

Eastern Question on the Golden Princess

Daniel 11:40 Prophecy Conference

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by John Witcombe

Eastern Question on the Golden Princess? Let me begin by defining terms:

The Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy was a prophetic lecture on Daniel 11:40-45 presented in public meetings by early Adventist pioneers and evangelists, such as General Conference President A.G. Daniells and noted author and publishing house editor Uriah Smith. The contents of this lecture were outlined in our denomination's publications, *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, and Uriah Smith's book, *Daniel and the Revelation*. In this lecture, the "King of the North" and the "King of the South" were interpreted to be literal political powers operating in the theater of the Middle East. "North" was identified as Turkey, and "South" as Egypt. This was the lecture that our evangelists and pastors used as a means to bring the attention of the world to the Seventh-day Adventist message. We have located over 850 newspaper articles from the late 1800s up into the first half of the 20th century that reported on the presentation of this lecture.

In 1884 Ellen White wrote the following report regarding a presentation on the prophecies of Daniel 11:40-45: "The evening meeting was largely attended. Elder Smith spoke with great clearness, and many listened with open eyes, ears, and mouths. **The outsiders seemed to be intensely interested in the Eastern question.** He closed with a very solemn address to those who had not been preparing for these great events in the near future." {Letter 55, Aug. 24, 1884}.

Would the same presentation in 2018 elicit the same response?

Which brings me to the definition of the Golden Princess. Last month, my family sent my wife and me on an all-expense paid, 12-day Princess cruise from Los Angeles to Alaska. After a few days at sea, I gave the ship's Entertainment Director a copy of my book, *Jerusalem Caliphate and the Third Jihad*, along with a copy of a poster advertising a prophetic lecture on Daniel 11:45 that I had given several months ago at the Radisson Hotel in Helena, MT.

I told the Entertainment Director that I would be willing to present this lecture on his ship.

The poster reads:

The Battle for Jerusalem.

The United States President, Donald Trump, declared that Jerusalem is the eternal Capital of Israel.

Muhammad declared that Jerusalem was to be the final capital of the Islamic Caliphate: the Capital of Islam.

So, whose Capital: Islam's or Israel's?

A prophecy in Daniel 11:45 answered this question 2,500 years ago.

And the answer may surprise you!

If you know anything about the nature of the entertainment found on a cruise ship, there was little chance, very little chance that the ship would allow such a lecture to be presented.

Was I ever surprised when I received the message that I was scheduled to speak at one of the ship's premier venues.

The ship publishes a daily paper that is delivered to every stateroom on the ship first thing in the morning. It provides an hourly schedule of the day's activities. Here is the wording **they** came up with to advertise my lecture:

3:15pm Lecture: Jerusalem Caliphate and the Third Jihad Join Fellow Guest and Author, Pastor John Witcombe for this lecture. Discover what Bible prophecy reveals regarding the end game for the city of Jerusalem. Explorers Lounge, Deck 7 Midship

The lounge was packed with several hundred guests for the lecture I entitled: The Battle for Jerusalem. Gauging from the applause, along with the written and verbal comments, it was evident that the 45-minute lecture was very well received. One guest wrote me a note telling me that this lecture was the talk of the dinner table that evening.

The Entertainment Director thanked me on three separate occasions. He noticed that: "The afternoon meeting was largely attended and that I spoke with great clearness, and many listened with open eyes, ears, and mouths. The Entertainment Director noticed that the ship's guests seemed to be intensely interested in the Eastern question." {Letter 55, Aug. 24, 1884}.

An Elite status guest, who has been on scores of cruises all around the world working as a cruise entertainer, let me know how unusual it was for a cruise ship to allow a biblically based lecture to be held in one of the main lounges of the ship. He had never seen the likes. He too saw the interest of the people and encouraged me to offer this lecture on other cruise lines.

A young woman came up to me just before we disembarked back in Los Angeles and told me the following story: Her mother and her aunt were traveling with her on this cruise. They came to the lecture and guessed that I must be a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, perhaps because I mentioned Uriah Smith's book, *Daniel and the Revelation*. They left a message on my stateroom phone asking if I would conduct a Sabbath church service on the ship. I checked with the ship and they made the arraignments for me to do this. The prophetic lecture coupled with the Sabbath sermon, reached the heart of this young woman's aunt, who had left the Seventh-day Adventist Church many years ago. The niece recognized that her aunt was not the same lady that got on the ship. Her aunt told her that it was divine providence that brought them on this cruise.

This young professional emailed me a few days ago: ". . . if you plan to hold any type of seminar or Bible study groups in the future on cruise ships please let us know so we can see if booking is an option for our family."

But the interest of the people and lives being affected doesn't prove that the Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy lecture is biblical truth. Perhaps the lecture I gave was a Jesuit-inspired teaching, as Louis Were claimed in regard to the Easter Question view held by Elder Uriah Smith. Maybe the *king of the north* in verse 45 has nothing to do with Turkey and is really the papacy; and perhaps the *king of the south* in verse 40 is not the leader of Egypt, but rather represents atheism or Islam.

Is there a way to know for certain whether or not the Eastern Question that was taught for over 80 years in our church is indeed prophetic truth?

If we were left solely to our own interpretive abilities to understand Daniel 11:40-45, we could expect to see a multiplicity of views with everyone believing that their view is the correct understanding.

And that is exactly where we are at today.

The founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, coming from various denominations, were just as divided on their understanding of doctrinal issues as those of us here are divided on our understanding of Daniel 11. Reporting on one of the 22 Sabbath Conferences that were held between 1848 and 1850, where our doctrinal positions were hammered out, Ellen White wrote:

“Our first general meeting in western New York, beginning August 18, was held at Volney, in Brother David Arnold's barn. About thirty-five were present,--all the friends that could be collected in that part of the State. **But of this number there were hardly two agreed. Some were holding serious errors, and each strenuously urged his own views, declaring that they were according to the Scriptures.**” {*Life Sketches*, p. 110}.

“Hardly two agreed”. Sound familiar? If it was not for God’s **intervention** back then, I doubt that there would have ever been unity. But God promised in His Word that He would intervene. By what means? Listen to what Ellen White stated:

“I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. **God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the ‘last days’**; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and **to correct those who err from Bible truth.**” {*Early Writings*, p. 78}

Here is Ellen White's report on how this promised intervention worked for the brethren back in 1848:

“Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, ‘We can do nothing more,’ the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me . . .” {*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 206}.

Ellen White also stated:

“They knew that when not in vision I could not understand these matters, and **they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given me.** The leading points of our faith as we hold them today were firmly established. *Point after point was clearly defined, and all the brethren came into harmony.*” {*This Day With God*, p. 317}.

A most important question for us to answer this afternoon is: Did God give to Ellen White any indication as to whether or not the Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy was biblical truth? If He did, then, for those who will allow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit working through the ministry of Ellen White to correct their interpretation of the Bible, it is possible that all of us brethren assembled here today could come into harmony.

If God did not speak through His prophet regarding the last six verses of Daniel 11, then unity of interpretation will be impossible to achieve.

I am going to make a case this afternoon that God was not silent on the Eastern Question. Follow me closely:

“**There must be no long discussions, no presenting of new theories in regard to prophecies that God has already made plain.**” {RH, November 27, 1900 par. 13}

How can we know if Ellen White is including the prophecy of Daniel 11:40-45 as one of the “prophecies that God has already made *plain*”, thus barring the presentation of new theories on these verses?

Here is my evidence that the Eastern Question is prophetic truth that God had already made plain to His church. Ellen White wrote:

“Elder Daniells speaks this evening upon the *Eastern Question*. May the Lord give His Holy Spirit to inspire the hearts to make **the truth plain.**” {Ms189-1898 (December 25, 1898) par. 9}

God’s Holy Spirit could not have made the truth of the Eastern Question *plain* to the hearts of the listeners unless it was prophetic truth that God had already made *plain* to His church.

When was it made plain to our church? It was made *plain* during a ten-year period of time (1862-1872) when a *thorough investigation* of the books of Daniel and Revelation was made by our church.

Ellen White speaks of this investigation:

“While the people who are anxious for truth have been calling, ‘Watchman, what of the night?’ the answer has been given intelligently, ‘The morning cometh, and also the night.’ *By a thorough investigation of the prophecies* we understand where we are in this world's history; and we know for a certainty that the second coming of Christ is near. The result of these investigations must be brought before the world through the press.” 4T 592, (1881)

Our press rolled out the results of that investigation. Over a million copies of *Daniel and the Revelation* were printed in several languages.

Regarding the leader of this thorough investigation, Ellen White wrote:

“God used the author [Uriah Smith] of this book [*Daniel and the Revelation*] as a *channel through which to communicate light* to direct minds to the **truth.**” {1MR 63}

Perhaps it is no coincidence that, on two separate occasions, God led Ellen White to call the *Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy*, **truth.**

“Elder Daniells speaks this evening upon the **Eastern Question**. May the Lord give His Holy Spirit to inspire the hearts to make the **truth** plain.” Ms189-Dec. 25, 1898.

“Sunday forenoon Elder Smith spoke upon the **Eastern Question**, . . . the great day of the meeting was over. Many had listened to the **truth**, and the day of final reckoning will reveal the results of that day’s meeting.” Letter 10a, 1877.

It is in Uriah Smith’s book, which Ellen White labeled “God’s helping hand”, where we find the truth regarding the Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy plainly laid out.

“Those who are preparing to enter the ministry, who desire to become successful students of the prophecies, will find *Daniel and the Revelation* an invaluable help. They need to understand this book. It speaks of past, present, and future, laying out the path so *plainly* that none need err therein. . . . The great, essential questions which God would have presented to the people are found in *Daniel and the Revelation*. There is found **solid, eternal truth** for this time. Everyone needs the light and information it contains.” {1MR, 61}

In closing, let me summarize:

God made the interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 *plain* to our church during that ten-year investigation of the prophecies, when God channeled prophetic light through Uriah Smith as he led that group of “able Bible students” in a thorough investigation of Daniel and Revelation.

I base this conclusion upon the fact that Ellen White prayed for the Holy Spirit to make the truth of the Eastern Question plain to the listening audience. Ellen White would not have prayed for the Holy Spirit to make the truth of the Eastern Question plain to the listeners, unless she knew it was prophetic truth that God had already made plain to His church.

Let me bring home the import of this conclusion to this conference here today.

Because God had indeed already made plain the Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy, we must not present new theories on the prophecy of Daniel 11:40-45.

“There must be no long discussions, no presenting of new theories in regard to prophecies that God has already made plain.” RH, November 27, 1900 par. 13

So why all the new theories?

Before July 16, 2015 when the White Estate released several previously unpublished manuscripts, we did not have access to the significant statement regarding Ellen White’s Ms189 prayer for the truth of the Eastern Question to be made plain. And without a word from God’s messenger “to correct those who err from Bible truth”, everyone rightfully felt free to develop and promote their own private interpretation of this prophecy.

We were all ignorant of this statement because it had not been released by the White Estate. But now that we have read this statement, what are we going to do with it?

We could ignore it, explain it away and continue presenting new theories on this important prophecy. But if we do so, wouldn’t we be making of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God? We have been warned:

“The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish’”. 10MR 311

We must not fall for this deception. We should allow this statement to bring us into unity so that God’s church can once again speak with a united prophetic voice on this critical prophecy.

“Elder Daniells speaks this evening upon the **Eastern Question**. May the Lord give His Holy Spirit to inspire the hearts to make the **truth plain.**” Ms189-Dec. 25, 1898.

Ellen White believed that Uriah Smith's interpretation of Daniel 11 represented divine truth. If we accept Smith's understanding because it is endorsed by Ellen White, will we then be in opposition to principles of sound hermeneutics?

Not at all! And in my paper posted on this conference’s website I demonstrate that our pioneer's understanding of Daniel 11 is indeed based on sound principles of prophetic interpretation. The paper is titled, “A Literal King of the South”. In this paper, I’ve updated Uriah Smith’s interpretation of verse 45, taking into account the current geopolitical conditions of the Middle East.

Our pioneer's understanding of Daniel 11 was indeed based on sound principles of prophetic interpretation. I believe that Daniel 11:45 is soon to be fulfilled and God desires His church to give powerful public witness to this prophecy before its fulfillment.

The Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy is present truth that we must share with the world.

So if I’m ever sent on another cruise, I’m going to request the ship’s theater as the venue for my Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy lecture.

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