

July 15, 2018

# The Empire Strikes Back

Daniel 8

## The two acts of Daniel

Last week we began Act 2 of the Book of Daniel. Chapters 1-6 was Act 1 and it was comprised mainly of Daniel's life. Act 2—chapters 7-12—is comprised mainly of Daniel's prophecies. This shift is significant because whereas in Act 1 we dealt largely with historical literature, here in Act 2 we are dealing largely with apocalyptic literature. Remember that apocalyptic literature has different rules. It invites us into the country of imagination with frightening symbols and fantastical beasts. But just like other genres in Scripture, the main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things. If we press for details that God didn't intend for us to press, then we will find ourselves going down the rabbit hole, and our time together will look more like Alice in Wonderland than worship of the Triune God of Holy Scripture.

## The two languages of Daniel

Let me remind you that the book of Daniel was originally written in two languages: Hebrew and Aramaic. The first part of the book was largely Aramaic with the exception of chapter one.<sup>1</sup> I believe the reason for this is that Aramaic was the main language of the world.<sup>2</sup> The message of God's total sovereignty over world empires needed to be heard by all peoples. And God had this truth about Himself proclaimed with the megaphone of the Aramaic language. But now, in chapter 8, we transition back to Hebrew—which was the

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<sup>1</sup> "1:1-2:4a; 8:1-12:13 are written in Hebrew, and 2:4b-7:28 are written in Aramaic." E.J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted 1980), pg. 22

<sup>2</sup> Help here from E.J. Young, *ibid*

language of the church in the OT. God is, as it were, directing His speech at us, and for good reason. E.J. Young puts it this way:

“These revelations were given at a time when the period of the *Indignation* had begun. What was to be the future course of the people of God? Was God to cast them off utterly, to leave them dispersed among the nations? Or was He to fulfill His earlier promises in sending to the people a Redeemer? And, if He was to send them the Redeemer, how would this be accomplished? In what relation would the people of God stand to the mighty heathen empires which were now appearing upon the scene?<sup>3</sup>

The rest of the book of Daniel answers those questions.

### **The two antichrists of Daniel**

Now there is an important connection between chapters 7 and 8. This ominous “little horn” is present in both. However these “little horns” are not identical, as least in my view.<sup>4</sup> In ch. 7, the “little horn” was *the* Antichrist, and the message of ch.7 was ‘this is what Antichrist will do.’ The message of ch.8 is ‘here is an example—a type of antichrist.’ The two chapters together illustrate the truth of **1 John 2:18** “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming [ch.7], so now many antichrists have come [ch. 8].”

### **The two messages of Daniel**

Now the same comfort that Daniel 8 brought to the ancient people of God is the same comfort that we need today. Daniel saw a vision that in some ways was more disturbing than the last. After it concluded, **v.27** says “I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days.” It is an appalling vision. He became physically ill over it. Not *merely* because of the desecration that this new “little

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<sup>3</sup> “In answer to these questions, the book of Daniel reveals that God has not cast off His people. The nations will arise and become powerful, but they will nevertheless be subject to the all-controlling power of God. There will yet be much persecution for the people of the LORD, but when the appointed time has come, God will establish His own eternal kingdom.” *ibid*, pg. 21

<sup>4</sup> At least in my view. Other commentators see them as the same person—see Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative*, (Scotland, UK,: Christian Focus Publications, Reprint 2015), pg. 113-121

horn” will reap on the people of God. But because Daniel sees that he along with the rest of the people of God are blameworthy. That’s the message the angel brings to Daniel. The empire of the serpent and the empire of their own sin are conspiring together.

And that is the same message that we need to hear this morning. Dear congregation, why is the world the way that it is today? Why is there so much death and desecration, and sin and suffering in the world? Because of you. Because of me. Perhaps that’s hard to see, so ask yourself: why does your personal life often feel out of control? Why do you struggle and fight with those around you? Why do you have the most perverted and hateful thoughts towards other people? Even people you say you love? Why is worshipping the Lord the most burdensome task that you face daily? What’s the common denominator in all your heartache? You. Your sin. Your rebellion. Daniel sees this clearly. Yes the empire of the serpent is causing destruction. That is not being denied. But the empire of sin—your sin, my sin—is conspiring right along with the serpent. Both of these deadly empires—to use Daniel’s imagery—are *desecrating the temple* of God. We need another Empire to strike back. And what we are going to see, is that this Empire is going to strike back in the most surprising of ways.

- ☆The Empire of the Serpent (*What* is going to happen?)
- ☆The Empire of Our Sin (*Why* does this happen?)
- ☆The Empire of the Savior (*What* is God going to do about it?)

### *The Big Idea...*

The empires of Satan and sin can only be defeated by Another who takes defeat upon Himself in order to gain the victory

## I. The Empire of the Serpent (*What* is going to happen?)

### The vision of the ram and its interpretation

Recall from last week that we saw four beasts that represented the four kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome. Of course they represent more than that, they represent that all of human history is beastly and rebellious against God. The emphasis of chapter 7 was on the fourth kingdom, that is, the final kingdom of AntiChrist. Here in chapter 8 the emphasis is on the third kingdom and the lower case antichrist that springs from it.

So what do we find? First, Daniel has this vision, this time in the third year of Belshazzar's reign (v.1)<sup>5</sup> very close to when Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall. This time there is no ambiguity in the dream because the angel gives us the interpretation. Look at v. 3-4

I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the canal. It had two horns, and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. [4] I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. No beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.

Now look at v.20 when the angel interprets it for Daniel. "As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia." The vision that Daniel had of this kingdom is spot-on. The ram was the very imagery that Medo-Persia used of *itself*—"they carried a gold ram's head with them"<sup>6</sup> on their military marches. One horn was higher than the other—the

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<sup>5</sup> Duguid has a great note here on the generalities that ch.7 presented versus the particularities that ch.8 presents and what this means. Cf. Iain M. Duguid, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Daniel*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 124

<sup>6</sup> Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative*, (Scotland, UK.,: Christian Focus Publications, Reprint 2015), pg. 114; cf. Sinclair Ferguson, *The Preacher's Commentary, OT Vol. 21: Daniel*, (Nashville, TN.,: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988), pg. 157

Persian faction of this empire was stronger than the Medes. This ram charged westward—conquering Babylonia, Syria, Asia Minor; northward—conquering Armenia and the regions about the Caspian Sea; and southward—conquering Egypt, Ethiopia.<sup>7</sup> The Persian empire was undefeatable, v.4 says “no beast could stand before him...no one who could rescue from his power.” Why? Daniel already told us in 2:21 “[God] removes kings and sets up kings.” It would not be removed until God removed it.

### **The vision of the goat and its interpretation**

And that’s what happens. Look with me at v.5 “As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.” The angel tells us who this goat is in v.21 “And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king.” This first king is none other than Alexander the Great. Josephus the great Jewish historian records that when Alexander was making his conquest of Persia, he passed through Jerusalem. Jaddua the high priest met him outside the city and entreated him to accompany him to Jerusalem. Here is Josephus in his own words:

“Alexander was escorted into Jerusalem by the high priest and his attendants. He went into the temple, where he sacrifice to God according to the high priest’s directions. And when the book of Daniel was shown to him, which predicted that one of the Greeks would destroy the Persian empire, he thought himself to be the one so designated.”<sup>8</sup>

And that’s exactly what happened—v.6-7 tell us that he made war with the ram and v.7 says “the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him. And there was no one who could rescue the

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<sup>7</sup> E.J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted 1980), pg. 168

<sup>8</sup> *Josephus: The Essential Writings*, Translated by Paul L. Maier, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Kregel Publications, 1988), pg. 199

ram from his power.” The speed at which Alexander conquered the civilized world—by the age of 26<sup>9</sup>—was predicted in v.5 when it says he didn’t even touch the ground.<sup>10</sup>

But *just as quickly* as he defeated the ram, *just as quickly* as he became the world’s superpower—whom nobody could even challenge—he was broken, v.8 says “the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.” Who are these for horns? History tells us that when Alexander died, his kingdom was divided between his four generals<sup>11</sup>—“1) Macedonia under Cassandra, 2) Thrace and Asia Minor under Lysimachus, 3) Syria under Seleucus and 4) Egypt under Ptolemy”<sup>12</sup> (cf. v.22)

### The vision of the “little horn” and its interpretation

All of this leads us inescapably to this “little horn” that rises from one of these four divisions. v.9 says that he sets his sight not only on the south and the east but on the “glorious land” meaning the land of Israel. The devastation this “little horn” brings is unspeakable.

v.11 says he “became great,” meaning exceedingly arrogant—v.25 says “in his own mind he shall become great.”

v.11 He takes away the burnt offering and overthrows the temple

v.12 He throws the truth to the ground and causes deceit to prosper (v.25).

v.13 He is responsible for “the transgression that makes desolate”

v.24 He kills the the saints of God (these are the “stars” in v.10)

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<sup>9</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *The Preacher’s Commentary, OT Vol. 21: Daniel*, (Nashville, TN.,: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988), pg. 158

<sup>10</sup> Alexander was the leopard with the four wings in Daniel 7:6.

<sup>11</sup> *Josephus: The Essential Writings*, Translated by Paul L. Maier, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Kregel Publications, 1988), pg. 200

<sup>12</sup> E.J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted 1980), pg. 168

v.25 says “he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes”—meaning God Himself.

The laser accurate precision of this prophecy leads us to none other than Antiochus Epiphanies. He came to power in 175 B.C. came from Syrian wing of the Alexandrian empire under Seleucus. He gave himself the blasphemous name *Theo Antiochus* meaning “God manifest.”<sup>13</sup> The Jews had a different name for him—Antiochus Epimanes—which means “the Madman.” And he was. Dale Davis reports of his tyranny:

He abolished the Temple worship “and the observance of the Law, and [substituted it its place] pagan cults. The observance of all Jewish ordinances, in particular those relating to the Sabbath and circumcision, was prohibited on pain of death. In every town in Judaea sacrifice was to be offered to the heathen gods. Overseers were sent everywhere to see what the royal command was carried out. Where the people did not comply willingly, they were obliged to do so by force. Once a month a check was made, and whoever was found with a scroll of the Torah or had had a child circumcised, was put to death. On...December 167 B.C., a heathen altar was built in Jerusalem...and [there on the altar of the Lord, a pig was sacrificed<sup>14</sup>]<sup>15</sup>

1 and 2 Maccabees from the Apocrypha provide the best description of the persecution that Antiochus brought to the Jewish people.

### **This empire’s chief fear**

The question here is, what do we take away from all this? Two important things: **First** the empire of the serpent, or the city of man, is afraid of the book of Daniel. Why? Because Daniel had this vision in 550 B.C., but these events dominated the world for the next 385 years. It’s history from our perspective,

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<sup>13</sup> This is perhaps the chief characteristic of antichrist—cf. Isaiah 14:13

<sup>14</sup> Bryan Chapell, *The Gospel According To Daniel*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2014), pg. 145

<sup>15</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Daniel, His Kingdom Cannot Fail*, (Downers Grove, IL.,: IVP Academic, 2013), pg. 111-112

but from Daniel's perspective it was future. This is why liberal scholars desperately want to date Daniel in the 2nd century B.C. or later. They want to say that Daniel wrote these events after the fact, because, they say, no one can predict the future. Correct. No one but God. Knowing the future is a litmus test of being God. This is how God taunts the false gods in **Isaiah 41:21-23** "... tell us what is to happen...declare to us the things to come...Tell us what is to come hereafter, *that we may know that you are gods;*"

Daniel's prophecy is either a Divine revelation or it is a fraud. As one author says "It admits of no half way measures. It is either Divine or an imposture."<sup>16</sup> Which means Daniel is a "battle-ground between faith and unbelief."<sup>17</sup> If Daniel was written after the fact, then it is a fraud. And if so, then Jesus is a fraud because He affirmed the authenticity of Daniel.<sup>18</sup> But if Jesus is a fraud, there is no Christian Faith, and you may as well throw out your Bibles. You must decide. So ask yourself: aren't the things the Bible says **about the world**—*that it is broken and getting worse*; **about you**—*that you are sinful and miserable*; **about Jesus**—*that He meets all your needs for forgiveness and righteousness*—don't you find these things more true than anything you hear from the unbelieving skeptic? Of course. No, Daniel is not a fraud. It is a revelation of the God who rules over the affairs of mankind. That's why the empire of the serpent is afraid of the Book of Daniel, because it affirms the absolute authority and sovereignty of God by showing the world it's history before it even begins. This is the God that all must bow to.

### **This empire's chief aim**

The second thing we take away from all of this is that the empire of the serpent is aiming at one primary thing: the worship of God. Notice how our author spends hardly anytime on Alexander the Great—who was one of the

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<sup>16</sup> E.J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted 1980), pg. 25

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, pg. 25

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 10:23; 16:27ff; 19:28; 24:15; 24:30; 25:31; 26:64

greatest war strategists in the history of the world—but spends nearly all of his time describing this little horn.<sup>19</sup> And we’re going to see this little horn again in later chapters. Why? Because of what the little horn is doing: he’s attacking the worship of God.<sup>20</sup> He’s attacking the very reason that God made mankind, so that He would be honored and admired, praised and prized, cherished and chased after. The worship of God is the reason we exist. What is the chief end of man? **Man's chief end** is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. The number one priority on planet earth is that God would be praised.<sup>21</sup>

**Psalm 67:3-5** “Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah* Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!”

**Romans 15:10-11** “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.” And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.”

**Philippians 4:4** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

**1 Corinthians 10:31** “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Dear congregation, the worship of God is why God made the world. There is no motive deeper in the heart of God for anything He does than worship. “For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another” (**Isaiah 48:11**). This is what the empires of this world are set on destroying. This is why Antiochus set his sights on ending the

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Iain M. Duguid, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Daniel*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 128

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 1 Macc. 1:44-47 to see how virtually all worship of God was removed, not merely one part of it.

<sup>21</sup> **The first commandment** “You shall have no other gods before me.” (**Ex. 20:3**)

burnt offering, and overthrowing the sanctuary (v.11). This is nothing less than the overthrowing of the world itself. I mean ask yourself: what is the main difference between Heaven and Hell? There is no worship in hell. Antiochus was trying to create hell on earth. The absence of worship is hell.

This is chief thing the empire of the serpent aims at: worship. Dear congregation, this *is* the battle. This is where the empire of the serpent makes it's main attack on your life: on your worship of God.<sup>22</sup> He'll use anything—good things, bad things, exciting things, boring things, threatening things, comfortable things to prevent you from worshipping God. Dale Davis tells of an experience he had overseas once:

“I recall being overseas and hearing from a married couple why they had not been in morning worship that day: their daughter had been invited to the birthday party of one of her friends. So they were ‘forced’ to miss worship. Nothing about a courteous phone call, indicating they would drop off a gift on Saturday but that as the party conflicted with their Sunday worship, their daughter would not be able to attend the party. But no; there was this ‘have to’ mode of thinking.”<sup>23</sup>

They *had* to miss worship. That is the principle aim of this little horn. Dear congregation, what are you willing to miss worship for? This isn't about *this* church, or *my* expectations. God made you for one main purpose—to love Him with all your heart and soul and mind and strength (**Mark 12:30**). This is about you coming face to face with the Living God. The worship of God is not some nebulous thing, it is the very strength of your soul. Who would you be without the worship of God? That's the fate of the devils. Without worship you will whither (**Nehemiah 8:10**). That's our **first point**: the empire of the serpent aims at destroying the very worship of God.

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<sup>22</sup> **2 Corinthians 4:4** “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

<sup>23</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Daniel, His Kingdom Cannot Fail*, (Downers Grove, IL.: IVP Academic, 2013), pg. 86-87

## II. The Empire of Our Sin (*Why* does this happen?)

### 'How long, O Lord?'

Now this event of Antiochus destroying the worship of God is so distressing that even the angels are deeply troubled. We read in v.13 "Then I heard a holy one [an angel] 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?"<sup>24</sup> He's asking 'How long will will God's people be persecuted and God's worship be profaned?' v.14 "And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state." The amount of ink spilled on this verse alone I think demonstrates that nobody definitely knows what this means. If this number means "days" then it is roughly the equivalent of Antiochus' entire reign of terror. If this number means the morning and the evening sacrifices then this number is cut in half to equal approximately 3 1/2 years which covers the time between the desecration of the temple and when the Jews rose up in the Maccabean revolt and took it back by force.<sup>25</sup> Or it could be completely symbolic pointing to "a significant but limited period of suffering on the part of the people of God."<sup>26</sup> The point is not the exact timing, but that God is Lord over the timing.<sup>27</sup> As one author has said "God has a precise calendar for [all] the events of world history, a calendar that

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<sup>24</sup> I think there is a strong connection between this verse and 1 Peter 1:10-12 Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time[a] the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

<sup>25</sup> cf. Sinclair Ferguson, *The Preacher's Commentary, OT Vol. 21: Daniel*, (Nashville, TN.,: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988), pg. 162

<sup>26</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Daniel*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 132

<sup>27</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven

is accurate to the day, yet at the same time utterly inscrutable to all human efforts to decode it.”<sup>28</sup>

### Whose transgression?

So that answers the “*how long?*” question. But what about the *why?* Why is this happening? Antiochus was going effectively destroy the temple of God and slaughter the people of God. “According to 2 Macc. 5:14, a total of 80,000 were destroyed in three days, half in fighting, the other half sold into slavery.”<sup>29</sup> If the God of Daniel is the Most High God who sets up kings, controls all time, makes nations vanish like vapor, makes kings lose their mind, protects boys from a fiery furnace, and old men from lions, then why is He giving His people over to this Madman? Look at **v.12** “And a host will be given over to it [the little horn—Antiochus] together with the regular burnt offering *because of transgression.*” This has been taken in one of two ways.

The **first** is that this transgression in **v.12**—this rebellion—refers to all these other empires culminating in Antiochus. This has merit, because **v.23** says “And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit.” God does His strange work of judgment on the wicked when their sin is full. God told Abraham that he and his descendants would not yet enter the promised land because “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” (**Genesis 15:16**).<sup>30</sup> Therefore this is happening to God’s people because these empires have rebelled against God and He permitted them to continue until their transgressions reached the limit He set, and then He would judge them. Now I think this is true. But it’s the second view which I think is the emphasis.

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<sup>28</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Daniel*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 132

<sup>29</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Daniel, His Kingdom Cannot Fail*, (Downers Grove, IL.,: IVP Academic, 2013), pg. 111 fn 14

<sup>30</sup> The Apostle Paul also spoke about the wicked Jews who were “hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!” 2 Thessalonians 2:16

The second view is that this transgression that **v.12** refers to, is the sins of God's own people. This squares with what Gabriel says to Daniel in **v.19** "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the *indignation*, for it refers to the appointed time of the end." (also cf. **v.17**) What is this indignation? This refers to the period of the exile and captivity in which God was angry with Israel.<sup>31</sup> In **Isaiah 47:5** God speaks to Israel's captors "I was angry with my people; I profaned my heritage; I gave them into your hand;" (cf. **Isaiah 10:5, 25**) So when Gabriel speaks of "*the appointed time of the end*" here, he's not referring to the end of the age when Christ returns. **Daniel 7** dealt with that. He's saying 'when Antiochus appears, this is the last part of God's anger towards His people.'

So why will Antiochus reap such slaughter among the Jews, and desecrated God's temple? Because Israel—God's people—sinned. Daniel knew this which is why he prays in **9:5** "we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules."

### **I am Antiochus**

Dear congregation, your main problem in this world, my main problem is not Antiochus, or Hitler, or liberalism, or statism, or even the Antichrist to come. The church's main problem is our own sin. This vision is a window into what causes all the conflict in the world. And Antiochus—this little horn—is the epitome of this conflict. What was his core characteristic? He refused to worship the most High God and instead worshipped himself.<sup>32</sup> That's the very essence of sin. You see Antiochus is a "figure for [fallen] humanity."<sup>33</sup> You are I

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<sup>31</sup> cf. E.J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted 1980), pg. 15

<sup>32</sup> This is God's charge against the whole world **Romans 1:21-23** "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."

<sup>33</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *The Preacher's Commentary, OT Vol. 21: Daniel*, (Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988), pg. 163

are Antiochus. He is the consummate self-centered, self-serving, self-interested, self-absorbed, self-glorifying, and self-righteous man. That is your default setting. Your greatest daily battle is your love affair with yourself. I'm not saying this to accuse you, I'm telling you what you already know by experience.

Why do you fight and argue? Because you are selfish and impatient and want things done your way. **James 4:2** "You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel."

Why are you jealous when others have more success than you? Because you are just like the disciples who fought over who was the greatest (**Luke 9:46**).

Why do you hide your failures and sins from other people. Why? Because you want them to think you more righteous than you are.

Why do you say things behind people's backs that you wouldn't say to their face? Because you like to feel superior and self-important.

You see, by your "comfortable coexistence with your cherished sins, you daily bear witness to the darkness that still remains in you heart."<sup>34</sup>

Even if I haven't listed your particular sin, I'm not concerned, because you are actually far worse than I could ever reveal. Dear congregation I know these things about you, because this is what I face. If you knew the twisted self-serving God belittling thoughts<sup>35</sup> that went on in my head you wouldn't want me to be your pastor. And if I knew yours, I wouldn't want to be your pastor. You see, you and I like ancient Israel have been unfaithful to God *even as believers*. Like Israel, we have so often chased after other gods, *even as believers*. The

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<sup>34</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Daniel*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 134

<sup>35</sup> Where is your moral outrage that God was not the main story on the news last night and every night?

question is, how will we ever make it? Why would God ever love someone like you? Why would God ever forgive someone like you? That's the position these Jewish captives were in. That's our **second point**: the empire of your own sin is your greatest enemy.

### III. The Empire of the Savior (*What* is God going to do about it?)

#### **God is the shepherd over rams and goats**

Gabriel told Daniel in **v.26** to “seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.” He didn't mean ‘keep it secret,’ but rather ‘keep it safe.’ The Jews would need this prophecy when the horror of this little horn came to pass. Then they would see, that God had appointed an end to Antiochus **v.25** says that “he shall be broken—but by no human hand.” Antiochus lived up to the name that the Jews gave him in the end. God struck him with a “bowel disease so odious that it also drove him mad.”<sup>36</sup> Perhaps that is one reason the imagery changes from monsters in Daniel 7 to sheep and goats in Daniel 8. To teach the church that our enemies are but “overgrown domestic animals” in the hands of the Divine Shepherd. That is how this first empire of the serpent is defeated. And just as easily as God deposed Antiochus, so will He depose all our enemies on the last day.

#### **The true destruction of the temple**

But the second empire of our sin would not be defeated so easily. The desecration that Antiochus brought to the temple was a horror, but there was a greater desecration to come. Remember this period of captivity was called the time of God's indignation. God was *angry* at His people. But at the very same time of His anger, He also suffered with His people. Look at **v.11** “the regular burnt offering was taken away from *him*, and the place of *his* sanctuary was overthrown.” In other words, God's sacrifice and God's temple were being

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<sup>36</sup> Bryan Chapell, *The Gospel According To Daniel*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2014), pg. 145

destroyed.<sup>37</sup> What did Jesus say in the gospels? “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (**John 2:19**). We need a sacrifice and a temple to worship God. Jesus became both.

### **The true time of God’s indignation**

The true time of God’s indignation was not when the Jews were in captivity, but when His Son was on the cross. There has never been a greater display of God’s wrath in the universe than when Jesus Christ hung on the cross for our sins. He suffered more than the cumulative sufferings of all mankind. Those who reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will suffer the wrath of God in hell, but they will never experience the fullness of His wrath. That’s why hell is eternal because there will never come “that particular moment, when it can be said, that now justice is satisfied.”<sup>38</sup> But when Jesus suffered on the cross, His last words were “It is finished” (**John 19:30**). Meaning ‘God’s wrath has been fully satisfied. The true time of indignation has been completed for all of God’s people.

### **The true abomination that causes desolation**

We look at the abomination that Antiochus committed by sacrificing a pig on God’s altar, but that’s *nothing* compared to the true abomination of sacrificing God Himself—Jesus Christ on the altar. “What worse abomination...could there ever be than crucifying God?”<sup>39</sup> Jesus didn’t become swine’s flesh, He became worse—He became a curse. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is

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<sup>37</sup> “Apparently Antiochus did not actually tear down the temple, although evidently he desecrated it to such a point that it was hardly fit for use.” E.J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted 1980), pg. 172

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Edwards quoted in John Piper’s *God’s Passion For His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards with the Complete Text of The End For Which God Created the World*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 1998), pg. 251

<sup>39</sup> Iain M. Duguid, *Reformed Expository Commentary: Daniel*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 133

hanged on a tree” (**Galatians 3:13**). Jesus was the incarnate manifestation of the damnation of God.

### **Jesus suffered for and from His own people**

And Jesus didn’t suffer solely under the beast of Rome. Jesus suffered at the hands of his own people. **John 1:11** says “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” And this is not just a Jewish problem. It’s not as if we can say that it was merely the rebellion of the Jews that placed Jesus on the cross. It was our rebellion. **1 Peter 2:24** says “He himself bore *our sins* in his body on the tree.” The sobering truth is that you are the abomination that caused the true desolation.

But dear congregation, don’t think that Jesus Christ became this abomination as a helpless victim. No, but Jesus became that abomination on the cross for you willing. Jesus said “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (**John 10:18**). Jesus is no victim. He is the one who walked in the fiery furnace with those Hebrew boys. He is the one who stayed the mouths of those lions in that den with Daniel. It wasn’t the beast of Rome that held Him on that cross. It was His love for you. “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (**Romans 5:8**). That’s God’s empire striking back—God struck His own Son so that He wouldn’t strike you. “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Dear unbeliever, isn’t that the kind of Savior that you long for? One that will take all your sins? One that will give you a perfect righteousness? One that has risen from the dead—guaranteeing that if you belong to Him you too will rise from the dead? He invites you to life with Him this morning. “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (**John 5:24**)

# Application

## Our Doctrine and Delight: God's sovereignty is the soul's anchor

We have to deal with Daniel's despair at the end of this chapter. When he saw this vision and heard Gabriel's interpretation, he says in **v.27** "And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days." The sin and suffering that Daniel saw was simply too much to bear. It made him physically sick for days. And perhaps that is where some of you are right now. You are physically sick or you are sick in the soul. I know that there are several trials happening right now in the lives of many of you that look like despair. If that's now you right now, then wait, it will come. Paul said in **2 Timothy 3:1** "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days." What do we do in terrible times? Look to the Sovereign God of Daniel. Our God is the God who takes notice when a sparrow falls to the ground. **Matthew 10:29** "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father." Your afflictions and trials and heartaches in this life do not come at you randomly. They are not from the devil. They come from the hand of a kind God. Paul writes to us **1 Thessalonians 3:3** so "that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this." We were destined for afflictions—by God. Why? David Brainerd the great missionary to the Indians asked that same question. He suffered greatly in his short life—dying at the age of 29. He pressed this question hard. 'God why these afflictions? Why not bring them to an end? Or why not just bring us home' This is how he answers

"God designs that those whom he sanctifies in part here, and intends for immortal glory, shall tarry a while in this present evil world, that there own experience of [afflictions and trials and tribulations] may teach them how great the deliverance is, which God has wrought for them, that they be swallowed up in thankfulness and admiration to [all] eternity."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol. 2*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 440

That's why God destines us to affliction down here. So we can have a greater understanding and admiration of the suffering that Jesus went through and the death and destruction that He has saved us from. Take heart, dear suffering soul, God is wielding the sword of sovereignty in your life so that you treasure Christ more. Everything is aimed at your highest joy in Him. Jesus said "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (**John 16:33**).

### Our Duty: "Go about the King's business"

Lastly after Daniel was revived from his sickness, **v.27** says "Then I rose and went about the king's business," Daniel did not stop serving God in spite of this appalling vision. We are never called to retreat from the culture even when the culture is attacking us. This is God's empire. Every part of it. Whether you are a stay at home mom who washes the dishes and changes the diapers; or a painter, or baker or carpenter or politician or lawyer or construction worker or banker or teacher. Whatever God has called you to do in this world, He wants you to continue doing His business, regardless of what the future holds. This is one of the greatest witnesses to the pagan culture. When Christians calmly continue in the king's business even in this increasingly hostile culture, it becomes a witness that cannot be silenced. Paul said in **Philippians 1:27-28** "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a *clear sign* to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God." When we continue to do the work that God has called us to do—to grow in holiness, to engage in witness, to fulfill the cultural mandate—it is undeniable and certain testimony that this is God's empire.

