

## The sermon

### Intro

Here's a good question that might come up in conversation. Why do you believe in Jesus? Let me give my answer.

First, I'd give a theological, doctrinal, biblical answer. God chose me to be a believer before the foundation of the world. I was just a simple sinner going about my business as a drunken partier trying to be cool when God started shining his light inside my heart and drawing me to himself. I wasn't looking for God. I didn't want God. I loved my sin. I enjoyed my friends. I just found myself thinking about God when I never had before.

Second, I'd give an experiential (yet doctrinal) answer. Because God's promises about being born again are true. I've experienced them. Ezekiel talks about God giving us a new heart that causes us to obey and Jesus talks about rivers of living water flowing out of our heart. I am not who I was. God changed my loves and my conduct. I've experienced God's empowering grace and his peace that surpasses all understanding. I've found gospel promises to be real.

Third, I'd give an intellectual answer. Before I was a Christian I didn't do my research. I didn't give every religion and philosophy a chance. I just found myself drawn towards Jesus. I just believed the Bible without reservation.

But after becoming a Christian I did my research. I found out what the religions were and what they believed. I discovered other religions are generally truth claims without evidence or perversions of Christianity. And I discovered Christianity wasn't a truth claim without evidence. For example, the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Another thing I found is prophecy demonstrates the supernatural nature of the Bible.

And I'm not talking about vague prophecies like there will be wars and earthquakes and opposition to Christianity. But specific prophecies like Greece will defeat Medo-Persia and Alexander the Great's rise will be swift and short (Daniel 8). And the stuff we find in Daniel 11.

My **BIG IDEA** is

**The Bible is a supernatural book worthy of your trust!**

### Body

#### Passage Focus

We'll see what Daniel 11 is talking about. We'll consider evidence for the supernatural nature of Scripture. And we'll consider how this knowledge connects with our lives.

#### Historical Fulfillment

I'll just highlight some interesting events. The sermon notes provide more detail if you desire.

#### READ 11:1

The angel recounts how he strengthened Darius three years ago. Then he gets to the vision. The vision's purpose is to make Daniel *"understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days"* (10:14).

#### READ 11:2

That's four more kings after Cyrus, who died in 530 BC. The fourth was Xerxes 1 = Ahasuerus, the king that married Esther.

#### READ 11:3-4

Alexander the Great defeated Persia in 331 BC and died in 323 BC, meaning he reigned for eight years. Following his death, an internal struggle left the kingdom divided among four generals, not his sons.

The south is generally Egypt. The north is generally Syria and Babylon.

**READ 11:5-6**

Ptolemy II Philadelphus (south) attempted to make peace with Antiochus II Theos (north) by sending his daughter Berenice to marry him. Berenice and Antiochus II were poisoned by Laodice, the wife Antiochus divorced to marry Berenice.

Ptolemy II was the guy who requested a Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint.

**READ 11:7-9**

Ptolemy III Euergetes, Berenice's brother, conquered Antioch. During the invasion Ptolemy III succeeded in killing Laodice.

**READ 11:10-13**

After a series of battles, the north became increasingly dominant while the south weakened.

**READ 11:14-19**

The Jews (*"your own people"*) rose up against Ptolemy V Epiphanes, but the Egyptian army crushed the rebellion.

The glorious land, Palestine, remained under Syrian control until Rome took over with Pompey's invasion in 63 BC. The Jews remained under foreign oppression after returning from exile.

Antiochus III the Great (north) gave his daughter to Ptolemy V (south) in marriage, hoping her presence would give him greater power in Egypt, but she supported her husband instead of her father.

**READ 11:20-28**

11:21-35 concern Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the "little horn" of Daniel 8:9-14, 23-26.

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC) took the throne because the rightful heir, was imprisoned (*"to whom royal majesty has not been given"*).

Antiochus IV plundered the richest parts of Egypt's territory in 169 BC (11:24). On his way home, Antiochus IV visited Palestine and encountered an insurrection. So he killed 80,000 men, women, and children, inspiring the Maccabean Revolt.

**READ 11:29-35**

In 168 BC, Antiochus IV invaded Egypt and was defeated because Rome (*"ships of Kittim"*) had joined with the Ptolemies to oppose him.

Enraged by defeat (11:30), in 167 BC, Antiochus IV came to Palestine. There he:

- 1) Abolished the Sabbath.
- 2) Halted the sacrifices.
- 3) Replaced Jewish religious festivals with Greek religious festivals.
- 4) Built altars to pagan idols in the temple sanctuary.
- 5) Offered pigs and other unclean animals on the pagan altars.
- 6) Allowed prostitution in the temple precincts.
- 7) Made practicing Judaism punishable by death, even killing children who were circumcised (*"shall stumble by sword and flame"*).

As a result, many Jews started speaking Greek and adopting Greek customs (11:32, 34). But the faithful resisted. A priest named Mattathias with his five sons led the Maccabean Revolt and rededicated the temple in 164 BC. The Jewish holiday Hanukkah commemorates this rededication of the temple.

Judas Maccabeus led a military campaign where the outnumbered Jews defeated the Syrian forces. Their "little help" (11:34) included an alliance with Rome.

### **What's Foretold Here?**

History is foretold hundreds of years in advance. Who will conquer who. Where the battles take place. Who they'll marry. Who will kill who. What they'll do to the Jews. How the Jews will respond.

For those who know ancient history, there's no doubt about the events intended. This vision isn't like Nostadamus where any number of events can fit into a vague picture. Statements like "Fire approaches the great new city. By fire he will destroy the city" becomes the World Trade Center in New York City on 9/11. In Daniel 11, we aren't squeezing modern events into vague statements.

Critical scholars, those who don't believe the Bible to be inerrant, agree with me about the historical events. However, because of their presupposition that knowledge of the future is impossible, they explain prophecy by saying Daniel was written in 164 BC. After the events of Antiochus IV Epiphanes took place. In other words, they claim Daniel is a fictitious individual and this prophecy was written after everything had already happened.

Is there a credible Christian response?

### **Arguments for an Early Date**

The details are at the end of your notes. Review them later. Try to track with me now.

#### 1) Aramaic and Hebrew evidence.

Daniel is partially written in Hebrew and partially written in Aramaic. Daniel's Hebrew and Aramaic both line up with 5<sup>th</sup> century documents.

Writing style indicates Daniel was written long before 164 BC. Just like the original KJV's English indicates it was written long before the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### 2) Septuagint evidence.

The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Septuagint was completed by 132 BC (per Prologue to *Ecclesiasticus*). We only know it was finished by then. We don't know when it was actually finished.

Meaning 132 BC is the latest possible date for the completion of the Septuagint and the Greek translation of Daniel. The Septuagint could have been completed much earlier. Daniel could have been translated much earlier. Daniel could have been translated into Greek decades before 132 BC.

The best case scenario for critics (which is unlikely) is a forgery was accepted as Scripture by the Jews, copied, circulated, and translated into Greek within 32 years.

My point? The critical view leaves no time for Daniel to have been translated into Greek.

#### 3) Jewish acceptance.

The Jewish historian Josephus recorded that Alexander the Great's reign was shown beforehand to Alexander in the book of Daniel (*Antiquities*, 11.8.5).

Josephus lines up with the historic Jewish view that Daniel was a prophet who, before the fact, revealed future events centuries beforehand in writing with undeniable accuracy.

My point? There's no evidence the Jews ever viewed Daniel as after the fact prophecy.

4) Daniel's successful prophecies extend beyond 164 BC.

For example, Daniel 9:24-26 speaks of Rome destroying the city and the temple after the Messiah was cut off. See Daniel 2 and 7 where Rome is the 4<sup>th</sup> kingdom and the end time "little horn" comes from Rome.

The Messiah was crucified 30/33 AD. Rome destroyed the city and the temple in 70 AD. No matter how hard they try, the critic can't escape before the fact prophecy!

In sum:

- a) Language analysis reveals Daniel to be before the fact prophecy.
- b) The critical view allows no time for acceptance into the Old Testament canon, translation, etc.
- c) There's no evidence the Jews ever viewed Daniel as after the fact prophecy.
- d) The vision of the temple destroyed by Rome is evidence of before the fact prophecy.

### **The God Delusion?**

Why so long on this?

Atheistic evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins wrote a book called *The God Delusion* with the gist that it's almost certain God, whoever he might be, does not exist. And that the Christian faith qualifies as a delusion. A persistent false belief in the face of strong contradictory evidence.

There's a thought out there that Christianity is based on blind faith. That our faith is trust in the absence of evidence. God revealing the future to Daniel centuries beforehand argues otherwise.

Another thought out there is that all religions are on equal footing. Jesus' claims are as valid as Buddha's claims. The Bible is as valid as the Book of Mormon or the Quran. God revealing the future to Daniel centuries beforehand argues otherwise.

No other religious book has Daniel 11. No other religious book has evidence of a supernatural element. Daniel 11 reveals the Bible is a supernatural book. Humans just don't know the future.

### **Isaiah 40-48**

I'm arguing that God separates himself from false religions by revealing the future before it happens. God himself argues in this way.

Darryl read from Isaiah 41. There God challenges false gods to prove their claims by declaring the future. In the end, the false gods are but a delusion.

The fact that God revealed the future before it happened is one reason why I believe today and have confidence in my Bible.

### **The Life of Faith**

What does this mean for us today?

- 1) We can have confidence that the Bible is a supernatural, divinely inspired book.

We can trust everything it says. About the future. The books will be opened. A day of reward and punishment is coming. About the present. There are right and wrong ways to do life.

2) We have a reason to resist seductive flattery.

***“He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant”*** – 11:32

The unbelieving world goes along with the spirit of the age. Christians, we cannot. When they twist words and call accepting sin love and believing the Bible judgment, we have a choice to make. Will we be duped and reject God's word? Or will we reject the twisted lies and side with God?

I'm not saying navigating Satan's lies will be easy. I'm not saying people will like it when you don't go along with the lies. But I am saying Daniel 11 is proof God's ways are true and right and good.

3) We have a reason to stand firm.

***“but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.”*** – 11:32

That's not giving up gospel ground. Not being intimidated by external pressure. Not being seduced by the lies of our day. Daniel 11 is proof standing firm is the right call!

4) Opposition provides opportunity for spiritual growth.

The Jews were seduced to discard God and embrace the Greek way of life. The Jews were threatened by death to discard God and embrace the Greek way of life.

The visions says, ***“and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white”*** (11:35). Meaning death and distress were the occasion of victory over sin.

Refining process:

- 1) Metal subjected to high temperature.
- 2) Metal liquefies.
- 3) Dross (impurities in the metal) floats to the top.
- 4) The refiner skims off the dross.

Refining pictures God's removal of moral impurity from the believer's life.

The picture is the people suffered, but the suffering provoked a faithful response. Our circumstances draw out a response. Our circumstances show us who we truly are.

A hard co-worker shows us who we are. The hard co-worker may show us to be hateful and irritable. The hard co-worker may show us to be patient and merciful. The hard co-worker may open our eyes to sin in our heart and result in refining.

Faced with a choice between personal well-being and honoring God, they chose God over self. Having been subjected to death threats and imprisonment and loss of goods, they were better off than before. They had developed a resistance to worldly, Greek culture. They had developed courage and an allegiance to God.

5) Opposition provides opportunity to evangelize.

***“And the wise among the people shall make many understand”*** – 11:33

Threats of sword and flame and captivity and plunder forced them to choose a side. Faced with death or imprisonment or loss of goods, they stood with God. When questioned why would you do this?, they explained why they sided with God. Maybe things like the books opened and the everlasting kingdom.

When people are upset that you won't go along with the seductive lies of our culture, you have an open door for evangelism. They've asked the question. Now you can give gospel answers. Their dismay is your opportunity to point them to the Savior.

When opposition comes, people are forcing the religious conversation on us! Shouldn't we want this?

### **Gospel**

Let me pass on that truth right now. The good news is Jesus died on the cross as a substitute for sinners so that whoever believes will escape judgment and receive eternal life and forgiveness of sins.

Why was Jesus crucified? Because in order for the guilty, us, to be declared righteous we need someone to take away the punishment our sins deserve.

If we turn to Jesus in faith and repentance, God will treat us as if we lived Jesus' perfect life. If we continue to live as if Jesus' death is irrelevant, we'll be punished for our sins in hell.

If we got anything today, Daniel 11 means God's promises and his threats are true! There's ample reason to believe everything the Bible says. There's ample reason to trust Jesus and look forward to his promises and obey him today. God is true. And God is merciful. Trust him. Follow him.