**Daniel 11 Conference Sermon – All Eyes on Waco**

**Scripture:** Daniel 2.1-23.

**Introduction**

* 1993. The Branch Davidians were led by [David Koresh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Koresh) and were headquartered at [Mount Carmel Center](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Carmel_Center) ranch, 13 miles NE of [Waco](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waco,_Texas). Suspecting the group of stockpiling illegal weapons, the [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureau_of_Alcohol,_Tobacco,_and_Firearms) (ATF) obtained a search warrant for the compound and arrest warrants for Koresh and a select few of the group's members.
* Warrants in hand, the ATF attempted to raid the ranch. An intense gun battle erupted, resulting in the deaths of four Federal agents and six Branch Davidians. After the failure of this initial raid, a siege lasting 51 days was initiated by the FBI, 28th Feb – 19th April 1993. Eventually, the FBI initiated a [tear gas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tear_gas) attack in an attempt to force the Branch Davidians out of the ranch. During the attack, a fire engulfed Mount Carmel Center. In total, 76 people died, including David Koresh.
* In 1993, all eyes were on Waco. In 2018, all eyes are on the Middle East. Today, our eyes are on Scripture.

**Principle 1 - Listen to the Internal Expositors**

* Many Bible prophecies have a dual nature: they are part prophecy and part explanation. The explanation may come from a human or an angel who provides an explanation for the prophecy. God not only provides prophecies, many of which use complex symbols, but He often provides an internal expositor to tell the reader what the symbols mean. Rule 1 therefore is to note and take seriously all internal expositors.
* Gen. 40-41. The butler, the baker and Pharaoh all had dreams, which were interpreted by Joseph.
* Daniel 2. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, and nobody could tell him the dream or the meaning until God gave the interpretation through Daniel. We must listen to the interpretation from the internal expositor.
* Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar dreamt of a mysterious tree that is cut down but not destroyed, and Daniel provides the in-text interpretation. The tree, says Daniel, represents Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore, the “7 times” of v. 32 must be interpreted literally, i.e. 7 years, for they refer to Nebuchadnezzar personally, and cannot be interpreted as representing more than 2,500 years, ending in 1914, as the JWs argue.
* Daniel 5. Daniel interprets the handwriting on the wall. An internal expositor explains a given prophecy.
* Daniel 7. 4 beasts come out of the sea, and Daniel asks for an explanation from “one of them that stood by” (7.16), an angelic interpreter. Daniel 8. Daniel has a vision of a ram and a he-goat, a prophecy concerning the Persian and Greek empires. God instructs Gabriel to, “make this man to understand the vision” (8.16). Gabriel is the internal expositor. Daniel 9. Daniel has become ill, seeks further understanding, and God sends Gabriel to explain the 70 prophetic weeks (9.21).
* Daniel 10. Daniel, in vision, sees two beings, one like the Son of Man, the other a majestic angel. The latter Gabriel, who says, “I am come to make you understand” (10.14). The internal expositor.
* Daniel 11. An explanation by an angel of the vision of Daniel 8, given in non-symbolic, literal language.
* Not to use the guidance of internal expositors casts us adrift on an ocean of speculation, which leads us to our 2nd principle: to compare Scripture with Scripture.

**Principle 2 - Compare Scripture with Scripture**

* To compare Scripture with Scripture recognizes that the OT & NT form a coherent, unified and single whole. Its many references, quotations and allusions are closely, and often deliberately, interrelated.
* Bible passages and texts are not standalone items that can be interpreted within their own life. Scripture sheds light upon Scripture, and symbols in Revelation are often to be understood by tracing the symbols back to older and other passages.
* It is easy to inject one’s own meaning into a passage. Uriah Smith wrote of the woman clothed with the sun in Rev. 12. He equated the sun with the Gospel era and the moon with the OT Judaism. “The Mosaic period shone with a light borrowed from the Christian era, even as the moon shines with light borrowed from the sun.” Nice, poetic, imaginative, but indefensible from Scripture.
* Comparing Scripture with Scripture, we come to Joseph’s dream of the sun, moon and 11 stars bowing down to him. The message? The sun represents Jacob. The moon represents Leah. The 11 stars represent his 11 brothers. Yes, the pure woman represents the Church of God, but it is the Jewish nation and OT Judaism that gave birth to the Redeemer.

**Principle 3 – Be Consistent!**

* This principle is suggested by common sense, and requires that wherever possible, the interpreter should assign the same meaning to the same symbol wherever it appears. Either Daniel and Revelation are a chaotic jumble of completely unrelated and random symbols, or God is a God of order and these books are an internally harmonious revelation of the future and His perfect will.
* For example, the 7 heads and 10 horns of Rev. 12, 13 and 17 should, according to this principle, refer to the same entities pictured as the 4 beasts of Daniel 7. And what of the 10 horns? They can be seen in the beasts of Rev. 12, 13 and 17, as well as those of Daniel 7. As Daniel 7 parallels Daniel 2, the 10 toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue indicate that the 10 horns also represent the nations that came out of the Roman Empire, i.e. the modern nations of Europe. If we do not apply the principle of consistency, we end up with 28 heads and 40 horns, which would make for an infinite # of possible interpretations.
* Consistency helps us explain the conundrum of the beast of Rev. 17. What does it represent? Revelation as a whole is concerned with 3 major opponents of the Lamb: the dragon (Rev. 12); the leopard-like beast and the 2-horned beast (Rev. 13). How do we know this? These are the 3 beasts that end up in the lake of fire and brimstone (20.10). So, the beast of Rev. 17 must correspond to one of these other 3.

**Principle 4 – Recognize Prophetic Augmentation**

* Visions in Daniel basically cover the same ground, but they are never identical. Later visions provide greater detail or emphasis, zooming in to provide clarification on specific issues as needed. In the process, symbols may remain the same, be expanded or modified, but remain consistent in interpretation.
* Prophetic augmentation is particularly evident in Daniel & Revelation. The vision of the 4 beasts (Daniel 7) parallels but augments Nebuchadnezzar’s statue (Daniel 2), adding new elements, e.g. the blasphemous little horn power and the heavenly judgment.
* Daniel 8 provides more details of how the little horn from Daniel 7 persecutes God’s people and opposes the heavenly sanctuary ministry of the Messiah Prince. Daniel 11 is a non-symbolic explanation of the entities depicted in Daniel 8, expanding on their activities and final fate.
* Recognizing prophetic augmentation is crucially important, because it necessitates a realization that the visions of Daniel & Revelation should be studied together. Each book and each prophecy is not a collection of disconnected snapshots, but a connected film of interrelated sequences. Alternative schools of prophetic interpretation (Futurism and Preterism) fail to recognize this principle, and thus fall short in their interpretations.

**Principle 5 – Seek Historical Correctness and Accuracy**

* Simply put, the predictions of Scripture should be measured against historical events. Yet, history raises difficult questions. Can we be truly objective about history? Whose history do we tell? At what point do objective facts merge into subjective interpretation of those facts?
* When Sir Isaac Newton wrote his “*Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms”* in 1728, he was working from the Bible and the works of classical Greek and Roman writers. When AT Jones wrote his *Empires of the Bible* in the late 1800s, he had access to greater historical research. And in the 21st century, we have yet greater access to historical understanding. As we march on through history, we are witnessing an explosion of knowledge, research, data analysis and understanding.
* The challenge we face is to remain as objective as we can with the available data, avoiding the temptation to twist history to suit current needs. Even church history can be tainted at its source. Catholic clerics and religious writers have repeatedly perverted the facts, at times deliberately falsifying them. Zealous to promote the interests of the Papacy, and no doubt for the greater glory of God, clerics have even resorted to blatant forgeries. Refraining from similar and shameful abuses is one of our goals.

**Principle 6 – Avoid History as Forgery**

* In the early 1700s, discerning Germans invented the phrase, “er lugt wie gedruckt” which means, “He lies as though it were printed.” They were talking about people who through the newspapers were massaging the truth and influencing society in malign ways. Liddell-Hart, a famous British military historian in the 1940s, said, “Nothing can deceive like a document.” “Fake News” is nothing new.
* Ramses II, 1279-1213BC, known as Ramses the Great, boasted of his military victories. His greatest battle, against the Hittites of Turkey, ended in a draw, but Ramses boasted of it as his greatest victory.
* Sennacherib, 705-681BC, ruler of the Assyrian empire, boasted of his successful campaign against Judah. He lists all the cities he captured, but when he comes to Jerusalem, he wrote that Hezekiah was “a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage.” What he failed to mention was his failure to capture Jerusalem, and the death of 180,000 of his soldiers in 1 night at the hands of an angel.
* In Christian history, the most famous chronicler of early church history was Eusebius (265-340AD). His history of the early church was foundational for how the Papacy understood itself in history, and was an historical reconstruction to emphasize the legitimacy of a church led by monarchical bishops, including the one from Rome.
* For many centuries, the Papacy used a forged document known as the Donation of Constantine to assert its legal right to religious and civil dominion of western Europe. The Donation was included in the False Decretals, otherwise known as the Decretals of Pseudo-Isidore. This 9th century collection of Catholic ecclesiastical laws originated in France, and contained forged and fictional accounts of early church councils from the first 7 centuries to buttress the power of the Papacy.
* A British aristocrat, Lord Acton, a famous historian and Catholic in the 19th century, wrote the famous words, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” He was condemning a fellow Catholic’s book on the Renaissance popes for letting them get away with murder. He opposed the doctrine of Papal infallibility, which causes huge problems for the Papacy today. How right Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) was when he wrote, “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.”
* Perverted history is a serious problem for prophetic interpreters. Truth is often the first casualty of war, and also of historical writings. It lies as if it were printed, and alas, it especially lies if Catholic clerics have been involved. If the Bible’s predictions are to measured against past events as well as current affairs, the record should obviously be scrutinized and presented with all the honesty at our command.

**Principle 7 – Avoid the Trap of the Contemporary**

* Sometimes a writer, noting a superficial resemblance between prophecy and a contemporary event, rushes into print. The book produced may be exciting and is certain to impress certain types of readers. However, when subsequent history turns out differently and contradicts expectations, the writer is caught in the trap of the contemporary. Mockery and embarrassment follow. Avoiding this trap is another sound principle!
* Throughout history, interpreters have argued that Adolf Hitler, Jimmy Carter and Henry Kissinger have been manifestations of antichrist. Dispensationalist Hal Lindsey argued that the world would end within 2 generations of the establishment of Israel in 1948, but 1988 came and went, and we are still here.
* When Napoleon Bonaparte was in the ascendant in Europe, an English commentator, Samuel Toovey, argued in 1813 that Napoleon was the 2-horned beast of Rev. 13. He then tried to find 666 in Napoleon’s name. Yet, in 1814 Napoleon was exiled by the British to Elba in the Mediterranean, and finally to St Helena, in the south Atlantic, where he died, after his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo.
* The truth is that very few individuals make the rarified heights of specific prophetic identification. Three emperors have loomed large enough for specific, prophetic attention: Cyrus (Isa. 45); Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2); and Alexander the Great (Dan. 8). The reason for singling them out was that they were synonymous with the empires which they founded. Writers today would avoid embarrassment if they were a little more cautious in ascribing contemporary events to specific Bible prophecies.

**Principle 8 – Respect Previous Prophetic Interpreters**

* 16th Dec 2003, John Glenn, the first American who went into orbit around the earth, together with Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong were at Kitty Hawk, to commemorate the Wright brothers, who on that day in 1903 had given humanity wings. Senator Glenn said, “Whatever we were able to do we were able to do because we stood on the shoulders of others.”
* Likewise in prophetic interpretation. Those who write today must be aware of those who wrote yesterday, in the last year, during the last century, and across the millennia. We can learn immensely from intellectual giants such as Martin Luther, Charles Wesley, Sir Isaac Newton, Uriah Smith and Le Roy Edwin Froom. More often than not, modern writings can be more accurate because of subsequent historical research or the fact that events subsequent to these writers have brought greater clarity.
* Moreover, God has had something to say to every generation, and to believe that Daniel and Revelation were written primarily or even exclusively for us today is shortsighted and egocentric. Throughout history, many have perished who imagined such a thing about their own generation.
* Peter wrote, “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation” (1 Peter. 1.20-21). This means that throughout salvation history, God has blessed His Church with those who may interpret prophecy within the Body. God gave us prophecy so that we might know, and also be blessed in the search for understanding. The symbols of prophecy are not unintelligible, but only those who have a desire to serve Him and love for Him will understand them.

**Conclusion**

* Studied Koresh’s hermeneutics for my MA dissertation. BBC interview. To study to be ready to answer for our faith. To know history. To understand how and why we come to certain prophetic interpretations. And to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through us and for us. Prophetic interpretation is important.
* In 1993, all eyes were on Waco. In 2018, all eyes are on the Middle East. Today, our eyes are on Scripture, but more important, like Daniel we today prayerfully lift our eyes to God for understanding.
* “Blessed be the name of God from age to age, for wisdom and power are yours. You change times and seasons, You depose kings and You set up kings; You give wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. You reveal deep and hidden things; You know what is in the darkness, and light dwells with You. To you, O God of my ancestors, We give thanks and praise, for You alone give wisdom and power, and we humbly ask that you reveal to us what we ask of you, a fuller understanding of the open scroll of Daniel, and the boldness to share your last offer of mercy with our dying world."