

A Critique of the Islam Interpretation
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October 21, 2021

I. Introduction

Among the three major interpretations of Daniel 11, the newest view is that of Islam as the King of the South that attacks the King of the North—the papacy—during the time of the end. This ushers in the third and final holy war between Islam and Christianity that leads to the end of the world. While there are some variances, there is general agreement on certain major points and this understanding is taught by Tim Roosenberg, Roy Gane, Michael and Randall Younker.

This paper will critique some of the challenges with this interpretation and how it affects our understanding of end-time Bible prophecy as Seventh-day Adventists.

II. My Initial Exposure to Islam in End-Time Prophecy

My first exposure to the idea that Islam will play a role in end-time prophecy occurred while I was living in Loma Linda, CA in the year 2008, I heard a speaker named Jeff Pippenger. His views are certainly extreme compared to what is espoused by the names mentioned in the introduction but there are some similarities. Jeff Pippenger claimed that because Islam attacks Christian Eastern Rome in the first and second woes of Revelation 9, it must necessarily be part of the third woe of Revelation 11:15-19. This is an *a priori* assumption that forces an interpretation into the text rather than allowing that particular passage to interpret itself.

Pippenger refers to this as the “triple application of Bible prophecy.” Based on this “triple application,” he has taught that the third woe began in history on September 11, 2001 because of Islam’s attack on modern America. Along with this interpretation, he also claims that the loud cry of Revelation 18 and the judgment of the living began on September 11, 2001. Pippenger subsequently became more extreme and predicted that Islam would attack Nashville, Tennessee with a nuclear bomb on July 18, 2020. He took out a full-page newspaper ad in the Sunday edition of *The Tennessean* to warn the residents of Nashville. The advertising manager for *The Tennessean* was fired as a result of the ad.¹

These latter extreme views are not shared by the lead presenters of the annual Daniel 11 symposium.

However, like Pippenger, there is agreement among them that Islam will emerge a third time to attack modern Christianity which will usher in the closing events of this earth’s history.

III. Overall Framework of Islam Interpretation

The foundation for this view is the understanding that there are three holy wars between Islam and Christianity. The first war took place during the first woe in Revelation 9 when there was Arab expansion of Islam and seven major Christian crusades from AD 1095 to 1291. The second war took place during the second woe from roughly AD 1449 to 1840 in which there was growth of the Islamic Ottoman Empire during the period of the Reformation.²

¹ <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2020/06/22/tennessean-fires-manager-donates-funds-plans-training-after-anti-muslim-ad-runs/3234806001/>

² Tim Roosenberg, *Islam and Christianity* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011), 12

In the third and final holy war, Islam will attack Christianity during the time of the end, which Roosenberg says begins in 1844 and coincides with the beginning of the third woe. This third and final holy war between Islam and Christianity ushers in the final crisis of this earth's history.

In the scope of Adventist history, this a new interpretation that veers off from a standard historicist approach and relies on an exegetical method with a thematic view of history. That does not mean that this viewpoint is necessarily wrong, but when a new interpretation is arrived at, it is fair to ask what the underlying methodological approach is that leads to such a new view.

With this framework in mind, Roy Gane sets forth a proposition of the sequence of kingdoms in the verses of Daniel 11.³ The following table is from Dr. Gane's paper:⁴

Reference	Kingdom/Dynasty	
11:2	Persia	
11:3-19	Greece: Alexander and four divisions	
	<i>North</i>	<i>South</i>
11:5-19	Seleucid Syria	Ptolemaic Egypt
11:20	Rome: Republican	
11:21-22	Rome: Imperial	
11:23-45	Rome: Papal	(Byzantine Empire)
11:25-30a		Islam
11:30b-39		
11:40-43		
11:44-45		
12:1-3	Transition to God's kingdom, with resurrection	

From this table, it can be nicely seen how Dr. Gane presents the flow of history through these verses. To summarize briefly, Greece is given 17 verses in Dan. 11:3-19; Pagan Rome is given 3 verses in Dan. 11:20-22; Papal Rome is given 23 verses in Dan. 11:23-45.

With the transition to Papal Rome in verse 23, the Islam view believes that verses 25-30a of Daniel 11 describe the crusades with the first two holy wars between Islam and Christianity.

³ Roy E. Gane, "Religious-Political Papacy and Islamic Power in Daniel 11," Daniel 11 Conference, October 19-21, 2018

⁴ Ibid, p. 22

IV. Challenges to the Interpretation — Greece is Greater than Pagan Rome in Daniel 11

The first variance to a standard Seventh-day Adventist interpretation in Daniel 11 is that Greece, including its division into Seleucid Syria and Ptolemaic Egypt, is given far more attention than pagan Rome in its Republican and Imperial divisions. Antiochus III is given more verses (Dan. 11:15-19) than pagan Rome (Dan. 11:20-22).⁵

This is a minority view among Seventh-day Adventist interpreters as many believe that pagan Rome enters the narrative of the prophecy in Dan. 11:14 or Dan. 11:16. As Gerhard Pfandl says:

The differences between the various authors are primarily concerned with the question, “At what points in the story do the Romans and the papacy enter the picture?” Francis D. Nichol, Edward R. Thiele, and C. Mervyn Maxwell see the Roman entry in verse 14; Roy A. Anderson, George M. Price, and William H. Shea believe the Romans come on the scene in verse 16. Ernest W. Marter has the Romans come on the scene in verse 22. Jacques B. Doukhan believes the Romans appear briefly only in verse 4; from verse 5 he has the papacy as the king of the North until the end of the chapter.⁶

Another striking point that Pfandl makes is with respect to evangelical scholarship regarding Daniel 11:

Modern critical scholarship views chapter 11 as a description of the wars between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings, culminating in the career of the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who is seen as the main actor in verses 21-45. Evangelical scholarship generally follows this outline, except that from verse 35 on some see the career of Antiochus Epiphanes foreshadowing the activities of the last-day antichrist; others postulated a gap of many centuries between verses 35 and 36 and interpret the last ten verses as applying only to a future antichrist.⁷

While not necessarily identical, the Islam interpretation minimizes the role of pagan Rome in the Daniel 11 prophecy and follows a pattern of history through the first 19 verses of Daniel 11 in a similar manner to evangelical scholarship before leaving the evangelical track and finally acknowledging Rome’s place in the narrative of Daniel 11 in verse 20.

Most Seventh-day Adventist interpreters believe in the principle of “repeat and enlarge” through the prophecies of the book of Daniel in chapters 2, 7, 8, and 11.⁸ In the visions of Daniel 2, 7, and 8, Rome, as the fourth kingdom, is given more attention in the prophetic narrative than Greece.

In the interpretative phase of Daniel 2, Greece is described in one half of a verse (Dan. 2:39) while Rome is given all of Dan. 2:40. In Daniel 7, Greece is seen in Dan. 7:6, whereas Rome is seen in Daniel 7:7; 19, 20, 23, and the first half of verse 24. Furthermore, Daniel says in Dan. 7:19 that he wants to know “the truth of the fourth beast.”

⁵ Ibid, pp. 6-7

⁶ Gerhard Pfandl, *Daniel: God’s Beloved Prophet* (Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, MD, 2020), 168

⁷ Ibid, p. 168.

⁸ Ibid, p. 163. Pfandl says, “We can expect, therefore, that the vision of Daniel 10-12 will enlarge the outline of Daniel 8.”

Finally, in Daniel 8, Greece is the second of three kingdoms. Medo-Persia is the first kingdom as the ram (Dan. 8:3, 4, 20) and it became *great*. Greece is the second kingdom as the goat (Dan. 8:5-8) and it waxed *very great*. Rome is the third kingdom and is described in two phases (pagan and papal) as the little horn (Dan. 8:9-12) and it waxed *exceeding great* even in its pagan phase in Dan. 8:9.

Clearly, pagan Rome is given more attention and emphasis than Greece in the first three prophetic visions of Daniel. While there is certainly greater detail about Greece in Daniel 11:3-13 than in Daniel 2, 7, 8, it is not plausible from a historical and prophetic standpoint to give more detail to Greece than pagan Rome in Daniel 11. There is solid historicist evidence for the rise of pagan Rome in Daniel 11:14 or 11:16 as evidenced by the multiple scholars listed above in Gerhard Pfandl's book.

When Dr. Gane does get to Rome, he identifies the "raiser of taxes" not as Caesar Augustus as nearly all Seventh-day Adventist scholars do,⁹ but he rather identifies this as "the Roman senate."¹⁰

This minimization in the Islam interpretation of the pagan Roman power in Daniel 11 that waxed *exceeding great* in Daniel 8 is a bit surprising. While not concerning to the same degree, it is somewhat reminiscent of the interpretation that evangelical and higher critical scholars give regarding Antiochus IV Epiphanes in Daniel 8 even when Rome is a much better interpretation. While the evangelical interpretation in Daniel 8 is preterist, Antiochus IV Epiphanes is a historical figure, but he does not fit best as the little horn power.

In the same manner, Antiochus III is not anywhere near as good a fit for the interpretation of the power spoken in Daniel 11:15-19. Pompey and Julius Caesar are much better known historical figures and were key players in helping pagan Rome rise to its status as the strongest empire yet at that time.

V. Papal Rome and the Crusades

The next area of challenge to the Islam interpretation is found in Daniel 11:23-30a. While there is admittedly disagreement among non-Islam interpretations about the flow of history from Daniel 11:22 to Daniel 11:23,¹¹ many interpreters follow a fairly linear history that leads to the fall of the pagan Roman Empire in AD 476 in Daniel 11:30a and the rise of the papacy in AD 508 in either Daniel 11:30b or 11:31.

The Islam interpretation sees the rise of the papacy in Daniel 11:23 and sees Daniel 11:25 as a description of the onset of the crusades in AD 1095 when Pope Urban II called on the Christian

⁹ Ibid, p. 170.

¹⁰ Roy E. Gane, "Religious-Political Papacy and Islamic Power in Daniel 11," Daniel 11 Conference, October 19-21, 2018, p. 10

¹¹ Uriah Smith famously jumps back from the death of Tiberias Caesar and the death of Christ in 31 A.D. to the Roman league with the Jews in 161 B.C. and then describes the history of Mark Antony, Cleopatra, and Caesar Augustus. Others, such as Edward Nelson, C. Mervyn Maxwell and William Shea see the rise of the papacy in verse 23.

nations of Europe to help gain access to pilgrim sites in the land of Israel.¹² This is the beginning of the first holy war between Islam and Christianity during the first woe. The second holy war continues from around AD 1449 to 1840 during the second woe according to Roosenberg¹³ while Michael Younker more specifically applies it to the Venetian vs. Ottoman wars between AD 1394-1718.¹⁴

V. The Ships of Kittim

One of the key points for the Islam view upon which much of their interpretation hinges regards the “ships of Kittim” in Daniel 11:30 and the events surrounding the battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571. Michael Younker says:

From 11:23-45, there are very few proper ‘place’ nouns, and all of them are located in 41-45, except for verse 30. This makes the interpretation of verse 30 absolutely critical, a hinge verse upon which interpretations of the entirety of Dan 11 will either fail or be affirmed.¹⁵

As Gerhard Pfandl says,

The Hebrew word *kittim* appears also in Isaiah 23:12, Jeremiah 2:10, and Ezekiel 27:6, where it refers to the islands of the Mediterranean Sea, particularly Cyprus.¹⁶

The Hebrew word for “ships” is *tzi*. Michael Younker says,

The first appearance of *tzi* is in Num 24:24, in Balaam’s prophetic oracles. There it is prophesied that *tzim* will come from *Kittim* (!) to afflict Asshur and Eber, before likewise being destroyed. This appears to be precisely what happened when some of the “Sea Peoples” invaded northern Israel after spending some time, perhaps a century, on Cyprus. The Sea Peoples, some of whom may have spent time near Egypt, were among the first in history to utilize a decked ship for the archers and soldiers on top, with oarsmen below to increase the speed of the ships, while also including an adjustable sail for maneuverability, and these ships dominated the Mediterranean for centuries thereafter—they were perfect for the shorter voyages around the Mediterranean, in contrast to the later larger and more complex multi-sailed vessels needed for oceanic exploration.¹⁷

Younker then goes on to say,

¹² Roy E. Gane, “Religious-Political Papacy and Islamic Power in Daniel 11,” Daniel 11 Conference, October 19-21, 2018, p. 14

¹³ Tim Roosenberg, *Islam and Christianity*, p. 12

¹⁴ Michael F. Younker, “Daniel 11:10-40: A Literal-Historicist Proposal and Commentary,” October 6, 2020, p. 83

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁶ Gerhard Pfandl, *Daniel: God’s Beloved Prophet*, p. 171

¹⁷ Michael F. Younker, “Daniel 11:10-40: A Literal-Historicist Proposal and Commentary,” October 6, 2020, p. 80

In summary, if *tzi* means a particular war-galley fitted with a deck, oarsmen, and sail, then it is referring to the dominant warship that ruled the Mediterranean from around the time of Balaam (~13th century B.C.) until after the conclusion of the War of Cyprus in 1573, around 2,800 years.¹⁸

Based on this understanding, the Islam interpretation then applies the “ships of Kittim” to the ships that were used by the Ottomans that sailed from Cyprus to meet the fleet of the Holy League of Pope Pius V in the battle of Lepanto near western Greece on October 7, 1571. The fleet of the Holy League defeated the Ottomans in this battle. This would be the last battle with ships of this kind in the Mediterranean.¹⁹

Afterward, the Holy League collapsed and the Ottomans rebuilt a new fleet of ships that led to an ongoing stalemate in the Mediterranean. Thus, the victory for the papacy was short-lived.

While there is really no dispute regarding the meaning of *tzi* and *kittim*, the great challenge to this interpretation is whether verses 25-30a are really a description of the crusades and whether *tzi* and *kittim* can be applied to other historical events.

Pfandl comments on this passage:

If verse 30 refers to the Romans, the ships of *kittim* that come against Rome could be the ships of the Vandal king Genseric, who, sailing from the old site of Carthage, destroyed the Roman fleet and sacked Rome in AD 455. Maxwell, who places this verse into the time of the Crusades, believes that the Muslims hired Greek vessels to assist them in opposing the crusaders.²⁰

Notice also this statement from *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*:

Some see in the “ships of Chittim” a reference to the barbarian hordes who invaded and broke up the Western Roman Empire.²¹

There is solid historical evidence for the destruction that the naval force of the Vandals brought upon the Western Roman Empire with the sacking of Rome in AD 455 before its final demise in AD 476. This represents a very logical and linear flow of history.

Herein lies the greater concern with the Islam interpretation. Already, we have seen an interpretation in Daniel 11:3-19 that places more emphasis on Antiochus III than all of pagan Rome. Only three verses are given to pagan Rome in Daniel 11:20-22.

In verses 23-30a, the focus is placed on the rise of the papacy and its wars with Islam rather than the eastward expansion of the pagan Roman Empire and of its collapse in AD 476.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 83.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 86

²⁰ Gerhard Pfandl, *Daniel: God's Beloved Prophet*, p. 171

²¹ F.D. Nichol, editor, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1955, 1980), vol. 4, p. 873

By identifying Egypt as Islamic in Daniel 11:25,²² the Islam interpretation can make the battles between the King of the North and the King of the South between the papacy and Islam throughout the rest of the chapter.

What is perplexing to this interpretation is that the Crusades continued until at least AD 1718 and the battle of Lepanto occurred in AD 1571. This makes a very disjointed transition in the prophecy from the historical timeline of the papacy in Daniel 11:30a, as understood by the Islam view, versus the papacy in Daniel 11:31. With the exception of those who promote the literal interpretation, in which the secular power of France is identified by them as the power spoken of in Daniel 11:30b-36,²³ the rest of Adventist scholarship identifies the papacy as the power described in Daniel 11:30b or 11:31.

Ellen G. White makes her clearest statement on Daniel 11 and she starts in 11:30b:

We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. Much of the history that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy will be repeated. In the thirtieth verse a power is spoken of that "shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." [Verses 31-36, quoted.]²⁴

It is evident that Ellen G. White is referring to a new power in Daniel 11:30b. This power is the papacy, and this is a transition from pagan Rome in Daniel 11:30a.

From Daniel 11:31, we have the beginning of the 1,290 and 1,335 day prophecies as referenced in Daniel 12:11, 12 in which the daily is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up. The activities of Clovis in AD 508 meet the fulfillment for the starting point of these prophecies so that we arrive at AD 1798 and 1843.

This is why the Islam interpretation of Daniel 11:25-30a is so problematic. It is simply illogical to accept that a thematic approach regarding the papacy can justify a description of the Crusades through at least AD 1571 in the battle of Lepanto in Daniel 11:30a and then to leap back in time 1,063 years to AD 508 to describe the dark age papacy in verses 30b to 39.

It makes much more sense to apply the "ships of Kittim" to the commonly used ships of the Mediterranean that were used by Genseric of the Vandals (2nd trumpet out of four in Revelation 8) to lead to the downfall of the pagan Western Roman Empire in AD 476 in Daniel 11:30a. Even Michael Younker admits that the "ships" described were the dominant warships of the Mediterranean for about 2,800 years from the time of Balaam until the 1500s. Thus, these would have been the dominant warships during the time of Genseric and the Vandals.

The fall of the pagan Western Roman Empire in Daniel 11:30a is then followed by a transition to the rise of the papacy in Daniel 11:30b and the role of Clovis in AD 508 in Daniel 11:31. This flow of history fits with the repetition and enlargement of the book of Daniel throughout the

²² Roy E. Gane, "Religious-Political Papacy and Islamic Power in Daniel 11," Daniel 11 Conference, October 19-21, 2018, p. 13

²³ Ken Lebrun, "Identifying the King of the South Through a Natural Reading of Daniel 11," Daniel 11 Conference, October 19-21, 2018, pp. 13-18

²⁴ Ellen G. White. *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13, 394.

major visions and does not require a leap back in time of over 1,000 years. Instead, it is a forward movement of 32 years which makes much more sense and is much easier to follow.

The “ships of Kittim” and verse 30a is used as a major point of emphasis in support of the Islam view. But from a historicist viewpoint, jumping back in time 1,063 years from AD 1571 to AD 508 makes it one of the weaker arguments in the entire interpretation. Especially when there is a clear historical interpretation from AD 455 in which the Vandals used ships in their voyage through the Mediterranean Sea to attack the Western Roman Empire, leading to its downfall in AD 476.

Point of Agreement

The interpreters of the Islam view agree that Daniel 11:31-39 is a description of the dark-age papacy. I am not aware of any points of disagreement that I have with the Islam interpreters in these verses. In verse 36, “the king” is a definite article and refers back to the papacy in Daniel 11:30b-35. Verses 36-39 are also a description of the papacy and not of Revolutionary France.

The Time of the End and The Third Holy War

Verse 40 is where things become challenging again. There is agreement that the papacy is the King of the North in verse 40 and through the end of the chapter. However, how the events of verse 40 are interpreted leads to further difficulties.

Tim Roosenberg teaches that “the time of the end” begins at the end of the 2,300 years in 1844.²⁵ This allows him to identify the King of the South in Daniel 11:40 as Islam attacking the papacy sometime after 1844 as the commencement of the third and final holy war during the third woe.

The third woe does not start until after 1840, based on Revelation 11:14-19 in which the second woe ended on August 11, 1840, and the third woe begins shortly after that. The third woe is described in Revelation 11:15-19. A careful reading of that passage does not support a third holy war between Islam and Christianity but rather God’s final judgment on spiritual Rome that culminates with the outpouring of the seven last plagues (see hail in Rev. 11:19 and the hail of the seventh plague in Rev. 16:21).

The belief that there are three holy wars between Islam and Christianity in the respective three woes is an *a priori* assumption in a somewhat similar fashion to Jeff Pippenger’s “triple application” of Bible prophecy.

While there may be variations in understanding by the lead interpreters of the Islam view as to what will happen in verses 40-45, there is general agreement that Islam is the King of the South that attacks the papacy or Christianity to usher in the third and final holy war, which then leads to the final crisis of this earth’s history before Jesus returns.

There are several key points of difficulty to this interpretation. Firstly, most Seventh-day Adventist scholars rightly interpret “the time of the end” to begin in 1798, not 1844. The vision of the 2,300 evenings and mornings was sealed until “the time of the end.” If this vision had been sealed until 1844, William Miller and the Second Advent Movement would not have come to an understanding of that important prophecy. However, the 2,300 day prophecy was unsealed to be understood in 1798, and God used the understanding of that prophecy to give rise to His last-day people even before 1844.

²⁵ Tim Roosenberg, *Islam and Christianity*, p. 209.

Gerhard Pfandl offers an excellent assessment of this phrase and its importance:

The term “the time of the end,” which appears five times in the book of Daniel (8:17; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9), is a purely Danielic phrase. It is not found in any of the other Old Testament books, nor in any extrabiblical Hebrew source. The key to its meaning is found in the vision of Daniel 11. In the concluding part of this vision a resurrection of the dead takes place (12:2). It is this event which holds the key to the proper understanding of the expression “time of the end.”

In Daniel 12:4, Daniel is told to shut up the prophecies and seal the book until the time of the end. Many shall then go back and forth in the book (that is, search) and knowledge of these prophecies shall increase. The expression “time of the end” in Daniel 12:4 refers back to “the time of the end” in Daniel 11:35, 40. In view of the larger context, “the time of the end” in these texts refers to the time preceding the resurrection of the dead in Daniel 12:2, which will happen at the second advent. This also seems to be the meaning in Daniel 12:4. Prior to the end of history, people will study and search out the Danielic visions just as Daniel himself searched out the seventy year prophecy of Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2).

From history we know that in the nineteenth century, after the end of the 1260 years of Daniel 7:25, knowledge of the Danielic prophecies increased dramatically. These prophecies had been understood as calendar years by only seven writers in the sixteenth century, and by only twelve in the seventeenth, but they were correctly understood by twenty-one of the twenty-two who wrote in the eighteenth, and by over one hundred of the 109 who wrote on Daniel between 1800 and 1850. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the time of the end began with the fall of the papacy in 1798. This means that the events from Daniel 11:40 onwards must be sought in the time between the fall of the papacy in 1798 and the resurrection at the end of time.²⁶

For further clarity, Daniel 11:33-35 shows us that the dark-age papacy would persecute God’s saints for “many days” until, or to, “the time of the end.” Daniel 7:25 tells us that this persecution of many days would last for 1260 days, or years, which takes us from AD 538 to AD 1798. There is no question, biblically and historically, that the time of the end begins in 1798 with the deadly wound of the papacy, not in 1844.

Why does that matter? It shows that the attack of the King of the South against the papacy took place in 1798 before the third woe began and before the second woe ended. It significantly weakens the idea that there will be a third holy war between Islam and Christianity during the third woe. The attack against the papacy in Daniel 11:40, comes not from Islam, but from an atheistic power. The language, “at the time of the end,” at the beginning of verse 40 will be addressed more completely in the next section.

At the Time of the End, or During the Time of the End

This raises another important question. What is meant in Daniel 11:40 by the phrase, “at the time of the end”?

²⁶ Gerhard Pfandl, *Daniel: God’s Beloved Prophet*, p. 174

This phrase continues a preposition which, as Marcus Swearingen Bates says, “can be translated into English in several ways, including ‘at,’ ‘by,’ ‘in,’ and ‘with.’”²⁷

Those who follow the Islam interpretation favor “in” or “during” the time of the end. Therefore, they do not see Daniel 11:40 as the deadly wound against the papacy “at the time of the end,” but see it as a future attack by Islam against the papacy “during the time of the end” or “in the time of the end.”

However, the language of this passage favors a specific point in time, “at” the “time of the end” or “at” 1798. Marcus Swearingen Bates goes on to show in his paper that the great majority of Bible translations translate the phrase in Daniel 11:40 as “at the time of the end.”

Furthermore, Swearingen Bates points out:

This preposition can identify a spatial location as far as an area or domain (i.e. someone or something is at a particular location) or a temporal location as far as marking an actual point in time (i.e. an event occurs at a specific point in time). These observations suggest that, “and at the time of the end” (וּבְעֵת לְאֵץ) in Dan. 11:40 potentially directs the reader to a specific point in time when an important event takes place. Otherwise, this Hebrew preposition would have been rendered as either “in” or “during” the “time of the end” in the English translations of Scripture.²⁸

Thus, it is very logical to accept the understanding that Daniel 11:40 is not describing some future event after 1844, but rather an attack against the papacy “at” the “time of the end” in 1798 at a specific point in time. Logically, this is describing the deadly wound of the papacy at the onset of the time of the end in 1798 when Pius VI was taken captive by Napoleon’s general Berthier.

Therefore, instead of looking for some future attack by Islam against Christianity at the beginning of verse 40, we have already seen the fulfillment of the first part of verse 40 in 1798. Considering that the phrase “time of the end” is found five times in the book of Daniel, it makes a lot sense to see a specific point in time in which the time of the end begins in 1798. Daniel 11:40 gives us a clear picture of that event, “at the time of the end” as would be expected in such a detailed prophecy.

Again, when we understand that Daniel 11:40 is at a specific point in time in 1798, we see that this occurs before the third woe began and does not fit with a third holy war between Islam and Christianity.

Further Issues With the Islam Interpretation

Based on the clear language that verse 40 is describing a pivotal event “at the time of the end” at a specific point in time in 1798, in which the papacy receives the deadly wound, it becomes obvious as to the identity of the King of the South in verse 40. Atheistic France delivered the deadly wound to the papacy in 1798 and is described as “spiritual Sodom and Egypt” in Revelation 11:8. France was a combination of the licentiousness of Sodom and the atheism of Egypt, and it is an end-time power described as a “beast” or kingdom in Revelation 11:7.

²⁷ Marcus Alden Swearingen Bates, “The Phrase ‘And At the Time of the End’ in Daniel 11:40.” Unpublished Manuscript. August 2021, p. 1.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

Seventh-day Adventists routinely connect the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation in order to understand their meaning. This is a standard method of interpretation within historicism. Ellen G. White says of these two books:

The books of Daniel and the Revelation are one. One is a prophecy, the other a revelation; one a book sealed, the other a book opened.²⁹

The interconnectedness of these two books makes it perfectly logical and appropriate to connect the prophecies of these books. We see such an example in the first beast of Revelation 13 and how it is a composite of the beasts of Daniel 7. A knowledge of Daniel 7 is essential for a correct interpretation of Revelation 13.

With respect to the connection between Daniel 11:40 and Revelation 11, the beast of atheism in Revelation 11:7 arises at the end of the 1260 years as described in Revelation 11:2, 3 just before the time of the end and just in time to deliver the deadly wound at the time of the end. It is not difficult to see the connection with atheistic France as the beginning of the end-time power that develops into worldwide secularism and becomes the King of the South as spiritual Egypt at the end of Daniel 11. This view is accepted by many reputable historicist Seventh-day Adventist students of Daniel 11, including Daniel scholars at the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.³⁰

The beast of atheism in Revelation 11:7, 8 described as spiritual Sodom and Egypt is a perfect fit with the King of the South in Daniel 11:40 that attacks the papacy at “the time of the end” in 1798.

However, Roy Gane calls this approach to the study of Scripture an “illegitimate totality transfer” and as a form of *eisegesis*.³¹ It is easy to attach a negative label to a position with which one has a disagreement. The challenge is that there is an impasse between well-respected scholars on this point.

In fact, what Dr. Gane calls *eisegesis*, very reputable Seventh-day Adventist scholars identify as solid historicism as it reflects the way Seventh-day Adventists have always arrived at prophetic truths. To make things more challenging, by identifying *historicism* as *eisegesis*, Dr. Gane and those who hold to his views are engaging in a form of higher criticism.

While labeling the connection between atheistic France of Revelation 11:7, 8 with the King of the South of Daniel 11:40 as “an illegitimate totality transfer” it is again fair to say that believing that there are three holy wars between Islam and Christianity in Daniel 11 is an *a priori* assumption. The timeframe of Revelation 11 takes one through the 1,260 years to “the time of the end” in preparation for the deadly wound of Revelation 13:3 “at the time of the end” and fits much better than a future Islamic attack against Christianity.

I say this not to question anyone’s character as I believe everyone who is participating in this ongoing study of Daniel 11 has high character and a desire to arrive at truth. However, this an

²⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 971.

³⁰ See Gerhard Pfandl, *Daniel: God’s Beloved Prophet*, p. 175; Angel Rodriguez, *Daniel 11 and the Islam Interpretation*, pp. 17; 21-22.

³¹ Roy E. Gane, “Religious-Political Papacy and Islamic Power in Daniel 11,” Daniel 11 Conference, October 19-21, 2018, p. 26

impasse that will be difficult to bridge as the methodological approach that is used is very different. The Islam interpretation uses an exegetical approach that attaches aspects of history in a thematic approach that is non-linear and often hard to follow. The historicist approach follows a linear path of history that attaches the significant prophetic markers (i.e. deadly wound at the time of the end) to the interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel 11. Seventh-day Adventist prophetic interpretation is built on the principle of historicism. When that approach is discarded in favor of an exegetical method, we should not be surprised to see such a vast difference in interpretation.

The King of the South cannot be both atheism and Islam. It was atheistic France, that later gave rise to worldwide atheism and secularism that delivered the deadly wound to the papacy in 1798. Islam had nothing to do with that attack.

The events in the world today with the further rise of secularism in its ongoing push against Christianity gives further credence to the understanding of atheism as the King of the South.

Literal versus Spiritual Israel

The Islam interpretation favors a literal interpretation of the glorious land and glorious holy mountain. Dr. Gane suggests that the glorious land and glorious holy mountain refer to the temple mount in Jerusalem.³²

While Dr. Gane says that he does not support futuristic dispensationalism, it should be seen from the book of Daniel itself that literal, geographic Israel is not a key player in end-time prophecy for Seventh-day Adventists.

Daniel 9:24-27 shows that there is probationary time for the Jewish nation. That probation ended after the 70 weeks, or 490 years, with the stoning of Stephen in AD 34. It is the Christian church that has become the territory of God's people since that time.

When the King of North, as the papacy, enters into the glorious land, it is for the purpose of conquest. That conquest comes through a law which gives the papacy dominion over God's people in that territory. That law is the National Sunday Law that becomes universal.³³ We are not waiting for the pope to make movements toward the temple mount in Jerusalem. That interpretation is found nowhere in the book of Revelation or in the writings of Ellen G. White. While that alone does not exclude such a possibility, it would seem reasonable and logical to find such an understanding in other major prophetic chapters of Scripture or in the book *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White.

Summary and Conclusion

As can be seen, there are several challenges with the Islam interpretation. We have seen that this interpretation gives much more attention to Greece and Antiochus III than it does to the pagan Roman empire. It then jumps ahead chronologically to the Crusades and the battle of Lepanto in AD 1571 in Daniel 11:30a before jumping back 1,063 years to AD 508 in Daniel 11:31. It makes an *a priori* assumption that there are three holy wars between Islam and Christianity and that the final war takes place beginning in Daniel 11:40 sometime after 1844.

³² Ibid, pp. 19, 20.

³³ See Norman McNulty, *Commentary on the Book of Daniel: Practical Living in the Judgment Hour* (Remnant Publications, Coldwater Michigan, 2019), pp. 234-255.

However, we have seen that pagan Rome is a key prophetic kingdom in the first three prophecies of Daniel and deserves more attention in Daniel 11 than it is afforded by the Islam interpretation. We have also already seen the fulfillment of the attack against the King of the North by atheistic France as the King of the South in 1798. Islam is not the King of the South in Daniel 11:40.

By denying that prophetic reality in Daniel 11:40, we set up ourselves up to look for sensational news events in the Middle East that have nothing to do with the major end-time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation.

In short, we are not looking for a Middle East conflict as the culmination of a third holy war just before Jesus comes back.

The book of Daniel makes it clear that the major apocalyptic events culminate with the Second Coming in Daniel 2, the beginning of the judgment in 1844 in Daniel 7, the cleansing of the sanctuary beginning in 1844 in Daniel 8, and the close of probation and Second Coming in Daniel 10-12. The end of Daniel 11, leading into Daniel 12, relates to how God's people stand through the final crisis as Christ finishes His work of cleansing the sanctuary from sin.

See the table below for a summary of these prophecies:

Daniel 2	Daniel 7	Daniel 8	Daniel 10-12
Babylon	Babylon	—	—
Medo-Persia	Medo-Persia	Medo-Persia	Medo-Persia
Greece	Greece	Greece	KON vs. KOS; KON starts as Seleucus from Greece
Pagan Rome	Pagan Rome	Little Horn as Pagan Rome	KON as Pagan Rome
Divided Kingdom	Papal Rome	Little Horn as Papal Rome	KON as Papal Rome
Second Coming	Judgment	Cleansing of Sanctuary	Probation Closes; Second Coming soon after

When His people stand faithfully through the Sunday Law crisis as the King of the North enters the glorious land, Michael stands up to deliver them from the final onslaught of the King of the North.

Recent developments on this earth make it clear that those events will certainly come as we have always believed. The rise of worldwide secularism and atheism today shows that we as God's people need to make sure we avoid the pitfalls posed by apostate Christianity from the King of the North and the atheism/secularism of the King of the South. Just as God's people in the ancient glorious land were caught between the King of the North and the King of the South of that time, we face a spiritual struggle between these powers today.

May we be faithful now and during the closing events of this earth's history as we see the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation unfold.