

#12 - Standing Up in a Smackdown World

1/25/2009 - Jim Johnson/Daniel 8:1-27

Daniel 8 gives us a preview of the adversaries that the people of God must face in the future. Whereas chapters 2 & 7 focused on the future Kingdoms of this world, chapter 8 focuses more on the Kings that ruled those kingdoms. This involves the second of 4 visions given to Daniel, this one just 3 years after the one given in Daniel 7. It was also during the reign of Belshazzar, the last the Babylonian King to rule. God transported Daniel in his dream from the capital of Babylon to the capital of Medo-Persia. This place called Susa near the Ulai canal. (8:1-2)

A. The first opponent – _____ the Great – 3-4, 20

Daniel is looking once again at the future Medo-Persian Empire and specifically at her king Cyrus the Great. The nation is likened to a ram with two horns. Ironically - the Ram was the national emblem of Persia. The 2 uneven horns signified the uneven alliance of the Medes and the Persians (3) The ram butted its way westward and defeated Babylon, northward to defeat Lydia, and southward to defeat Egypt.

B. The second opponent – _____ the Great – 5-8, 21-22

The goat is Greece and the big horn between his eyes represented her first and greatest King - Alexander. The speed of the Greek forces is captured here by the picture of this goat moving so fast, his feet did not touch the ground. (5) The goat started out in the west and moved to the east. Verse 7 tells us that he was enraged with the ram. Alexander was pictured on his march into the Persian Empire to settle a grudge with Medo-Persia that went back 150 years. Greece eventually won and disreplaced the Medo-Persians.

The male goat personified by Alexander magnified himself exceedingly as tyrannical world leaders are want to do. Although he was in his prime at age 33, his life was stolen by disease. The mighty horn was broken. Having no legal heir, his four strongest generals vied to replace him. No one prevailed and instead the Kingdom was divided among the four including Seleucus who took control Syria and the lands east of it. (8, 22)

C. The third opponent - _____ - 9-14, 23-25

We are still in the Kingdom of Greece as it was divided among the four horns, meaning the four generals of Alexander. Out of one of those horns another small horn sprouted. 377 years after Daniel saw his vision there arose from the Seleucidan dynasty, a man whom history calls Antiochus Epiphanes. He ruled from his capital in Antioch of Syria from 175 till 164 B.C. He conducted military campaigns to Egypt which was south of Syria, lands east of Syria and to the land of Israel, also called the Beautiful Land. (9) He wanted to unify and consolidate his realm by forcing the Greek culture and religion on all his subject nations, including the Jews. He murdered the legitimate high priest of Israel, Onias III, and replace him with an evil priest that was under his power (in 171 B.C) he forbade reading ghte Torah practicing the Sababth and circumcision. Those who disobeyed were massacred. He raided the temple, and looted it of its treasures. He then stopped the daily animal sacrifices. He erected an idol of Zeus in the Holy of Holies and then offered a pig as a sacrifice to it. This man made himself to be equal with the Commander of the hosts (11) God that it is. - Daniel was told that Antiochus would be empowered for 2,300 days. Roughly 6 1/2 years. If we use the date that Antiochus murdered the high priest as our starting point, then add 2300 days to the date 171 BC, we end up with the year 164 BC. which is about the time that Antiochus died of natural causes. (13)

D. _____ Preview of the end times.

After Daniel had received the vision, and right before it was interpreted, he meets an amazing visitor from heaven. It was the angel Gabriel who was told to help Daniel understand the meaning of the visions. (15-16) It was he that interpreted the vision.

Its puzzling in that the angel told him that the vision had to do with the end (17) the *final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.*" (19 This is unusual in that everything studied thus far in cp. 8 seems to have had an historical fulfillment. What does this have to do with the end of time? - What God did in cp. 8 was to give us Antiochus to give us a preview of what the future Antichrist will be like. Antiochus became a type of the antichrist who is yet to come. In that Greek madman we can better understand the evil character of the Antichrist.

E. The fourth opponent – _____ 23-26

This will be a very shrewd king. (23) He will be empowered by Satan himself according to the book of Revelation and he will wage a war with the people of God. (24) He will use deceit and he will seem to succeed. He will lift himself up and he will kill and destroy man when they are not expecting it. The Antichrist will even oppose and do battle with the Prince of princes, Jesus our Lord, but He will be broken with human agency. God himself will cast him into the bottomless pit. (25)

APPLICATION

Why do you suppose that God gave us this information in Daniel 8?

1. To give us a _____ of the Antichrist.

2. To give us a reason to _____ His Word.

Daniel saw this vision in about 552 BC. From there he could see King Cyrus and the ram like Medo-Persian Empire which would come 13 years later. He could see Alexander and the goat like Greece who would not come to power until over 200 years after Daniel had first seen these things. He could see to the year 175 BC to see Antiochus Epiphanes. He described him and his evil works in vivid and startling detail

God's Word has an incredible track record of reliability and accuracy. Unfortunately God's people today are not quite so impressed with the Bible.

1. Some of us believe the Bible, but only the _____ that we like.

2. Some of us are _____ about the Bible.

3. Some of us assume the Bible to be an _____ source of truth.

God's Word has been proven in the _____, and can therefore be trusted for today and tomorrow.

The book of Daniel was given to us for a time like this. The prophecies written in Daniels' book were fulfilled hundreds of years later with a startling degree of accuracy. God has given us abundant evidence that His word can be trusted.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. Just for fun, pull on an online Encyclopedia (wikipedia.com) and look up Antiochus Epiphanes. Compare what you find there to the predictions that Daniel made about him 350 years earlier.
2. Is there an area of the Word of God that you have trouble in trusting?
3. How does this study of Daniel 8 impact your faith?