

or ecclesiology, will be best served by the book. Those who understand the relevance of the topic, but find the reading intimidating, can still reinforce their understanding by paying special attention to, and often revisiting, the twenty theses or main arguments that are distributed throughout the book, always in the last section of each chapter. This is a recommended work for all evangelical Christians interested in the present state of Protestantism, particularly in the sub-topic of interpretive authority.

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Widder, Wendy L. *Daniel*. The Story of God Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 288 pp. Hardcover. USD 29.99.

Wendy Widder is the author of a new commentary on the book of Daniel, which is part of a new commentary series by Zondervan, entitled *The Story of God Bible Commentary*. The general editors of the series are Tremper Longman III and Scot McKnight, who have considerable experience as editors and authors. The purpose and aim of the series is to explain the Bible within its ancient context and show what it means for readers today, with special emphasis on its connection to Christ. Its audience is primarily clergy, but it intends to be accessible to laity also.

Widder has not published extensively on the book of Daniel, but she has taught several college level courses on the subject. Despite this disadvantage, she is to be commended for her measured and genial tone throughout the book. She competently addresses the major issues within the text and admirably connects the text to modern Christian living. However, her non-traditional interpretation of certain key chapters is not sufficiently supported with evidence from the text and raises important theological questions and concerns. She also does not consistently connect the text to Christ, which is one of the main aims of the commentary series.

The layout of the book is common to the commentary series. There is an introductory section that treats the introductory data for the biblical book. Next, each chapter of the biblical book is analyzed according to a set structure. First, there is a section titled, "Listen to the Story," which includes the biblical text from the NIV 2011 and relevant intertextual data. Then, the author analyzes the meaning of the text within its ancient context in the section titled, "Explain the Story." Finally, in the section titled "Live the Story," the author attempts to connect the text to the modern reader and apply it to the life of the believer and the church today.

In the introduction, Widder gingerly addresses the many thorny introductory issues of the book, such as authorship, date, and canon. Widder approaches these controversial issues tactfully and carefully. She accepts the traditional sixth century date of the book, but refrains from a negative appraisal of a second century date for the book. She accepts the veracity of Daniel as a historical figure, but states that it is impossible to definitively know who compiled the book. Widder eschews easy answers to these complex questions, but it is unclear whether her hesitation to commit to a certain

explanation is the result of an attempt to honestly wrestle with these demanding and perplexing quandaries, or due to her lack of extensive experience with the book.

In chapter one, as well as three through six, Widder follows the delineation outlined for the commentary series, which is noted above. She offers pertinent intertextual links to each chapter, extensively summarizing the texts. Next, she analyzes the chapter within its ancient context. Her exegetical analysis follows the standard outline of each chapter. She addresses the common problems that other commentators have discussed in these chapters and presents the various arguments. At times, she thoughtfully reaches her own conclusions, but at other times she inordinately relies on the commentaries of John Goldingay and Ernest Lucas. Finally, Widder then offers devotional thoughts and ideas for each chapter. Widder is at her best in chapter six, where her devotional thoughts connecting the text to contemporary life are exceptional. The section on “Successful Suffering” in “Live the Story” is especially meaningful.

In chapters two and seven through twelve, Widder addresses the dreams and visions of the book, continuing the outlined delineation for the commentary series. In chapter two she presents the two main views and lays out her position regarding the four-kingdom schema, which is the foundation for her interpretive approach for chapters seven through twelve. She presents the Greek and Roman views associated with the four kingdoms. Widder states that both views have their adherents and that, “Traditionally, interpreters have divided along party lines: traditionalists opt for the Roman view, and non-traditionalists hold the Greek view” (53). However, she further states and agrees with Longman that the Greek view has “strong evangelical arguments” in its favor (53). Yet, Widder does not offer such arguments as evidence for this view, which she accepts. She generally states her position without sufficient defense or support from the text. Also, she often does not enumerate the problems with the Roman view. This is puzzling and impairs her argument, therefore, it is difficult to see her negation of the traditional view as warranted.

The most problematic aspect of Widder’s interpretive approach is found in Chapter Nine. Her interpretation of Dan 9:24–27, in which she abandons the traditional Christological interpretation for one that focuses on the Maccabean crisis of the second century, raises foundational questions about the messianic prophecy itself and the prophetic certainty of the coming of Christ. It is evident that Widder does not seek to challenge the authenticity of the New Testament’s prophetic fulfillment of Christ’s first coming, nor does she seek to challenge the authenticity of Old Testament messianic prophecy. Yet, by abandoning the traditional interpretation, especially without detailed exegetical support, she undercuts a significant text for Old Testament messianic prophecy. This is perplexing, since one of the goals of the commentary series is to identify Old Testament “trajectories (historical, typological, and theological) that land in Christ in the New Testament” (xiv). One would assume that this text would be central to this goal or that Widder would at least give more exegetical support for her interpretation over against the traditional one.

Interestingly, one of the major flaws of this commentary is that it fails to consistently connect the chapters to Christ, which is part of the main purpose and aim of the commentary series. According to the introduction to the series, each book will “read the text in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus. No other commentary series does this important work consistently in every volume” (xv). Widder does well in connecting the text to modern Christian life, but it is not clear how she consistently reads the text “in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus.” It was not clear from the commentary how the book of Daniel consistently “anticipates the gospel” (ibid.).

Widder is to be commended for her knowledge of the issues concerning the book of Daniel and for her attempt to refrain from tendentious polemics. Her writing is exceptional and she competently presents the stories in their ancient contexts. In addition, she offers thought-provoking and meaningful connections to the text and modern Christian living. However, Widder’s non-traditional interpretive approach toward the dreams/visions contradicts traditional interpretations with little exegetical support. Also, her interpretation of Dan 9:24–27 raises several Christological questions. Finally, she does not consistently demonstrate how the text “anticipates the gospel” (ibid.). Overall, the purpose and aim of the new commentary series is a welcome addition to the genre and Widder’s work is commendable, but the complexity of the book of Daniel can be a quandary to any commentary series.

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Wright, Christopher J. H. *Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today’s World*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017. 248 pp. Softcover. USD 17.99.

Christopher Wright is International Ministries Director of the Langham Partnership and a mentee of the great Christian preacher John Stott. He often preaches on Daniel, though he has previously written books on other biblical topics, such as *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (1995) and *The God I Don’t Understand* (2008). In *Hearing the Message of Daniel*, Wright, with the help of what some would call “pastorally informed imagination,” draws lessons from Daniel’s book and presents them to pastors, small group leaders, and Christians in general. On a previous occasion, I had a chance to review *Preaching Christ from Daniel*, by Sidney Greidanus, AUSS 51.2 (2013), but it is obvious that Wright’s book, though smaller in size, takes a broader view of homiletical gems from Daniel’s book.

The chapter titled “Compromise or Confrontation” presents the story from Dan 1. The subtitles in this chapter are very descriptive of the lessons the author does not want us to miss: “They Said ‘Yes’ to a Pagan Education,” followed by “They Said ‘Yes’ to a Political Career,” then “They Said ‘Yes’ to a Change of Name,” and finally “They Said ‘No’ to the King’s Food.” The author could have mentioned the young Hebrews’ resistance to the giving of the new (Babylonian) names, something that is evident in the intentional corruption of the names Bel-te-Shazzar and Abed-Nego.