

Daniel 8 - John Karmelich

Greetings everyone. We're now about 2/3 through the book, and into the dreaded prophesy section. I'll just say if you can handle this section of the book, you can handle any part of the bible. With that said, as always I welcome you to read this lesson. Hopefully you'll learn a few things not just about history, but how we can be a good witness for God, which in essence is the main purpose for living. The reason God gave us His Word is to teach us how He expects us to live and yes that includes this chapter! With that said, let's begin:

Most of us have dealt with the famous question, "Do you want the bad news first or the good news?" I suspect most of us would choose the bad news first to get it over with! In effect, Chapter 8 is the "bad" and Chapter 9 is the "good". I'll come back to that tease in a second. Realize that from Chapter 8 until the end of the book is a return to the Hebrew language from the Aramaic language that we've had since Chapter 3. OK so what? It's because those chapters focused on messages given to the world on what I call a testimony to God's existence. Chapters 8 to the end of the book focuses on what the Israelites did and will face that are really bad news (think mass murders) leading up to the Antichrist coming prior to the Messiah (i.e., Jesus) showing up. So if the rest of the book is for Jewish people why should I care? Because the bad news of Chapter 8 and the rest of the book deals with dealing with suffering in general and that's something all of us can relate to at times!

Before I get into the specifics of Chapter 8, let me ask the classic question: why does God allow evil to exist?" As radio personality Dennis Prager says, "Religious people must wrestle with that question but non-religious people must explain everything else, such as why does world exist and what's our reason for living if ultimately the world has no purpose?" As tough as a question the existence of evil is, that's the hardest question we religious people wrestle with. I'd answer that question by reminding us that the God we worship allows freewill and our world is corrupted by sin. Obviously I can't explain the horrid things I've seen in my life including ways some devout Christians suffer ways prior to dying. With that said, Chapter 8 explains the future (from Daniel's time) that will for the Middle East, as well as parts of Europe and Asia). The chapter leads up to a horrible man who ruled over Israel about 150 years before Jesus was on the scene. That bad guy was responsible for the death of over 100,000 Israelites then, and the danger of "Jew hatred" continues throughout their history and when the "end times" come, it means the "Antichrist" will be even worse than even Hitler was for the Jewish people as scary as thought is!

So why did God give these warnings? Why not preview about say, Hitler while he was writing? What I'm reminded of is a classic speech that religious Jewish people state on Passover. It's to remember that every generation of Jewish people must deal with persecution. Why? One reason is the Jewish nation's the one who introduced the world to the concept of God, sin and accountability. Another reason is due to the promise that God will rule the world from Jerusalem one day. That's standard Christian doctrine and religious Jewish people believe in a Messiah who will permanently rule there! I'm getting into this because Chapter 8 is full of bad news about future Jewish persecution. It reminds us that when we deal with our own suffering we've got to realize God's still in control and He allows suffering to occur that's horrible to put it simply. Remember if there is no next-life, this world is a very unfair place to live.

That leads to my final point before I get into the chapter itself. Why give all these details about what is going to happen to Israel over the next few centuries after Daniel, then a few brief comments about the Antichrist (for lack of a better term) when he appears? Part of it is so that we realize God knows all of the future including the horrid things that happen to His chosen people! Part of it is to realize we know it'll happen and again God still calls us to make a difference for Him in spite of all of that! In summary

this chapter is here to remind us that evil exists, and horrible things occur in life and God's aware of all of it even though it seems like He doesn't care about us, which is one of Satan's greatest lies!

With all of that out of my system, time to break down and talk about Chapter 8 itself. Recall that in the book of Daniel, Chapters 1-6 are snippets in Daniel's long life in Babylon around 600BC. The next six chapters are in effect appendices that occur during the time period of the first six chapters. Chapter 8 takes place 2 years after Chapter 7, and 12 years before Babylon was destroyed by another empire. It's easy to just say "Daniel must be late dated" because this chapter names by name the Persian Empire as well as the Greek Empire which historically took place exactly as Daniel says it does. Also realize that the entire Old Testament was translated into Greek in 270 BC, including Daniel. What we read here in this chapter gives detailed predictions about what happens about 100 years after that date.

In short, the first part of the chapter describes Daniel seeing a vision where he's standing in the city that became the capital of the Persian Empire. It is about 250 miles away from Babylon. Since Daniel was a top government person there, he would recognize that city and gave some details to identify it. What is significant is Daniel, (12 years prior to the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire, the two groups united to be a large empire) described this vision as a ram with two horns. This vision uses animal references for the empires that conquered the known world at that time. Then Daniel's vision showed a goat with one horn (goats have two!) that conquered the ram. This chapter says bluntly the ram is the Persian Empire and the goat was the Greek empire! If you're not familiar with Alexander the Great, he conquered what we call Greece to parts of India in about ten years. This chapter describes a goat that moves so fast that it didn't touch the ground. Alexander died at the age of 33. After that a 20 year fight occurred over who would run that empire. It ended up being split into four parts. One got based north of Israel (what we'd call Syria today). One was based south of Israel in Egypt. The point is those two kingdoms fought for centuries with Israel in the middle as they attacked each other.

By the way, for those who doubt this is God's word, there was a Jewish historian named Josephus, who lived around the time of Jesus. He wrote a book on Jewish history. He records that when Alexander the Great came to Jerusalem, they showed him an old Daniel scroll (who lived 200 years before Alexander conquered that area). Alexander was so impressed by reading Daniel and figured out it was about him, that he spared Jerusalem from destruction from reading that book!

Anyway back to the story. As I said, two of the four empires that descended from Alexander fought in that area with Israel in the middle for centuries. Eventually a horrible man called Antiochus Epiphanes the Fourth ruled about 150BC. He desired to be worshipped as God. He killed the Jewish high priest as a "warm up act"! Then he sacrificed a pig in the temple, made it a death sentence to read the bible as it existed to that date. He also made circumcision a death sentence and did all he could to cause havoc in Israel. In the Roman Catholic bible, there are 2 Old Testament books called the "Maccabees". The first one describes this historical event in detail. It's not part of the Protestant or Jewish bibles. Scholars say that those books are historically accurate, just not God inspired. Bottom line, Daniel says in Chapter 8 this bad guy who caused havoc for exactly 2300 "evenings and mornings". The first book of Maccabees describes a successful revolt that ended the 2300 period to the day! That caused Temple worship to be restored. That temple restoration is what the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah's about. The Gospels tell us Jesus attended a Hanukkah festival in John 10:22. Anyway, Chapter 8 warns the Israelites about what Antiochus did. It became obvious in history of what Daniel saw in his vision.

That leads to the final few verses of the chapter, that predict about the Antichrist. One of the things we read in the Gospels we're told to watch for the desolation of the temple just as Antiochus did, but Jesus described it as a future event (Mark 13:14). To state the obvious as bad as that guy was, what Hitler did

was worse and I believe when the Antichrist comes on the scene it'll be even a scarier time for them! I am positive God knows the "end from the beginning" (all of history in advance. He gives His people a few warnings about the bad times to come. As I said at the start of this lesson, a Jewish prayer is every generation must face their own "bad guys" who will try to destroy the Jewish nation.

OK John so what? Yes this is horrible and we all know history is full of tragic stories. How does any of this affect my life now? It's a reminder that evil exists, God knows that and He still wants us to use our lives as a witness for Him in spite of evil! Realize Jesus didn't pray to remove us from the world, but to protect us from the evil one! The bible warns us evil's an issue (and tragedies) and we must accept that there are people and demonic forces opposed to God's plans for mankind exist. Daniel 8 reminds us He knows all the horrible things that occur in world history including our lifetime. Thank God that eternity is well eternal! As tough as life is, it goes quickly. It doesn't mean we're to give up, but that we're to be a witness for God in this life as long as possible no matter the circumstance!

Finally I said there is good news. It is a detailed prediction about Jesus First and Second Coming that's prominent in Chapter 9. We'll discuss that over the next two lessons. Until then, thanks for reading!

Yes my description of this chapter went long but it's a complicated chapter. One of the hardest to deal with in terms of historical knowledge and future predictions.

If interested, there are two other links on this chapter. They are for a more detailed lesson that I wrote about 20 years ago. Of course, you're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John