

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE #15

Introduction

The best sermon I heard last year was delivered by a young Pastor from Santa Rosa, CA. He was commenting on the current condition of American culture comparing it to Daniel and his friends living in Babylon.

Chad King

Do you feel the shifting tide like I do? A confusion like the Tower of Babel. With what's coming, American cultural Christianity as practiced, will quickly become irrelevant. We will need a worldview that equips us to survive and thrive in the midst of a Babylonian culture.

Chad King

Our nation is transitioning, and most don't know how to live in a world like this. We will have to get better at living in conditions that aren't Christian. This is essentially the same thing the Lord has been speaking to me...

Theme

Our current culture of American Christianity is largely unprepared for the escalation of political persecution that is coming to our door.

We are unprepared because there has been virtually no teaching in the American church on the subjects of suffering for the sake of the Gospel or being persecuted for righteousness' sake. So I'm entitling tonight's message...

Prepared For Persecution

I. Prepared for Persecution

A. Many Do Not Know That Persecution is Promised

1. The last and least mentioned of the 8 Beatitudes pertains to persecution:

Matthew 5:11-12

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is our reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

a. Notice He did not say IF they revile and persecute you; He said WHEN.

2. Jesus prepared His disciples for persecution by promising them to expect it.

John 15:20

Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

3. The Apostle Paul taught the same thing; in the last letter he ever wrote he listed how he had suffered for Christ and then promised all of us the same.

2 Timothy 3:12

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

4. It's my personal opinion that we American pastors don't preach on persecution because:

a. First, it is certainly not a 'seeker-friendly' sermon subject; telling people next Sunday's sermon will be "Prepared for Persecution" might not be a good marketing idea.

b. But secondly, we don't talk much about suffering and persecution because, up to now, American Christians haven't had much persecution to suffer over.

5. But all that is about to change because the antichrist forces of Marxist/Socialism now run the government. Dr. David Reagan tells what comes next:

Dr. David Reagan

***Socialism always results in religious persecution* since Socialists by their very nature are not religious and, in fact, hold religion in contempt. They are Humanists who believe in Man rather than God.**

a. How can he say, "Socialism ALWAYS results in religious persecution"? Look at history!

b. Any nation stupid enough to vote in the socialists will have to endure religious persecution as a result.

6. Socialists make socialism sound so good. They often use ‘Christian’ sounding language. But they never tell you their true endgame is not socialism, it is totalitarianism; the kind of government control that will always include the persecution of Christians.

Ludwig von Mises

Totalitarianism is the subordination of every individual’s whole life, work, and leisure, to the orders of those in power and office. It is the reduction of man to a cog in an all-embracing machine of compulsion and coercion. It forces the individual to renounce any activity of which the government does not approve. It tolerates no expression of dissent.

7. We began to get a glimpse of this a year ago as the socialist/totalitarians used the Corona crisis as an excuse for invading every area of our lives: face mask mandates; lockdowns of schools, businesses, and churches.

a. They told us where we could go or not go; who we could be with and how many.

8. The shocking thing is that most American Christians went with these mandates without a whimper. Many even voted to put the perpetrators of these policies into power!

a. Pantywaist Pastors went silent; deceived disciples voted for the pro-abortion party; some didn’t vote at all!

9. The Spirit of God was so grieved over the pathetic performance of the Church in the last election He directed me to do this series on “Holy Violence”; to remind the Church we are in a spiritual battle with evil itself.

Larry Alex Taunton

C. S. Lewis called Christianity a “fighting religion.” Think on that. These days, such a statement strikes a somewhat absurd note with a generation that has never known war, privation, or suffering in defense of anything, much less suffering in defense of noble ideals.

10. Up to now being a Christian in America’s been a piece of cake. But that’s about to change, as we will now see from the Book of Daniel.

11. If you haven't been with us we have been pulling some prophetic parallels of Daniel's captivity in Babylon that compare with what American Christians will soon experience.

12. The first test, in Chapter One, was a 'test at the table'; it was very private; it was over something simple as what to eat; he was offered the king's meat and wine.

Daniel 1:8

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat nor his wine.

a. This is critical to the rest of the story because it teaches us the kind of courage it will take to stand for God in an alien culture.

13. Daniel passed the test and received a promotion. But as we move on into the Book, we discover that what began as a simple test of private faith moves into some seasons of public persecution.

14. Living under a Babylonian political system will always expose the people of God to progressive levels of persecution.

II. Babylon: Progressive Levels of Persecution

A. Choosing Your Battles

1. Living in Babylon will require us to have wisdom in choosing our battles.
2. Not every government regulation will require us to resist:
 - a. Daniel and his friends did not resist being taken into Babylon.
 - b. They did not resist when they changed their names.
3. They *did* resist eating and drinking from the king's table; because obedience to the king's law would have required breaking God's law.
4. The Holy Spirit within us will give us guidance on these things in our time.

5. The message is that, at some point, we will have to resist the king's command; and when that time comes it will require us to take a *risk*.

6. This first test is taken in private; the risk is not so great; if things did not go well they might have been ousted from the palace and put into manual labor but there is no evidence that their lives were at risk.

7. All that changes in Chapter 3; the test moves from private to public and to disobey means it might cost them their lives.

B. Context of the Next Test in Chapter 3

1. They passed the private test in Chapter One; in chapter 2 Daniel interprets the king's dream and receives a promotion for it. But in Chapter 3, the stakes get raised.

2. The king constructs a giant golden image of himself and demands that everyone worship it.

Daniel 3:1

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

a. Then he gathers all the political and judicial powers in the land for the dedication ceremony.

Daniel 3:2-3

And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up...and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Daniel 3:4-6

Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever

does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

3. When you live under a Babylonian political system, sooner or later, the crisis will come over the issue of "WHAT WILL YOU WORSHIP?"

Ralph Waldo Emerson

What we are worshipping is what we are becoming.

- a. The world system is piping a tune; making a certain 'sound'; demanding that we "Dance to the Music".
- b. Now, as then...

4. Most of the people go right along with the king!

Daniel 3:7

So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

5. But Daniel's friends disobey the king; and are ratted out to the king:

Daniel 3:8-11

But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. They said to King...You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments. That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace.

Daniel 3:12

"But there are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

6. This is what we have today; the party in power is playing a tune and marking out those who refuse to bow down to it!

- a. "Lists" are being made of their political enemies

b. Algorithms are being used to identify those who dare to defy the messaging of the fake news media.

c. And man were they made about it!

Daniel 3:13-14

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?"

Daniel 3:15

Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

7. This is happening today; those in authority are threatening the people of faith; don't think this kind of persecution isn't coming. We need to pray we can answer as they did...

Daniel 3:16-17 NASB

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. "But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

8. What follows is the amazing miracle of their deliverance from the fiery furnace; one of the most famous stories in the Bible. God delivered them; and even promoted them!

Daniel 2:48

Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 3:30

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

9. But what if God had not delivered them and promoted them?

- a. Millions of Christians have been killed by socialist governments.
- b. Peter was crucified; Paul was beheaded.
- c. Stephen was stoned.

10. We are promised persecution in this world; we are not promised deliverance. Look what they said...

Daniel 3:17-18

"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

a. Notice 3 things here:

- God is able to deliver us
- But even if He does not deliver us
- We will not serve your gods or the golden image you have set up!

11. This ought to be our position on persecution!

III. Conclusion

We are now living under a Babylonian system of government where there will be an escalating persecution of people of faith.

The testing of our faith will move from private to public; the risk or cost of disobedience or resistance will become greater.

The prudent person will be prepared for persecution and pass the test of faith.

1. As of right now, our persecution has been minimal and private.

- a. Gasoline has risen 60 cents a gallon since the election
- b. Mask wearing mandates are a pain
- c. Our kids can't go to school

2. But what will we do when these little private persecutions go public?

- What will you do if the vaccine becomes a mandate?
- What will you do when your school allows boys in your little girl's locker room?
- What will you do as a business owner if ESG scores become national policy? (A set of standards used by socially conscious investors to screen potential investments) Companies and businesses with low ESG scores will have no place to go for business loans or opportunity to sell stock. Only businesses with high ESG scores will qualify for investment. Conservative owned business with low ESG scores will go out of business.
- What will you do if they come for your guns?
- What will we do when preaching from the Bible is banned as 'hate speech'?
- What will churches do when they are required to hire gay people?
- What will we do if they close down our churches?

3. I can almost hear some who hear this sermon accuse me of gloom and doom; they will say God will never let it get that bad. These are the same people who were saying a few months ago that it would never get this bad!

Proverbs 22:3

A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.

B. 3 Practical Things That Can Prepare Us For Persecution

- Purpose in your heart not to be defiled by the world
 - Make up your mind to take a stand for the Lord
 - Recognize the risk and count the cost; prepare for persecution if it comes
1. **Daniel purposed in his heart**; at the core of his being he pre-determined that he would not be defiled by the world; he would serve God no matter what
 2. Make up our minds to take a stand for the Lord when the time comes

1 Peter 1:13

Gird up the loins of your mind...

Prepare your minds for action...

Albert Barnes

The meaning here is that they were to have their minds in constant preparation to discharge the duties, or to endure the trials of life in the same way they would prepare for work, for a race, or for a conflict.

- a. The days will soon be upon us when neutrality is not an option.
- b. A true disciple will be forced to become a ‘dissident’.

“Dissident”

A person who opposes official policy, especially that of an authoritarian state.

c. For many years we let the great Rush Limbaugh speak up for us; Rush is dead; it’s time for us to speak up!

4. Recognize the risk; count the cost; be prepared for persecution.

Larry Alex Taunton

Too many Christians today are risk-averse. They prefer the safety of the family life center to engaging the culture in any way that might cost them something. God forbid they might sacrifice their wealth or comfort, endure the social media mob, or be excluded from the neighborhood barbeque.

Larry Alex Taunton

The highest calling of a Christian is not to be civil; it is to be salt and light. To stand strong for one’s faith in Jesus Christ and push back at a culture that, in the words of Isaiah 5:20, ‘calls evil good and good evil’ is today seen to be ‘divisive’, ‘unloving’, ‘bigoted’, and ‘intolerant’.

Larry Alex Taunton

This is because the Church has confused Christ’s command to love others with being civil as if that were an attribute of God. (It isn’t.) As a consequence, a superficial, self-righteous, good-for-nothing pietism has displaced authentic Christianity in many of the roughly four hundred thousand churches in America. This doctrinal malpractice has given us a generation of men, Christian and otherwise, who are what C.S. Lewis called “men without chests.”

- a. It’s up to each of us to hear from the Holy Spirit as to what this will look in our own lives.

4. I recently heard an amazing sermon on the Book of Daniel from Pastor Chris De Witt from Hope Central Church in Highlands, South Africa.

a. He closed the message with a challenge to each believer:

Pastor Chris De Witt

Hope Central Church, Highlands, South Africa

Where is the Lord calling you to take a stand that involves a risk? It could be very private: in your finances, your relationships, you finances. It could be speaking up for Jesus in a situation where that might be taken very badly.

b. He ended with this prayer:

Pastor Chris De Witt

Lord, would you show me? I don't want to blend. I don't want to assimilate. Then prayerfully pick something, no matter how small, and name it as such; an area where you have been tempted to compromise but now you're going to say, 'No more!'

In Jesus' name, Amen!