

Introduction

The visions continue but they seem to get more specific. This one concerns two empires (the Medes/Persians and the Greeks) followed by a particularly nasty “horn” (king) who turns out to do serious damage to God’s people. We might well ask why we need to know about this in the Bible? The king concerned turns out to be Antiochus IV who was a nasty piece of work. But God is kind in giving his people ample warning (about 350 years!) of what will happen to them so they are not surprised when the events come along. It was after all one of the most horrific periods in the people’s history. Calvin puts it this way: “For if nothing had been predicted, the pious would have glided gently downwards to despair in consequence of their heavy afflictions....If this had not been predicted, they would have thought themselves deceived by the splendid promises concerning their return [to the land from exile]. But when they perceived everything happening according as they been forewarned, this became a great encouragement in the midst of their woes.” And even though these events are now past, we too can take encouragement that God knows what he’s doing and has told us ahead of time of troubles to come (John 16:1).

Questions for Discussion

What’s your reaction when you hear on the news of the latest atrocity committed by the new tyrant on the world stage, or a rogue group out for domination and recognition?

How does it affect your view of God and his control of the world?

Daniel 8 teaches us that nasty kings will come and go, and yet remarkably God has told us ahead of time to prepare us!

[Again, like chapter 7’s study, we’ll study the passage thematically, as opposed to strictly verse by verse, to enable us to understand clearly what Daniel is teaching us]

vv1-8; 15-22

What is Daniel’s vision about in verses 3-8? It might help to write all the details down on a large sheet of paper.

What are the different characteristics of each of the animals and their effect?

What are we told by way of interpretation in verses 19-22?

[You might need at this point to explain about Alexander and the four kingdoms etc.]

vv9-14; 23-27

What are the characteristics of the small horn?

What are we told he will do to God and his people?

[You'll need to explain about Antiochus at some point!]

What encouragement is there in these verses?

(NB v 14, v 25b)

What do you think is the significance of the 2,300 evenings and mornings?

Applying the lessons...

Why do you think Daniel told his readers about these events ahead of time?

How would it have helped them?

What do we learn about the comings and goings of earthly kings?

What can we learn about God's role in all of this?

What does Daniel 8 teach us that we haven't already learnt from Daniel thus far?

Jesus said similar things in the New Testament. Look up John 16:1-4 and Mark 13:5-8.

How do these verses help us when we hear of dreadful things in the world and bad things happening to God's people?

What should our reaction be?