

Word notes Sunday 22/04/2012 Michael Meeks
Daniel 7 – take 1

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Text: Daniel 7

Biblical prophecy can sometimes seem obscure or difficult to understand, especially when they use imagery as strange as the beats found in Daniel 7. Yet these texts were recorded to inform and edify those who read them so that they might recognise the times and prepare. Jesus himself told a parable about the importance of prophecy – the tale of Lazarus the beggar in Luke 16. The summary was that “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.” Prophecy prepares us for what God is going to do and invites us to respond. As a result of many prophecies in the scriptures, including and perhaps especially Daniel 7, people at the time of Jesus were expecting the Messiah and this is shown by other writers such as Josephus when they refer to other would be leaders who rose up claiming to be the messiah and who were killed by the Roman forces.

How do we understand the images in this chapter? Michael told us the cardinal rule: “Context is king” and explained how chapter 7 relates to chapter 2 and which beats related to historical kings or rulers – and these would be those who ruled over the people of God rather than having global 20th century implications. There is a clear sequence of “rulers” culminating in the establishment by the Ancient of Days (God) of a ruler who was “given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” – also Dan 2:44. Clearly from our understanding of all scripture this must be the Christ. The sequence is: 1, King Nebuchadnezzar (7v4, 2:38), 2, The kingdom of the Medes and Persians (7v5, 2:39), 3, The empire of Alexander (7v6, 2:39) and 4, the Roman empire (7v7, 2:40).

And so it would be clear to those who looked for what was happening in the world and sought to understand that it would be after this fourth set of foreign rulers that God would establish His everlasting Kingdom through the Messiah (the rock cut from the mountain in Dan 2:45). John the Baptist knew this was the time and proclaimed the coming of the messiah and Jesus refers to this (John 5:31:35).

Just as John the Baptist and others were expecting and welcomed the Messiah in their day from an understanding of the scriptures and revelation from God, so we too can read this prophecy and decide what it means about the person of Jesus and his mission to establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Will we see the great rescue plan of God for his people Israel and will we see how we too are included and invited (Dan 7:14)? What will be our response – who is this rock cut from the mountain but not by men, the one “like a son of man”? Will we acknowledge Jesus as that “Son of Man” he claimed to be and fall at his feet in worship or like Nebuchadnezzar fail to learn from these and end up in disaster?

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

Do you have any favourite futurist predictions that didn't work out?

What sources do people use to tell them what is going to happen tomorrow, this year, the next 5 years?

What should God's people trust and how is this different from other sources?

Why do you think God uses imagery rather than times, dates and names? Have you seen this prophecy in a different way as a result of Michael's talk?

How does this and other similar prophecies affect our faith and our walk with Jesus?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

What concerns about the future do non-Christians have? How can we share our hope in Jesus to meet these concerns?