

Doomsday Preppers & Truth Preservers

Daniel 8:9-18, 23-27

"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away."

Introduction: In 2011-2014, a show created a ratings bonanza for the National Geographic channel, becoming the highest rated show in networks history. The show was called "Doomsday Preppers" and featured survivalists who were preparing to survive various circumstances that may cause the end of civilization, including economic collapse, societal meltdown, or the MOST likely electromagnetic pulse that takes out all electricity. Bunkers, underground shelters, generators, weapons arsenals, and food stashes were the norm, and middle aged men (the largest demographic) watched with intrigue and perhaps a bit of guilty pleasure, imagining themselves building a military grade bunker under their 3 bedroom house to withstand the inevitable bombing of their rural Iowa town. The show ended, but the fear of the future, distrust of the government, and figuring out how to prepare remains.

Jesus prepped His disciples for a fearful future on the night that He went to the cross. He did not mince words with them: **"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."** (John 15:18) The disciples were facing a world that would misunderstand them, persecute them (15:20), shun them (16:2), and even kill them, all because the world did not understand or know the Father or His Son Jesus Christ. This did not sound like a glorious future, but one with much adversity, tension, and discomfort. *How were they supposed to respond?* Build a bunker? Run to the hills? Take up arms? They were to **remember: 1) They were NOT of THIS world (15:19), 2) They were following in the steps of their Master (15:20); 3) They were to bear witness through the strength of the Holy Spirit (15:26-27).** *Remembering future realities would help them live boldly in the present based on past lessons.* This is exactly why Daniel received a vision in **Daniel 8**, and why it's important for us to understand these past history lessons, so that in understanding how the future unfolds, we can **bear witness of Christ** today, embracing circumstances and realities NOT in a fearful, hide-me-in-a-bunker kind of way, but one that **holds fast** to all that we've been told and commanded.

Daniel 8 is a vision given to Daniel that mapped out a future for him that is a past reality for us. In understanding this, it not only gives us a glimpse of OUR future but also how to live in the present.

A Glimpse Into The Prophetic Past (8:9-14)

Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east and toward the glorious land. 10 It grew great, even to the host of heaven. And some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them. 11 It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. 12 And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper. 13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" 14 And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state."

A Brief Review: To reframe where we've been, we remember that Daniel received a vision from the Lord of what was to come, 12 years before the fall of Babylon and 400 years before the events would actually all come to pass. He had a vision of the rising of the **Medo-Persian Empire**, of the **vast and powerful Greek empire**, with its great king **Alexander**, who in 10 years conquered the known world only to burn out like a blazing comet. This led to four generals taking over the kingdom, with none of them able to control the enormity of the kingdom, which gave way 22 years later for a little horn, Antiochus IV, the eighth king in the Syrian dynasty, to reign in 175 B.C. Each of these were represented vividly in the vision by a ram with 2 horns, a goat with a uni-horn, then a broken horn, leading to four horns, and finally a little horn that became large. This vision was **future for Daniel but is past for us**, an assurance that Israel would be back in the land in his future. We learned the makeup of Alexander, who pre-dated but embodied the future beast or anti-Christ, who was a military conqueror. Now we will see the actions and character of Antiochus, who showed the evil intentions and makeup of the future anti-Christ.

His beginnings: If you look at verse 9, you'll see this little horn started small but grew in power. Antiochus was NOT powerful like Alexander, but was significant because of his ruthless treatment of the people of Israel. He gained his position through **bribery and flattery**, and did make notable conquests in the south (Egypt), the east (Persia, Parhia, Armenia) and the Beautiful land (Jerusalem). Israel was pointed out because this little horn's rule over the land had tremendous consequences for the Jewish people.

His dealings: If you trace his history in verses 10-13, you'll notice how he dealt with the Jewish people. In verse 10 he threw down and trampled on the 'stars', which verse 24 says are the saints. In verse 11, he made himself like the 'Prince of the host', or elevated himself to the place of God Himself. He took away the regular offering in the Temple and overthrew the sanctuary. In verse 12, God judges the host (Jewish people) because of their sin and rebellion, truth will be thrown to the ground, and it will seem that everything the little horn does will prosper. This will culminate in desperation as a holy one cried out, "How Long, O Lord", especially after the **abomination of desolation**, where the Temple was made unusable and defiled. The answer was for 2300 days, or 6 years and 3 months. Then the sanctuary would be restored.

His actions: What does all this mean? Is his future or did it happen. It is almost universally recognized that all that is described happened in the rule of Antiochus, between 175 -164 B.C. Our historical source for much of his comes from **1 and 2 Maccabees**, which you may be familiar with if you grew up in a Catholic church, since they consider it canon. It charts what happened in the **inter-testamental period**, the 400 year time between the end of Malachi and the beginning of Matthew. It traces the **Hasmonean dynasty**, who rebelled against Roman rule and created an independent Jewish Kingdom for 100 years, following the reign of Antiochus. Though this is NOT equivalent to the rest of Scripture, it does give some historical insight. It also was written to show the tension of faithful Jews who kept the Law and tradition and those who capitulated to culture.

September, 175 B.C. - "There sprang from these a sinful offshoot, **Antiochus Euphron**, son of King Antiochus, once a hostage at Rome." (1 Macc. 1:10)
In those days there appeared in Israel transgressors of the law who **seduced many** (1:11).

One of the first things he did in the land was build a gymnasium (1:14), in Jerusalem, according to the Gentile custom. This was the first slide that moved the Jewish people in Jerusalem away from their God. In the gymnasium, the Greek way was to wrestle, compete, and work out their Olympic type activities, but did it in the nude (although they did wear a thin coat of oil). The gymnasium was built by the Temple and was clearly made to compete with the worship of the true God. Priests and people alike began to participate, and they

began to be embarrassed by their circumcision (1:15), since that was not the Gentile way. The goal of the occupiers was to get the people to embrace **Hellenism**, the cultural way of the Greek mind and activity.

169 B.C. - "After Antiochus had defeated Egypt....he returned and went up against Israel and against Jerusalem with a strong force. He insolently entered the sanctuary and took away the golden altar, the lampstand for the light with all its utensils, the offering table, the cups and bowls, the golden censers, and the curtain." (1 Macc. 1:20-21)

Because he was constantly at war, he had to come up with ways to pay for these endeavors. He raided the Temple of its valuable parts to fund his campaigns. Again, Israel was able to go back to the land, rebuild the Temple and the wall under Ezra and Nehemiah, but they did not have total control over this area and were constantly under duress.

167 B.C. - "*Two years later, the king sent the Mysian commander to the cities of Judah, and he came to Jerusalem with a strong force. He spoke to them **deceitfully in peaceful terms, and they believed him. Then he attacked the city suddenly, in a great onslaught, and destroyed many of the people of Israel.***" (1 Macc. 1:29-30)

Feigning peace, he came strong into Jerusalem and began a **systematic persecution** of the people. After killing 80,000 and sending that many off to slavery, he called the people to **abandon their customs and start sacrificing to the idols of the Greeks** (1:42-43). He prohibited the people from sacrificing to God in the Temple, and built other altars for idol worship. His goal was to get the people to "**forget the law and change all its ordinances.**" (1:49).

On **December 25, 167 B.C.**, he did the unthinkable. "***the king erected the desolating abomination***" (1:54), sacrificing a pig on the altar, forcing pork down the throats of priests, and using the Temple to offer sacrifices to Zeus. It was at this time that Antiochus minted coins with the name "Epiphanes" on them, which means "God made manifest". He tore up any scrolls of Scripture he found (1:56), and outlawed any practice of the law. Any mother caught circumcising her child would have that child killed, hung around her neck, and marched off a cliff to her death (1:60-62). Many turned on their own countrymen, turning them in, while others "*were determined and resolved in their hearts not to eat anything unclean; they preferred to die rather than to be defiled with food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. And very great wrath came upon Israel*" (1:63-64)

Never had a singular ruler so thoroughly and systematically attacked the Jewish people. This was not the last time, as God's people, in their time of rebellion against God, have still been persecuted throughout the ages. What we see through all of this is how God used Antiochus to our out His wrath on His people (Dan. 8:23). **And how long did it last?** 2300 days. We know it's days since it was a number attached to a description of a day (8:14), just like Genesis 1, where you had "morning and evening, the first day". In **164 B.C, Antiochus died, but not by human hand** (Daniel 8:25), which would have signaled the end of his reign of terror. Working backward from that date brings us back over 6 years to **171 B.C, where something must have happened to trigger the start.** We know that in that year, **Onias III** the legitimate, Jewish High Priest was murdered and a pseudo line of priests assumed power. During the death of Antiochus, **Judas Maccabeus** cleansed and rededicated the Temple on **December 14, 164 B.C** (1 Macc. 4:52). Jesus celebrated this festival during His life on earth (John 10:22), called the "Feast of Dedication", and today popularly known as **Hanukkah**.

A Gaze Into a Certain Future (15-18; 23-27

Daniel was overwhelmed, not just by the startling images but with the length of time where his people would be persecuted. As he was pondering and trying to understand the vision, God sent an angel to help Daniel understand the vision. The angels name was **Gabriel**, the

first time in Scripture an angels name was mentioned (Satan and Michael -Jude 9 and Rev. 12:7 - are the others). Gabriel seems to be God's messenger angel, as he was the one to visit Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19), and Mary (Luke 1:26). Daniel did what most of us would in the face of this much fear: *he fell into a deep sleep*, but the angel woke him up to make sure he understood what was going on. "***Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end.***" *What did he mean by this?* I believe that though all of this prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Antiochus, it gives us a type, picture of what Anti-Christ will be like in the future. This is not the same figure as in chapter 7, since that little horn came out of Rome, and Antiochus came from Greece. But we see many parallels between the two:

- Both Antiochus (8:9) and Anti-Christ (7:8) are symbolized by horns and went from 'little' to large in their time of leadership
- Antiochus was a king with a 'bold face' (8:23) and the beast will be imposing (7:20)
- Antiochus was one who understood riddles, or was a master of intrigue (8:23), where AC had eyes like a man (7:8, 20), meaning both will be problem solvers, understanding mysteries, and owning the room
- Antiochus had great power (8:24), but that power was not of his own, meaning he was empowered by Satanic forces in order to try to destroy God's people. AC will be Satanically empowered as well (Rev. 13:7-8; 2 Thess. 2:9).
- Antiochus destroyed thousands (8:24); AC will destroy more (Rev 13:15; 16:13-16)
- Antiochus prospered for a short while (8:24); AC will prosper briefly as well (Rev. 17:12; Dan. 11:36)
- Antiochus persecuted the saints (8:24); AC will oppress believers (Rev. 13:7; Dan. 7:21, 25)
- Antiochus was a deceiver (8:25); AC will be a master of deception (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:4, 14, 19:20)
- Antiochus was boastful, proud, and placed himself in a godlike status (8:25), self-proclaiming the title "Ephiphanes", though Jews called him "Epimanes" ('madman'); AC will redefine the idea of pride (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 25; Rev. 13:5)
- Antiochus blasphemed God (8:25), as will AC (Rev. 13:5-6; Dan. 7:25; 11:36)
- Antiochus was not killed by human hands (8:25), and neither will AC (Rev. 19:19-20)

What was all of this for? How was this helpful for Daniel, the people of Israel at the time, and for us today? (Especially for those that don't particularly like history):

1. This was an **exhortation to faithfulness**, to endure until the end. Knowing how it all turns out should help in bearing up under in the present, even in the face of loss and death.
2. This was **encouragement during difficult days**, knowing that the sunrise coming out of darkness and evil will be glorious.
3. This was a **comfort in the midst of suffering**, knowing that God is not whimsical, that history is MOVING toward a conclusion, and justice will be done.

But I think there is one more practical takeaway from learning about the nature, character, and actions of both Antiochus and Anti-Christ:

Gearing up for a Stormy Present

Though we are living in this in between time, the "time of the Gentiles", and though Antiochus is dead and Antichrist has not shown himself yet, there are several key characteristics that we face today:

1) **Deception** - Satan is the Father of Lies (John 8:44), which means he operates in anti-truth, because "there is no truth in him". How does the world welcome people like Antichrist? They buy into the lie, believing that this leader is out for THEIR best interest. How does the world get to place to turn their back on the truth that God has embedded into the creation, His Word, and our own consciences? We are watching it unfold in our own nation! Look no further than **education**, where an acknowledgement of God and even the Law has been replaced by humanistic drivel, where 5 years olds are being programmed to believe gender is fluid, God's design does not matter, and anyone who tells you different is the enemy. We have universities which make it their goal to "deconstruct" students religious beliefs and replace them with self-help, self-glorifying, self-focused dogma. The antidote to deception is the truth, and the only truth that counteracts this level of deception is **God's Word**. That is why we as a church, we as families, and we as individuals MUST RE-commit our pursuit of God through His Word, to teach our kids, to stand firm, and to tell others of what is true and real.

2) **Secularization** - Even before Antiochus made his in-roads into Jerusalem, Hellenism had already begun to take root. The Jews were surrounded by non-Jewish influences, and they slowly but surely began to act, think, and believe like those around them. In Jerusalem, it was trying to fit in with the concept of the "Gymnasium", the promoting of the body in an idolatrous way. Sports, fitness, and competition began to replace responsibility, home, and worship. Secularization ALWAYS comes in subtly and slowly, as good things become godlike things. During the time of Antiochus, secularization lead to a **leaving of worship, and they began to persecute their own people**, just as Jesus predicted will happen again (Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God - John 16:2). We are in this world, but we must not fall prey to being OF this world.

3) **Leaving Biblical practice** - Secularization meant that instead of a **commitment to the Biblical practice of worship** - both private and corporate - was replaced by much activity. Priests joined the gym instead of studying and sacrificing. The people were embarrassed by the weird things God called them to (see: *circumcision*), and began to neglect the practice. They would finally replace the worship of God with the worship of self - WHICH IS ALWAYS THE EXCHANGE THAT IS MADE IN SECULARIZATION - placing themselves outside of God's will and under His wrath.

4) **Persecution** - God would then bring persecution, as both punishment but also correction. Persecution created a **dividing line** - stand with God and lose possession, status, and life - or **compromise** and add temporarily in this life. Persecution is inevitable, both in the life of every believer and in our lives in the current flow of culture.

Do any of these resonate with you today? Do we see these happening in Christianity and the church itself? I think one of the most corrective and cautious realities coming out of this period of history is the formation of the **Pharisees**, those Jews who would not yield to Hellenism or Caesar, but preserved the practice of the Law while so many fell away. We have a pretty grim view of the Pharisees in Jesus day, but during the inter-testamental period, they held the line. Their problem is cautionary for us today:

They held the line, but took their eyes off the prize! They kept the Law, but forgot what the Law was for! They held onto their religious practices, but missed Jesus! This is our challenge today. We have been bought and purchased by Jesus, His blood covering out sin, His life exchanged for ours, His righteousness imputed to us. That means that **being moral in a perverse world** is an outflow, but NOT THE SOLUTION because **JESUS IS!** We must remember that our goal is NOT to make our country moral again (if that's even a thing), but to point them to Jesus, who makes them NEW! Our lives must reflect the goodness of Jesus, that we believe that obedience to Him is better than any material gain, that practicing weird things like baptism, communion, and fellowship with different people is not a reason to be ashamed

but rather to give hope to a world thirsting for real friendship, belonging, and forgiveness. I have no idea when Anti-christ will come, but I know our Christ has already come, and He has put all things under His feet (Eph. 1:20-21), and He will one day do away with death, evil, and even Satan himself. Until that day, we want to walk faithfully and confidently, not in our own righteousness or goodness, but in our Savior, who will make all things new.