

Word Notes Sunday 08/07/2012 Michael Meeks
Daniel 8

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

Key Text: Daniel 8

Don't be put off by the ending – "I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding." With the benefit of history we can have a much better understanding that Daniel. This vision comes at a time some 10 years before the "Writing on the Wall" incident so well before the ending of captivity for the Jews. The writings now move from Aramaic to Hebrew as an indication that while the previous judgements had been on the pagan kings this judgement is on the people of God.

Listen to Michael's talk for details of the vision and who the various beasts are (Gabriel tells us the main players in verses 15-25). In v17 Daniel is concerned about the times of the end – this is not THE END but an ending of a particular arc of the Jews story and as Gabriel continues with the explanation of the vision it is clear this is not the end times. The judgement on Israel described can be placed in history as the repression and persecution brought about by one of the four kingdoms that followed the breakup of the Alexandrian Empire – specifically that of Antiochus IV also known as Antiochus Epiphanes. His oppression and desecration of the Jewish people, Jerusalem and the Temple is told of in the apocrypha book of 2 Maccabees.

Why was this judgement coming their way, what were their sins? Put simply: complacency, compromise, indifference and accommodation. For example Jewish men were embarrassed by their circumcision as required by God under the Law so they developed a surgical procedure that made it look like they were not when they exercised nude (part of the Hellenic influence Antiochus brought in). So Antiochus made circumcision illegal. See Haggai and Malachi for a run down of the Jews complaints against God, the judgement foreseen by Daniel in his vision is the result of their growing indifference to God.

In Hebrews 12:5 we are told not to make light of God's discipline but to see how it is a way to grow closer. Back in the times of Daniels vision described in chapter 8 and 2 Maccabees their love grew cold and they turned to follow and worship Antiochus. NB Epiphanes is the same word as Epiphany – the coming of God to be with man, he was taking divinity for himself – taking God's place. He even had coins struck with the usual picture of Zeus on a throne but with his face.

But God will not be mocked and the same is true today. The difference today is that to honour God we turn to the cross and to be saved from judgement we look to Christ. When Peter was called to give an account of the healing of a crippled man he ended with these words: "Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).

Remember - there is another beast or animal of visions - The Lamb who alone is worthy to open the scroll, who sacrifices himself for us so we can know the goodness of God and have relationship with Him.

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

Daniel's vision concerns a time of judgement coming for the Jews (even though they are not yet out of exile for previous misdeeds!).

How many instances of God's judgment on those he has chosen can you recall?

Why was it necessary for God to keep putting them back on the right track?

What was God's ultimate answer?

Read Hebrews 12:1-11.

Is discipline a thing just for the Old Testament? What is different today?

Why does God discipline his people, what is His intended outcome (hint – vv10 & 11)?

What has been the fruit of God's discipline in your life? How did it come about?

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

If you've "read the end of the book" you'll know what awaits us all at the real END TIMES. How does this shape your relationships with others – are you a "fire and brimstone" or a love, justice and mercy evangelist? How did Jesus do it?