

Does the name Sir Christopher Wren mean anything to you? He is the man responsible for what is considered to be one of the ten most beautiful buildings in the world, St. Paul's cathedral in London. Though Wren is best known for St. Paul's cathedral, I ran across an interesting story about one of his lesser-known designs (told by MacArthur, letter 6/17/96).

The town of Windsor, just west of central London, gave Wren the task of designing the interior of the town hall. His plans called for large columns to support the high ceiling. When he finished, the city fathers toured the building to inspect, and expressed dissatisfaction over one problem: the pillars. There weren't enough pillars to suit them.

Wren's solution was creative. He did exactly as he was told and installed four new pillars. Those extra pillars remain in the Windsor town hall to this day, and they're not too difficult to distinguish. Those four pillars are the ones that support no weight, and in fact, don't even reach the ceiling. They're fakes. Structurally, they are useless. Wren installed them to serve only one purpose--to look good.

When you stop and think about it, that illustration represents a lot that takes place in our society today. Take the church, for instance. There are many "churches" this morning that are more concerned about show than substance. They're putting on an impressive performance to make people feel good, instead of preaching the substantive Word of God which alone can prepare people to be right with God. Many worship services across this land today are just like Wren's pillars, decorative and impressive, yet missing their intended purpose.

There's another situation in our society which is like Wren's pillars. Do the following words sound familiar? "I have a plan that will make your life better. I can take you where you want to go. My programs will increase your prosperity, improve the value of your family life, bring opportunity for your personal development in the job world. I am committed to what is best for you. Vote for me in November."

I thank God for those civil servants who serve the people of this land. But as you've read the newspapers and listened to CNN reports, have you noticed something? We are bombarded by promises, promises, promises. All of them sound good, but like Wren's pillars, quite a few of them don't reach the top.

As Christians, what should we do in an election year when we are being overwhelmed by voice after voice, each guaranteeing us peace and prosperity and security? We have two tendencies--one is to be cynical, the other is to be gullible. Neither is right. How then should we respond? God's Word offers us very practical help in Daniel 11.

I'm amazed at God's timing. This morning, as we continue to work our way through the book of Daniel, we come to Daniel 11. Do you know what Daniel 11 is all about? It's a prophecy God gave to Daniel 25 centuries ago which revealed what was going to happen to future world leaders--leaders that no doubt made promises to their constituents. I've entitled this study, "A Good Reminder in an Election Year."

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\*\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

Though full of relevant application, I must say at the outset that Daniel 11 is a complex passage to preach and understand. So here's where we're going.

**Proposition: Our aim in our study of Daniel 11:1-20 is to answer three questions.**

I. What does the vision mean?

- A. Keep in mind the following guidelines.
  - 1. It pertains to the future of the Jews (10:14).
  - 2. It will not be understood entirely until the end (12:8-9).
  - 3. The revealed conflicts remind us of the unseen conflict.
- B. Keep in mind the big picture.
  - 1. The first section deals with Daniel's day to Antiochus (1-20).
  - 2. The second section deals with the deeds of Antiochus (21-35).
  - 3. The third section deals with the future (36-45).

II. What does the vision say?

- A. The future involves a series of leaders (1-3).
  - 1. There will be four Persian rulers (2).
  - 2. There will be a mighty Greek ruler (3).
  - 3. There will be a host of successive rulers (4ff).
- B. The future involves a series of conflicts (4-20).
- C. The future involves hardship for God's chosen people (14, 16).

III. What does the vision imply?

- A. When leaders make promises, remember four things.
  - 1. When you hear promises of peace, remember conflict is inevitable.
  - 2. When you hear promises of wealth, remember prosperity is temporal.
  - 3. When you hear promises of hope, remember leaders are limited.
  - 4. When you hear promises of better life, remember God alone is sovereign.
- B. When God makes a promise, we can count on it.

I. What does the vision mean?

Have you ever been lost in a forest? The trees all look the same, and you start walking in circles. That can easily happen to a student of Daniel 11 if he gets preoccupied with the trees before he takes time to understand the layout of the forest. So before we analyze the details of Daniel 11, we must keep in mind two things.

**A. Keep in mind the following guidelines.** Consider three.

1. *It pertains to the future of the Jews (10:14).* There are actually four prophetic visions recorded in Daniel 7-12. God gave Daniel the fourth (which is recorded in chapters 10-12) in the third year of Cyrus' rule (10:1). The seventy year Babylonian captivity was over for the Jews, and a remnant had returned to the land of promise.

What would happen next for the Jews? That's what Daniel wanted to know. In chapter 10, the prophet tells us he spent 3 weeks mourning, fasting, and seeking God. God responded by giving Daniel the fourth vision, which is the most detailed of them all.

Don't miss what the angel told Daniel in 10:14, "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall *thy people* in the latter days; for yet the vision is for many days." God is about to reveal what will happen to Daniel's people, the Jews, in the future. The prophecy pertains then, not to the Church per se, but to Israel. In fact, God already revealed in chapter 9 that His dealings with the Jewish people would involve 70 "sevens" (490 years) of future activity.

2. *It will not be understood entirely until the end (12:8-9).* Frankly, I am encouraged by Daniel's admission *after* the vision in 12:8-9, "And I heard, but I

understood not. Then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."

Be careful about having prophecy all "figured out." That's not to say we should shy away from prophetic texts like this one. The angel told Daniel it would be understood at the time of the end.

3. *The revealed conflicts remind us of the unseen conflict.* The vision of Daniel 11 records one conflict after another. Ruler attacks ruler, nation attacks nation, over and over again. But don't forget a lesson the angel told Daniel in chapter 10. The conflicts we see in this world are a reminder of an unseen, spiritual conflict in the angelic realm.

The angel told Daniel that he was resisted by a demonic creature for 21 days, until the angel, Michael, intervened. Why would Satan try to hinder this meeting? It's because Satan doesn't want God's plan to be accomplished, and with the Jewish remnant back in the land, he could see it happening before his eyes. 55 years later, by using Haman, Satan tried to exterminate God's people, but God intervened using Esther. Four centuries later, Satan tried again under Antiochus Epiphanes who slaughtered thousands of Jews.

The point to remember is this. When we see the conflicts in Daniel 11, we must remember the agent behind them. There is an unseen, spiritual warfare raging in this universe. Don't forget this applies to our lives. If you belong to God, you have an enemy who wants to dishonor God through you. Paul would say, "Be strong in the Lord."

**B. Keep in mind the big picture.** The vision takes 45 verses to record, and can be divided into three sections (we'll look at one section a week in our study).

1. *The first section deals with Daniel's day to Antiochus (1-20).* For a time-frame, roughly speaking that's from 535 B.C. to 175 B.C.

2. *The second section deals with the deeds of Antiochus (21-35).* That's Antiochus Epiphanes, the blasphemous despot who tried to obliterate the Jewish faith around 167 B.C.

3. *The third section deals with the future (36-45).* That is, future *to us*, since the entire prophecy was future to Daniel. The final section describes the ultimate opponent of the Jews that will one day hit the scene, one like Antiochus Epiphanes, only worse.

With these guidelines and the big picture in mind, we're ready to consider the vision.

## II. What does the vision say?

The vision is full of specifics. God revealed to Daniel dozens of prophetic details about coming rulers, battles, and alliances. But, say some critics, the prophecy is *too* specific. As John Walvoord observes (252), "Probably no other portion of Scripture presents more minute prophecy than Daniel 11:1-35, and this has prompted the sharpest attack of critics seeking to discredit this prophetic section." The critics have said that since the book contains so many specifics, it couldn't have been written in Daniel's day in the 6th century B.C. They say someone living in 160 B.C. "forged" Daniel's name and wrote the prophecy *after* the events it "predicts".

But I ask you, why is it such an incredible thing to say that God would predict the future in detail? Daniel learned three specifics about the future from the vision.

**A. The future involves a series of leaders (1-3).** V 1 actually belongs in chapter 10 for in it the angel finishes his statement about the spiritual battle described in 10:21.

Then in verses 2-3, we learn about a series of coming rulers, starting with Darius the Mede (539 B.C.) and ending with a final world ruler in the time of the end.

1. *There will be four Persian rulers (2).* The angel spoke in v 2, "And now will I show thee the truth. Behold there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all, and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece."

Daniel learned that four Persian kings were coming, a fact verified by history. Walvoord gives their names: Cambyses (529-522 B.C.), Pseudo-Smerdis, Darius I (mentioned in Ezra 5-6), and Xerxes I (who ruled from 486-465 B.C., and appears in Ezra 4:6). The angel said the fourth would be richer than the others. History verifies that Xerxes I was a wealthy leader who put together an army numbering hundreds of thousands, one of the largest armies in the ancient world. Unfortunately for him, however, in 480 B.C., he launched an expedition against Greece which was disastrous, just as predicted in Daniel 11. What else did the angel predict?

2. *There will be a mighty Greek ruler (3).* V 3 states, "And a mighty king shall stand up that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will." Keep in mind this prophecy, though accurate, is selective, and does not mention all future rulers. There is more than a 100 year gap of history between v 2 and v 3. God wasn't merely giving Daniel a history textbook for 10th Grade world history class! He was communicating theology through history.

The mighty king in v 3 is Alexander the Great. What did the angel say would happen after Alexander passed from the scene? He predicted exactly what history verifies.

3. *There will be a host of successive rulers (4ff).* V 4 "And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven, and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those."

My friends, the first four verses of Daniel 11 were fulfilled just like God predicted: Four Persian kings, then the Great Greek ruler, Alexander, who died at the ripe age of 33, followed by a host of successive rulers who competed for power, as described in v 5ff.

You can trust your Bible! It's a book you can build your life on. You can raise your family by it. You can run your business by it. Do you know why? Because its author is the One Who knows all things, God Himself! God showed Daniel that the future would involve a series of rulers. He also revealed a second specific to him in the vision.

**B. The future involves a series of conflicts (4-20).** Beginning in v 5, the narrative picks up the pace, so much so that it's easy for a casual reader to get lost in the shuffle. In the vision, Daniel learned that a series of conflicts was coming on the world scene.

Rather than read verses 5-20, allow me to simplify the section by paraphrasing what Daniel learned would happen. Beginning in v 5, the angel predicted there would be a continuous struggle between the "king of the south" (Egypt) and the "king of the north" (Syria) which would last for the next 150 years. Here's what happened in the vision:

The king of the south is mentioned first in v 5, probably a reference to Ptolemy I Soter. The text says he was strong, but ran into a commander who was stronger. His daughter made an alliance with the king from the north, but the alliance failed (6), and the north king took over.

The tables turned in verse 7 when a new southern king attacked the forces of the north, entered the king's fortress, and took charge. He humiliated the north king by taking his gods and valuables to Egypt (8), and then left (9).

In verses 9-10, the north king invaded the south, but was forced to retreat. Next the northern kingdom amassed an even larger army, but it was no match for the southern king, who slaughtered thousands and became filled with pride (11-12).

The conflict continues in verse 13 as the north king raised an even larger army than before, with many others who despised the south king joining him--including, guess who??--some Jews (14). Eventually, the south ruler could withstand the onslaught no longer, and fell in defeat (15).

There's more. The angel told Daniel that the northern invader would make his way to the "Beautiful Land" (16), and cause problems for the Jews. In fact, to solidify his rule, he would make an alliance with the south (17), with the subtle intent to overthrow the south. His plan would fail.

Note: History verifies this biblical prediction. In 192 B.C., Antiochus the Great pledged his daughter, Cleopatra, to be married to the seven year old son of the Egyptian king. It was a political ploy. The problem was, it failed for when she got older, Cleopatra remained loyal to her Egyptian husband instead of to her Syrian father! (just like the Bible predicted! see v 17).

Seeing he had been hoodwinked, v 18 predicted this northern king would attack the "coastlands" where he would meet his match (history verifies that Antiochus the Great ran into the Romans). He scurried home to Syria (19) where he was heard of no more.

Commentator Walvoord makes a fitting observation (263), "Antiochus the Great, who could have gone down in history as one of the great conquerors of the ancient world *if he had been content to leave Greece alone* (italics added), instead fulfilled the prophecy of v 19 in that he had to return to his own land, defeated and broken." Self-seeking pride is nothing new to our generation, is it?

V 20 revealed that the north king's successor would establish the "New Deal"--you thought FDR came up with the idea!--he didn't. Seleucus Philopator did, the son of Antiochus the Great. His father left the northern kingdom in such debt to the Romans that Seleucus came up with a big idea--raise taxes! Did it work? V 20 predicted and history verifies that he passed away--not because of battle or anger--he just passed away.

His passing paved the way for one of the most contemptible rulers the world has ever seen, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the notorious persecutor of the Jews who desecrated the temple in the 2nd century B.C. The vision devotes the next 15 verses to Antiochus.

The mention of Antiochus brings us to a third specific predicted in the vision.

**C. The future involves hardship for God's chosen people (14, 16).** We won't take time to dwell on this point now, for next week's section will develop it more fully, but it's certainly hinted at even here. Listen to v 14 (NIV), "In those times many will rise against the king of the south. The violent men among *your own people* will rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success." And v 16 (NIV), "The invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have power to destroy it." Remember this. Arafat is not the first man to cause hardship for the Jews. Throughout history, there have been a host of Hitlers and Stalins and Antiochus's and Hamans who have plagued the Jews. Just like Daniel 11 warned.

You say, "This is a fascinating vision, but how does it apply to us?" Good question.

### III. What does the vision imply?

While the vision pertains particularly to God's past and future dealings with the Jewish people, there are some implications for us, especially in this election year. How should we respond to all the promises we're hearing these days? With biblical discernment.

#### **A. When leaders make promises, remember four things.**

1. *When you hear promises of peace, remember conflict is inevitable.* In our newspaper this past Wednesday, there was an interesting segment that began, "New Broom in Israel: Will Netanyahu bring peace and security to his country?" The article (actually a paid ad) began, "When Benjamin Netanyahu was elected prime minister of Israel many believed that the 'peace process' would come to an end. But Netanyahu, like all of his countrymen yearns for peace. In standing firm on his *campaign promises he will bring peace and security* to his country (emphasis added)."

There's only one Person in the universe that can bring lasting peace to this planet, and that's the Prince of Peace. We should long for His return. On the other hand, until He comes, the world will be full of peace-promisers. In fact, 1 Thes 5 tells us one characteristic of the day just prior to His coming (5:3), "While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape."

2. *When you hear promises of wealth, remember prosperity is temporal.* You'd think we'd learn the lesson. Why are we so preoccupied with the temporal?

On Friday, I conducted the funeral for my uncle, a man who died in the prime of his retired life. Two weeks ago, when I talked with him, do you know what was on his mind? He was concerned about his relationship with God. For most of his life, that didn't matter too much to him, but in the end it mattered a great deal.

It's amazing what a different perspective we have on life when we realize we are about to leave this life. Most of us are so busy we seldom take time to ponder the issues that really matter in the light of eternity. Our schedules are full of jobs, and ballgames, and raising families--all good things--yet good things which distract us from thinking about the essential things. Listen, when you hear promises of wealth, remember it's temporal.

3. *When you hear promises of hope, remember leaders are limited.* Something caught my eye in studying Daniel 11. Do you know what we see the leaders in Daniel 11 doing? The same things leaders today are doing--making peace treaties, and entering into alliances with other nations, and going to war to defeat enemies--all in the name of bringing hope to the world. Will the alliances and peace treaties bring lasting hope to this world? You know it won't, but why not? Because peace treaties can force people to lay down their guns (for awhile), but they can't change the heart that led the hand to pick up the gun in the first place. There's only One Who can do that.

4. *When you hear promises of better life, remember God alone is sovereign.* Frankly, the question, "Are you better off today than you were 4 years ago?" isn't really the issue, is it? Can human leaders really back up their promises of a better life? No. Why not? Only God is sovereign. One final reminder...

**B. When God makes a promise, we can count on it.** Let's put our trust in Him.  
We are privileged to live in a blessed land. Let's pray right now for our leaders.

Response: Psalm 118:8-9 says this, "It is **better to trust** in the LORD than to put confidence in man. "It is **better to trust** in the LORD than to put confidence in princes."

Why is better to trust in the Lord? Because He alone is trustworthy. Let's sing and acknowledge His Lordship. During the final refrain, the choir and servers will come forward to help us prepare for Communion.

*Hymn of Response: #105 "He Is Lord"*

*Ministry in Music to Prepare for Communion: Choir (standing at front)*

We are indebted to John Newton. He is the man who penned "Amazing Grace." He's also the one who said something like this, "If I ever reach heaven I expect to find three wonders there. First, I'll marvel because I'll see people I didn't expect to see there. Second, I'll marvel because I didn't see other people I expected to see there. And third, the greatest wonder of all, I'll marvel to find myself there." (Hughes, 16)

My friends, not a one of us will be in heaven because we deserve to be there. In fact, not a one of us will be there who think we do deserve to be there. Only those who have trusted in Christ alone will be there.

There's no room for pride when we come to the Lord's table. Let's take time to allow the Holy Spirit to shine the spotlight of His Word on our lives so that we might see our sins and confess them to our forgiving God.

*Communion*

While the deacons are distributing the elements, let's focus our thoughts on Christ.

During the Bread:

--Jesus Christ gave His life as a ransom payment to rescue us from our sins. Have you ever trusted in Christ for salvation? If not, do so right now. If you have, thank Him right now for saving you. Marvel at His grace.

--There are many voices calling us to trust them. There's only one Who is trustworthy. Are you trusting in Christ as you live day by day? If so, tell Him right now, "I trust You, Lord. I want to live for You."

During the Cup:

--Listen to the reading of Scripture, as we hear what Christ endured for us.

--Read Isaiah 53 (Darrel)

We learned a new song last week that is a fitting song to take with us again this week.

*Closing Prayer Song: #55 "Day by Day--A Prayer"*