



Dark Shadows: The Rise of the Antichrist Daniel 8

Summary

Daniel chapters 1 to 6 are a collection of *stories* meant to encourage the Jews to remain faithful to God in the long years of her exile in Babylon. Chapters 7 to 12 are a series of *visions* God gives to Daniel to guide his people as they prepare to return home from exile. The road ahead will not be easy. In chapter 7, Daniel's sees a vision of 4 beasts rising out of the sea, representing 4 successive empires that Israel will have to contend with. The final empire will be unlike any that have come before (clearly, Rome.) During the days of those rulers, God will set up his own kingdom on earth that will never be destroyed (cf. 2:44; Jesus through his death and resurrection.)

But Satan will not go down without a fight. A "little horn" will arise in time from that 4th empire that will oppose God and persecute his people (7: 8, 20-22). In chapter 8, Daniel's next vision zeroes in on an evil ruler (Antiochus Epiphanies IV) from the 3rd empire (Greece) that will provide a chilling picture of the future "little horn". He will be known in the New Testament as the "man of lawlessness" (2 Thess.2:1-12), the "beast" (Revelation 13), and his more familiar name "the antichrist" (1 John 4:1-4). This study explores Daniel's certainty that though evil may flourish for a season, God remains sovereign, and His ultimate victory is certain.

I. Understanding Daniel's Message

1. *Read Acts 17:26-27 and 2 Timothy 3:10-13.* Why do you think God gives Daniel these disturbing visions of evil rulers and persecution? What do these visions teach us about God's purposes and what His people should expect in this world?

2. Antiochus Epiphanes IV was a historical example of a ruler who persecuted God's people, attacked their worship, and tried to suppress God's truth. Retell his story that was shared in the sermon, or take a few minutes to look it up. What famous Jewish holiday (that is celebrated to this day) emerges from this story?

3. *Read 1 John 4:1-4.* In Daniel 7, the “little horn” comes from the 4th empire (Rome), yet in chapter 8, he comes from the 3rd empire (Greece). Rather than contradicting himself, Daniel is teaching an important biblical truth, which Jesus and the apostles would later teach:

Antichrist rulers will arise across time, leading up to a final, determined pushback of evil at the end of time.

It’s easy for Christians to get lost in the woods of end-times speculations. How does this understanding change the way we think about the Antichrist? Why is it a mistake to focus exclusively on identifying the final one?

II. Discernment In A World Of Deception

4. *Read Matthew 7:15-16.* Jesus warns in Matthew 7:15–16 that false prophets can appear harmless, even attractive, but that we will recognize them by their fruit. What kinds of fruit should Christians look for when evaluating a spiritual leader? Why can it be difficult to recognize deception early on?

5. Revelation 13 describes the endtime-antichrist as powerful and charismatic, with people marveling at him and following him. Take a few minutes to skim through the chapter, (but *don’t get sidetracked or lost in the woods!*) Why might people be attracted to a leader who opposes God's ways? What can make deception especially appealing during times of fear, uncertainty, or hardship?

III. Responding Faithfully To Evil

6. While this teaching can be difficult to hear, none of what Daniel is bringing to our attention should be surprising to God’s people at all. (In fact, God wouldn’t share it if he didn’t think we could handle it!) Read Psalm 2, then discuss why we can expect evil to not just “go away quietly in the night”. How does the reality of evil making a “last stand” to the end of the age line up with the Bible’s grand themes of *Creation – Fall – Redemption – Restoration*?

6. We ended the teaching providing five practical ways to respond to it: *Perceive, Prepare, Plead, Proclaim, and Pray*. While we will go into these more deeply when we discuss Daniel 9, write down a brief description of what you think it means? (We've given you a verse to spark some ideas.) Which of these comes most naturally to you, and which of these might you struggle with?

Perceive – *Matthew 16:1-3*

Prepare – *2 Timothy 3:12*

Plead – *Romans 12:15*

Proclaim – *Revelation 12:10-11*

Pray – *Matthew 6:13*

7. Bear said this in the sermon:

Many American Christians worship the god of comfort. We're not prepared to suffer. We're not prepared to sacrifice. We're not prepared to do without. We're undisciplined spiritually. And when hardship comes or suffering comes, it rocks our faith, makes us get all ticked at God. So many people filling churches now in days of ease and comfort, will flock to the antichrist when he comes in days of hardship and trouble.

Is Bear just being grumpy here? What spiritual habits can prepare us to remain faithful when obedience becomes costly or our faith is tested?

How does knowing that God will ultimately defeat evil shape the way we live today? What would it look like for us to live with courage and faithfulness rather than fear?

Prayer Requests