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REFORMED EXPOSITORY COMMENTARY

A Series

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Iain M. Duguid, Old Testament
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Daniel

IAIN M. DUGUID



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*To Ken & Yoori Han,
Faithful fellow-laborers in the service of the gospel*

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SERIES INTRODUCTION

In every generation there is a fresh need for the faithful exposition of God's Word in the church. At the same time, the church must constantly do the work of theology: reflecting on the teaching of Scripture, confessing its doctrines of the Christian faith, and applying them to contemporary culture. We believe that these two tasks—the expositional and the theological—are interdependent. Our doctrine must derive from the biblical text, and our understanding of any particular passage of Scripture must arise from the doctrine taught in Scripture as a whole.

We further believe that these interdependent tasks of biblical exposition and theological reflection are best undertaken in the church, and most specifically in the pulpits of the church. This is all the more true since the study of Scripture properly results in doxology and praxis—that is, in praise to God and practical application in the lives of believers. In pursuit of these ends, we are pleased to present the Reformed Expository Commentary as a fresh exposition of Scripture for our generation in the church. We hope and pray that pastors, teachers, Bible study leaders, and many others will find this series to be a faithful, inspiring, and useful resource for the study of God's infallible, inerrant Word.

The Reformed Expository Commentary has four fundamental commitments. First, these commentaries aim to be *biblical*, presenting a comprehensive exposition characterized by careful attention to the details of the text. They are not exegetical commentaries—commenting word by word or even verse by verse—but integrated expositions of whole passages of Scripture. Each commentary will thus present a sequential, systematic treatment of an entire book of the Bible, passage by passage. Second, these commentaries are unashamedly *doctrinal*. We are committed

Series Introduction

to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Each volume will teach, promote, and defend the doctrines of the Reformed faith as they are found in the Bible. Third, these commentaries are *redemptive-historical* in their orientation. We believe in the unity of the Bible and its central message of salvation in Christ. We are thus committed to a Christ-centered view of the Old Testament, in which its characters, events, regulations, and institutions are properly understood as pointing us to Christ and his gospel, as well as giving us examples to follow in living by faith. Fourth, these commentaries are *practical*, applying the text of Scripture to contemporary challenges of life—both public and private—with appropriate illustrations.

The contributors to the Reformed Expository Commentary are all pastor-scholars. As pastor, each author will first present his expositions in the pulpit ministry of his church. This means that these commentaries are rooted in the teaching of Scripture to real people in the church. While aiming to be scholarly, these expositions are not academic. Our intent is to be faithful, clear, and helpful to Christians who possess various levels of biblical and theological training—as should be true in any effective pulpit ministry. Inevitably this means that some issues of academic interest will not be covered. Nevertheless, we aim to achieve a responsible level of scholarship, seeking to promote and model this for pastors and other teachers in the church. Significant exegetical and theological difficulties, along with such historical and cultural background as is relevant to the text, will be treated with care.

We strive for a high standard of enduring excellence. This begins with the selection of the authors, all of whom have proven to be outstanding communicators of God's Word. But this pursuit of excellence is also reflected in a disciplined editorial process. Each volume is edited by both a series editor and a testament editor. The testament editors, Iain Duguid for the Old Testament and Daniel Doriani for the New Testament, are accomplished pastors and respected scholars who have taught at the seminary level. Their job is to ensure that each volume is sufficiently conversant with up-to-date scholarship and is faithful and accurate in its exposition of the text. As series editors, we oversee each volume to ensure its overall quality—including excellence of writing, soundness of teaching, and usefulness

in application. Working together as an editorial team, along with the publisher, we are devoted to ensuring that these are the best commentaries our gifted authors can provide, so that the church will be served with trustworthy and exemplary expositions of God's Word.

It is our goal and prayer that the Reformed Expository Commentary will serve the church by renewing confidence in the clarity and power of Scripture and by upholding the great doctrinal heritage of the Reformed faith. We hope that pastors who read these commentaries will be encouraged in their own expository preaching ministry, which we believe to be the best and most biblical pattern for teaching God's Word in the church. We hope that lay teachers will find these commentaries among the most useful resources they rely upon for understanding and presenting the text of the Bible. And we hope that the devotional quality of these studies of Scripture will instruct and inspire each Christian who reads them in joyful, obedient discipleship to Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless all who read the Reformed Expository Commentary. We commit these volumes to the Lord Jesus Christ, praying that the Holy Spirit will use them for the instruction and edification of the church, with thanksgiving to God the Father for his unceasing faithfulness in building his church through the ministry of his Word.

Richard D. Phillips
Philip Graham Ryken
Series Editors

PREFACE

The Book of Daniel is both familiar and unfamiliar to most Christians, and consequently poses its own unique challenges to preachers. The stories of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lion's den are the staples of children's Bible story books and Sunday school classes, and so are well-known even in an age of increasing biblical illiteracy. Most have been taught to read them as tales intended to encourage believers to "Dare to be a Daniel," to live for Christ in a hostile world. That is indeed part of their purpose: they provide models for believers living in an alien world as to how they can both serve the culture in which they find themselves and at the same time live lives that are distinctive from that culture. They encourage believers to remain faithful, no matter what the cost. Yet the reality is that few of us can really claim to come close to the standard set for us by Daniel and his friends: we are all compromised in many ways by the pressures of our environment. It is important therefore to be reminded at the same time of the one greater than Daniel who has perfectly lived the exilic life of service and separation for us, Jesus Christ.

The latter chapters of Daniel's vision are more unfamiliar and daunting to most believers. They may have been exposed to a variety of end-times speculations constructed from an amalgam of these texts and others drawn from elsewhere in the Bible, but few have been encouraged to consider how these apocalyptic passages encourage all believers, whether or not they find themselves living during the final pages of world history. Here too, seeing the centerpiece of these visions as the exalted heavenly Son of Man who took flesh amongst us in the person of Jesus Christ can bring these often puzzling visions to bear on our everyday lives in a whole new way. It is my

Preface

prayer that this commentary will help Christians to see how the gospel of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Book of Daniel.

These sermons were originally preached at Grace Presbyterian Church in Fallbrook, California, shortly before I moved to Pennsylvania. I would like to thank the elders and the congregation of that church for their constant love and encouragement. We all miss you greatly but are encouraged to see God's grace continuing to be poured out upon you through the ministry of my former co-pastor, Rev. Ken Han. This book is dedicated to Ken and his wife, Yoori, with gratitude to God for sending you to our church and equipping you with the gifts and character necessary for the work of gospel ministry.

I would also like to thank my wife, Barb, for her part in my own ongoing spiritual growth and development. Her ability to be open and unstintingly honest about her own sinful heart and her consequent passionate love for the grace of God in the gospel is a constant inspiration to me: I pray that as I grow in the Lord I may learn increasingly to share her humility, love, and compassion. My children have patiently endured the trials and joys of being part of a pastor's family. Thank you Jamie, Sam, Hannah, Rob, and Rosie for regularly making us look much better parents than we are. We thank the Lord for his continued work in each of your hearts and pray that you may daily grow in your knowledge of the depth of your own sin and the magnificence of your Savior, Jesus Christ.

§ *Daniel*

FAITH ENDURING THROUGH ADVERSITY

1

WHEN THE WORLD DOES ITS WORST

Daniel 1:1–21

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. (Dan. 1:8)

here is a fascinating genre of literature that goes by the name “Alternative Histories.” These novels imagine what life would be like if history had turned out differently from the way that it did. In the alternative history novel *SS-GB*,¹ Len Deighton imagines, “What if Adolf Hitler had focused all of his attention on invading Britain in 1940 and had not started a second front against Russia?” Very possibly, he would have made a successful assault, and the result would be a very different face for Britain and Europe today. In all likelihood, people in those countries would have grown up in a repressive police state, living in constant fear of the authorities.

For some Europeans, of course, that is not such an alternative history. I regularly teach in a small seminary in Latvia, and the young men in this

1. Len Deighton, *SS-GB: Nazi Occupied Britain, 1941* (New York: Knopf, 1979).

When the World Does Its Worst

country know precisely what it is like to grow up under a repressive regime. After having a brief spell of independence between the two world wars, their small country was annexed by the Russians in 1940 and spent most of the next fifty years under alien rule until they were finally able to regain their freedom in 1991. It was a time of terror and intense suffering for all Latvians, and especially for the church, as their world was overrun by enemies who were determined to stamp out their culture, their language, their identity, and their religion. Anyone who was a potential leader was either executed or exiled to some distant part of the Soviet empire.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to be exiled from home to a foreign city, to be alone and scared, a long way from familiar surroundings? How would you cope in such a hostile setting? What truths could you cling to? Would you remain faithful to your former identity or simply be assimilated into your new surroundings?

THE EXPERIENCE OF EXILE

This is not entirely an imaginative exercise for us either, however. Even though our Western experience of the hostility of this world is certainly not normally as extreme as that of postwar Latvia, it nonetheless remains true for all of us that we are exiles here on earth. As citizens of heaven, Christians live as aliens and strangers in a land that is not their own, and there are times when the world's enmity to the people of God becomes evident. The hostility of the world is often shown in the efforts it makes to squeeze us into its mold. It wants to make us conform to its values and standards and not to stick out from the crowd. The pressure is on us, in school and at work, to be like everyone else in the way that we dress and the language that we use. We are expected to laugh at certain kinds of jokes and gossip about certain kinds of people. If we want to get on and be promoted in the world of business, we are pressured to leave our values and religious beliefs at the front entrance and to live a lifestyle entirely assimilated to the business community. We are expected to value the things the surrounding culture values, to pursue passionately its glittering prizes, and generally to live in obedience to its idols. We have to choose daily whether to be part of this world in which we live, or to take the difficult path of standing against it.