formation requires resolve. It requires time. It requires commitment. It requires giving yourself away to something far bigger. You say, Lord, why don't you just take away these little gods in my life?

[25 : 03] Why don't you just take away these things that I struggle with? And the answer is that the Lord keeps them in our lives because he gave us to Babylon. Fighting is part of the spiritual journey.

Fighting is the very thing that will change you. And so the difference today in making a choice that is 1% better, 1% better in fighting your idol will be every difference for tomorrow.

When you say no to that temptation and that thing that keeps drawing you back over and over again today, you don't yet know the victories that you're going to reach in the future from that.

But when you let yourself, without resolve, you let yourself give in to that thing that keeps drawing you back today, you do not yet know the defeats that you will find yourself in in the future.

And so we all know from the headlines of church life how many times we're sort of surprised by people who we thought we listened to on podcasts that preach and things, and they fall big time, right?

[26 : 03] Well, how does it happen? It's because without resolve unto spiritual formation, our consumption 1% worse every day will land us eventually in a place where we have totally fallen.

And we'll say, how did this happen? And the way it happened is we did not live our spiritual lives with resolve, with resolve like Daniel does here. Charles Marsh in his biography of Bonhoeffer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and pastor, he talks about how the German church in the 1930s capitulated to Hitler, to the Third Reich, in so many ways.

But there was a group within the German church that broke away from the state church. They were called the Confessing Church, and they had resolved that they would not capitulate to Hitler and his ethics and all that he was doing.

And so this Confessing Church went to this very tiny little remote town in Germany called Finkenwalde, and they founded, say that again, Finkenwalde, no.

They found this little seminary, and Bonhoeffer was chosen to be the leader of the seminary. And this was, I mean, it was tiny. It was cold. It was remote.

[27 : 16] It was snowy. Nobody, everybody was struggling in early Nazi Germany. And one of Bonhoeffer's friends, Wilhelm Niesel, he knew Bonhoeffer very well, and he came alongside Bonhoeffer.

He was concerned. He said, when I look at what you're doing at the seminary in Finkenwalde, I feel like it is far too intense. And so Bonhoeffer had everybody there studying so much in the Bible so often, praying through long seasons of prayer, hours and hours of prayer, work and prayer, sort of a monastic regimen.

And Niesel came and said, this to me looks like spiritualism. It looks like pietism. And it's far too intense, and everybody's complaining.

And they're coming to me to say, you know, Dietrich, he's pushing us too hard. And so one day, Bonhoeffer took Niesel on a rowing expedition for a few hours in the early morning, and they went down a river.

And after a few hours of rowing, they came to an embankment, and he took Niesel on top of this embankment. And there they were, standing over this great field. And what was there but the Third Reich Army training with such vigor, with such force.

[28 : 31] And Bonhoeffer said, Wilhelm, I'll just paraphrase what Marsh says. He says, what we're doing at Finkenwalde has to be stronger than what Hitler's doing out here.

He says, this, our hearts have to be stronger than that if we're going to resist. Now, here's what Bonhoeffer knew. Babylon does not just offer, Nebuchadnezzar was not just offering Daniel a meal. It was offering him a formation program. A formation program. Three years of consumption designed to turn his heart away from the Lord. And what Bonhoeffer knew so well is that casual, coasting Christianity will not be strong enough to save you from the formation program that's at the heart of a city like ours, that's at the heart of this culture.

Casual Christianity is not strong enough. Just coasting is not strong enough. You have to, true spirituality needs resolve.

Every decision matters. Every 1% matters. And I've got to move on and finish. If you think about the fruit of Finkenwalde, boy, Hitler is long gone. The program of the Third Reich demolished.

[29 : 50] But today, it was at Finkenwalde that Bonhoeffer wrote *The Cost of Discipleship*, or *Life Together*, these very famous books about the Christian life that millions of people today are reading and learning from and growing from.

Bonhoeffer was right. And God won out, like we saw last week. He always will. This is an invitation today to spiritual resolve. Friends, our culture is not just tempting us with idols.

It's running a formation program. And every day through what you consume, what you read, what you buy, what you dream about, what you want, what you desire, you're being formed.

Are you aware? Do we have spiritual resolve? To be in the world? Because God has sent you to seek the peace of the city. But not let your heart be captured.

I've got to finish. How do you get this resolve? The great reversal. Daniel did something so difficult in this passage. Verse 12, he only ate vegetables and water.

[30 : 49] For me, that'd be very hard to do when there's meat on the table, only vegetables, only water. And then after 10 days, verse 15, the eunuch evaluated and said, these guys are fuller, fatter, stronger than the others.

Now, verse 17 and 18, additionally, they go before Nebuchadnezzar, and they had greater wisdom as well. Now, this is not about body composition.

Listen, it's just a simple fact that if you eat vegetables for 10 days and drink water for 10 days, and eat meat and drink wine for 10 days, you will not be fuller and fatter on the vegetables and the water, okay?

No matter what you believe about diets or think about diets, we at least know that, that meat and wine will make you bigger than vegetables and water. Yet, they were bigger. What's going on here? This is miraculous. This is a great reversal. This is a vindication that's taking place. And it's a physical vindication that points to a spiritual vindication.

[31 : 50] That their bodies are physically vindicated because the Lord is vindicating their choice. He's saying that real wisdom is the resolve to commit to the fear of the Lord, not to eat from the table of Satan.

And so, they have wisdom. They have strength. But it's all, the body's pointing ultimately here to the heart. And, you know, what does it look like here? It looks like, it looks like for them losing, boy, it feels like, it would feel like losing to me to be, have meat and other things on the table every day and say, but I've just resolved to eat the vegetables and drink the water.

It feels like a hard choice. It is a hard choice. It feels like they have to go down in order to come up. It feels like they have to choose loss and to give their lives away instead of choosing the comforts in front of them in order to gain the world.

And that's exactly what it is. And in the Gospels, you have to lose your life if you want to find it. You have to lose the little things that you're chasing for salvation if you want salvation.

You have to give your life away. Friends, every one of us in this room today, as we close, can say, I have eaten from the table of Nebuchadnezzar.

[33 : 06] You know, I know that there are idols in my life, in my heart, in our hearts. And you might come today in a deep web of idolatry, a deep web of addiction.

You might come from all sorts of places where you think, I don't know that I can have, I don't have the resolve. And it would be a huge mistake to come to the end of this passage and think that your salvation depends upon your resolve.

It would be a huge mistake. And what do we see here? Remember in the garden, in the Garden of Eden, the serpent said to the first Adam, come to my table, take and eat, and I will give you everything.

And it broke the world. Daniel entered into the garden city of Babylon, and this second serpent said to him, come and eat at my table, and I will give you everything.

But Daniel didn't do it. He was better than Adam. But look, we know that Daniel had idols. You see, what's going on here? Daniel is pointing you to a true and better Daniel.

[34 : 11] And you remember in Matthew chapter 4, Jesus Christ stood before that ancient foe, that serpent, in the wilderness. And what did that serpent do? It said, come, the serpent said to Jesus, you come and you eat from my table.

You come and take the bread from my table, and I will give you the whole world. I will make you great. He gave Jesus the Babylonian temptation that's at the core of our hearts. And Jesus did not eat. He fasted.

And in such a great reversal, even though he deserved everything, he chose to get nothing. Can you say today, Jesus Christ went down into the heart of Babylon, that Babylonian death at the cross, because of my idol?

That's the question. Can you say that today, that Jesus Christ entered a death he did not deserve because of my idolatry? And if you can say that today, you know, you can say, it's not resolve that's going to save me.

It's him. He already did. And now I have to resolve. Now, because of that, I have to resolve. Think about vindication. First Timothy 3.16 says, the mystery of godliness is this.

[35 : 22] Christ became flesh. He died, but he was vindicated by the Spirit. He went down, but at the resurrection, he was vindicated. He went up.

You got to lose your life to save it, but you only do that by participating in his vindication, in his resurrection, in his going down, in his rising. That's the only way it works.

Look, for those of you in this room today who are willing to say, I know I have eaten too many times from Nebuchadnezzar's table, I want to finish with the words of 2 Corinthians 5.17.

When you are in Christ, you are a new creation. Your idolatry has been defeated. So, go into the heart of the city.

Be in it, but not of it. Live your life with resolve. Let us pray. Father, we struggle with resolve. We're so weak.

[36 : 22] So, we pray today, Lord, that you would teach us afresh that 1% principle, what it means to be more committed, to be more formed by choosing your table, the table of Jesus, rather than the table of Nebuchadnezzar.

And so, Lord, I do pray today for some folks in this room who may be, for the first time, thinking, have I been vindicated in Christ? Have I been forgiven for my idolatries?

And I do ask, Lord, that you would meet now with those folks as we sing and then strengthen the faith of your people here as we go forth into the heart of our city. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.