

Word Notes Sunday 14/10/2012 Michael Meeks
Daniel 9 pt 2

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

Key Text: Daniel 9:20-27

This section of Daniel is probably one of the more difficult to interpret and apply – yet God has given all scripture to bless us, one way might be to give us the opportunity to learn how to bear with other Christians of different views.

Disagreement between followers of Jesus is handled in a spectrum of ways in scripture. At one end there is Paul's urge that we accept the one whose faith is weak and each other as God accepts us all and not pass judgement. If certain foods are "unclean" according to another then for him they are and we can respect that while not applying it to ourselves (Rom 14). At the other end in Galatians 1:9 Paul clearly says that anyone preaching a different Gospel is condemned or cursed. Somewhere in the middle there is the gentle but firm correction – eg in 1 Corinthians Paul addresses the "brothers" 19 times to bring correction and very definitely in love.

How does Paul differentiate – at the gentle end there are the "disputable matters", at the other "indisputable" ie those things of the gospel which are fundamental to our salvation and relationship with the Lord – the yardstick is set out by Paul in 1 Cor 15 1,2. How then do we deal with our differences? The human way is often to escalate every difference from minor to major, to put it towards one end of the "dealing with differences" spectrum or the other. Sadly this does not lead to us building one another up in faith. 1 Co 8:1 shows the way: "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." Whatever we "know" about disputable matters we should always seek to build up in love.

What you think about the passage from Daniel does not determine your salvation, whether you hold the Critical View, the Dispensational View or the Traditional View or no clear view at all! Michael set out the basic interpretations of each of these main views within the wider body of Christianity and we probably know people who hold to one or other of them even within our small fellowship. However we can all agree that "the end" will come and whether it's before, after or during the millennium, whether we see an age of dispensation or any of the varied interpretations of eschatological scripture turn into real events the important questions are more: "Are you ready?" or "Are you longing for that Day?" and to be urgently asking the Lord to hasten his return to end the suffering of the world. Even if we do not feel comfortable speaking to people about judgement and hell (though to avoid it completely is not right either) we can all tell people of our expectation for the Lord's return and the joy it will bring to those who know him now.

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

Michael gave an example of Celebrating Christmas to show that there are different views, even within Evangelical Christianity, about the validity of the festival. What range of views and practices on this are there within the group? If there is full harmony what about those who might not want to celebrate a formerly pagan festival or who deny Father Christmas his place?

Is Christmas a "disputable" matter, as Romans 14:1 would say, what are your reasons for saying so?

How big a jump is it from such a thing as celebrating a festival (or not!) to our understanding of end times? Are our views and interpretation of the Dan 9 scripture disputable or indisputable or something of a mixture – give your reasons.

In 1 Cor 15 Paul sets out a raft of "indisputable" matters. Which ones can you identify that relate to the "end times". Are Paul's words more useful than Daniel 9 or less when seeking to reach the lost?

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

Discuss around the group what are the crucial "indisputable" matters that we should know, understand and be ready at all times to speak about to others? How comfortable are we in being able these? How do disputes amongst Christians look to those outside the church? What can we do about that?