

Daniel 11 (Part 1) - John Karmelich

If you've been reading my studies for a while, you know I love to ponder the question, "Why does God want this text here and how does it apply to our lives?" With that in mind, realize Chapter 11 is mostly a "history written in advance" lesson. It's so accurate, bible critics insist it's late dated. That criticism is not valid as Daniel got translated to Greek about 270BC with the entire Old Testament. It's a historical fact! Part of this text accurately describes history after that date! With that stated, I'm not going to get into every detail of how this text describes 300-400 years of history from Daniel's time. If you believe the bible is God's word and accept He knows all things (Isaiah 46:10 states that fact), then it should not bother us that a section of the bible blatantly describes part of Israel's history as well as the surrounding nations for hundreds of years! My question of course is why does it do that and why should we care?

First we got to remember that the bible isn't just for us. This section in effect describes many hundreds of years when war occurred in the land of Israel. Obviously a lot of Israelites died due to those wars. I would argue this text is in effect a warning to them that hard times are ahead. That leads to the logical question: If it's that bad, why didn't God do something to stop it? The answer is the same reason God wants us to grasp the reason this is in the bible: The fear of death is one of the things most people fear. For those of us who believe in God, the big question is "What happens next? How do I get judged? Do I have to suffer horrible things, like a war, and be caught up in that? A reason God allows suffering is to get people to focus on Him. As I've always stated, if there's no next life, this one is very unfair! As I like to say, the purpose of life is to glorify God. The issue isn't how long do we live, but what did we do with the time God has given us? Let's be honest, to be faced with death "right in the face" is a good motivation to get our focus on Him!

So if that's true why isn't all history that bad? For most of human history, suffering and facing death in the face (so to speak) is a reality. Even if we live in a world of relative peace, God wants us to consider our relationship with Him as much as we can, and nothing does that like facing death! Anyway, as we read this section of scripture, again it covers the time period of life in and around Israel from soon after Daniel died all the way to close to the time Jesus came on the scene. Realize around Verse 36, the text in effect jumps to the end time "Antichrist" stuff and some versus about Jesus return. So if you think it this lesson is strange, the next lesson really "jumps off the deep end" as we finish Daniel over the next two lessons.

I stated some lessons back that a good number of chapters in the book of Daniel predict things that will occur in the Middle East leading up to the time of Jesus then it jumps to end time stuff. Why? I believe it's because of something Paul noticed: The Old Testament doesn't cover the time that the church exists in the world. He called this idea a mystery (Ephesians 5:32). I'm just trying to explain why Daniel and other bible books jump from the immediate future all the way to "end times" when I'd argue the church is no longer here! Remember this part of Daniel is written in Hebrew. It's to tell the Israelites what they can expect over the next 400 years after Daniel. For us it is one big reminder that the threat of death is always there as none of us know how long we will live. We should make the best use our time for the reason God created us which is to glorify Him with our lives!

In the lesson itself I'll describe on a verse-by-verse basis, how this text states history in advance with a lot of actual historical background that involves the Persians who ruled after Daniel's time, then about the Greeks who ruled after that. That rule was due to Alexander the Great. The text tells us his family was killed so there was no successor. That led to his four generals setting up four empires that ruled for centuries. It included one based in Egypt (just south of Israel) and one in Syria (just north of Israel). It

meant the Israelites would be caught in a long running war between those groups for centuries. We get an implication to the rise of the Romans as well as a reference to Cleopatra's grandmother (who had the same name!) We'll discover this text it is very historically accurate and it reads like "history recorded in advance". It also reads like a game of thrones and in that sense the details are interesting to read!

Again, my emphasis isn't on learning history, but understanding how the bible relates to our lives. God wants us to know this stuff not to be an expert on history in that era. It's to get our focus on Him as we deal with life! To face death "head on" means we got to focus on eternal life and what that means to us for the long term! I suspect that's the underlying reason why this is here.

Let me pause at this moment to explain why I'm stopping mid-chapter. The later part of Chapter 11 and Chapter 12 switches focus from past tense to future tense. However, it doesn't switch "on a dime". It is if the past tense (from our perspective) is getting "blurry" and the future tense (end times) becomes the key focus. It's significant if for no other reason, than the fact that Jesus told us to be aware of what did happen here will happen again in the "end times". If He says so, who am I to argue? It is not to assume we'll be alive whenever that is. It's to realize Jesus wants us to know that stuff. Obviously I'll explain it more in the next lesson. I'm just explaining why I'm "jumping off the deep end" on all of this prophesy stuff! In the meantime, we still need to focus on the strange text here for one week.

With all of that out of my system, let me give a few highlights of Daniel's summary of 400 years of the Middle East history. This story started in Chapter 10 and took place in the third year since the Persians took over Babylon and set up their own empire. Chapter 11 opens with the fact that the same angel did strengthen that king as he gave the order for the Israelites to return to that land. Only about 40,000 took up that offer. Then the vision starts to describe "future history": It says there will be four more Persian kings and then a big war with Greece. That war led to the rise of Alexander the Great. After he set up a major empire that ruled a large chunk of that world he died at a young age. His children and relatives were killed and the empire went to his four generals who split it in four parts. As I said one of them set up "shop" in Egypt and another in Syria. It meant for centuries those two empires fought with Israel in the middle. In effect it ends with a horrible man called Antiochus IV. He becomes a model of what the Antichrist will do, as well as a model of what happen to Israel when it was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. I'll discuss "the 4th" more in the next lesson as Jesus Himself makes a reference to that guy!

In summary, once one understands what Daniel's describing in incredible accuracy, it's telling us about a lot of horrible things that occurred for about four hundred years after Daniel lives. Jesus Himself tells us that what Daniel wrote here needs to be studied as it will be repeated in history! Again, I don't think God wants us to know this to learn Middle East history. It is to realize God knows all things. It means nothing we can do or have done shocks Him! Since He knows history in advance, In effect He's telling us that trouble is part of life. The only thing we can control is our attitude about it! Thinking about all of these horrible things reminds us that life here is short and there is a judgment for all people. That is why this is here, to remind us of that unpleasant to think about but necessary fact. Now that I've scared everyone half to death, I invite you to read what I wrote on this chapter about 20 years ago! There are 2 links on this section of the book are a more detailed lesson that I did write about twenty years ago. You are welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John