

In Daniel 11:40-45, Who Is the King of the South?

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In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (John 2:14-22 ESV)

Introduction

For three and a half years Jesus let His disciples ponder the same question that confused the Pharisees, i.e., "Yes, how is He going to do that?" It was not until after Jesus rose from the dead that they finally understood what He meant. He was speaking past everyone who heard Him because He was speaking on a spiritual level and they were hearing on a literal level. Is God speaking past us in Dan 11?¹ Would it be possible, or impossible, to think so?

Literalism

In what follows I argue for a spiritual interpretation of Dan 11:40-45. I see literalism as a desire for something tangible and real, where straightforward readings of the text bring us to reliable exegetical results. This desire is entirely praiseworthy, and I share it. But there's a question whether literalism is an effective way of achieving the goal. The fact is literalism can play tricks on people. Let me give two examples. It is in comparing them that the point will become clear. In a 1992 paper Evangelical author J. Paul Tanner makes the following observations. (By "antichrist" he means a Jewish leader based in Israel.)

¹ See Matt 11:16-19; 13:11-13; 15:15-16; 16:6-12, 21-23; 22:41-46; Mark 7:14-23; 8:14-21, 31-33; 9:1, 30-32; 12:35-37; 14:26-31, 72; Luke 2:48-51; 5:10-11; 6:5; 7:31-35; 8:45-48, 52-56; 9:12-17; 11:29-32; 17:20-21; 18:31-34; 24:13-27; John 2:18-22; 3:4-15; 4:7-26, 31-34; 6:41-44, 60-62; 7:32-36; 8:21-27, 57-59; 11:11-16, 23-27; 13:7-11, 36-38; 14:1-7; 16:16-18; 18:33-38; 19:30. "The death of Jesus as fully destroyed their hopes as if He had not forewarned them" (GC 594).

At times the [Seleucid] empire included in addition to Syria the ancient realms of Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Parthia, Bactria, Arachosia, Sogdiana, and much of ancient Anatolia.⁴² Translated into terms of today's national boundaries this would include Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, parts of Pakistan, and some of the central Asian republics (the lower parts of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan).

Interpreted in light of the domain of the ancient Seleucid empire, the "king of the North" is no small player for the Armageddon scenario. I would like to submit that the "king of the North" is a confederation of northern Arab nations that will attack the antichrist and his forces in this military conflict centered in the Middle East. If the "king of the South" is Egypt and possibly other neighboring countries of North Africa, then Dan 11:40 may be a prophecy of a combined Arab assault against the forces of the antichrist with Israel caught in the middle as in the days of the Ptolemies and Seleucids.²

According to Tanner, if the Seleucid Empire was North anciently, just move all of that forward into the end time, and there we have the prophetic North of our day. Such logic is entirely straightforward and clear.

The second example comes from Hal Lindsey. In his 1983 book, *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon*, Lindsey sets forth the position that Russia is the king of the North. "Just take a globe and run your finger due north from Israel; you'll find yourself smack in the middle of Russia."³ Again, the logic is crystal clear. But instead of a horde of true believers, we now have a horde of unbelievers.

Both writers share roughly the same set of starting assumptions, and both argue for their positions articulately, but the only point of agreement between them is that Israel is an object of attack. In my view the best way to achieve reliable exegetical results, after careful exegesis of the primary passage, is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. We will never get literalism from such a method, but we will gain certainty.

The Text

At this symposium our task is not to determine who the king of the North is, as in my examples above, but who the king of the South is. We begin with the text we are studying, looking first at vs. 40, then 41-43, then 44-45.

Verse 40

Verse 40 has four clauses corresponding to the Hebrew accents. These four clauses contain three metaphors (in clauses a, b, and d). In the first, the king of the South is compared with an animal – an animal with horns, capable of goring another animal (*yitnaggah* 'immô). In the second metaphor the actions of the king of the North

² "Daniel's 'King of the North': Do We Owe Russia an Apology?" *JETS* 35/3 (1992), 327-328.

³ London: Bantam Press, p. 67

are compared with wind (*w^eyistā'ēr 'ālāyw*), and in the third, with water (*w^ešātap w^e'ābar*). Such expressions have no literal application. Verse 40 is a figurative passage. See tables 1, 2, 3, and 4, all of which describe different aspects of vs. 40.

Table 1
The Three Metaphors of Dan 11:40
(Hebrew)

a	ûb ^e 'ēt qēš yitnaggah' immô melek hannegeb	w^eyistā'ēr 'ālāyw melek haššāpôn b ^e rekeb ub ^e pārāšîm ûbo'oniyyôt rabbôt	b
c	ûbā' ba'arāsôt	w^ešātap w^e'ābar	d

Table 2
The Three Metaphors of Dan 11:40
(English [ESV])

a	At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him [lit. gore him],	but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships	b
c	And he shall come into countries	And shall overflow and pass through.	d

Table 3
The Three Metaphors of Dan 11:40
(Nature of the Metaphors)

a	Animal (#1)	Wind (#2)	b
c	[No metaphor]	Water (#3)	d

Table 4
The Three Metaphors of Dan 11:40
(References to Later Verses)

a	[No later reference]	Vss. 42-43	b
c	Vss. 41-43	Vss. 44-45	d

In vs. 40a the king of the South attacks the king of the North, travelling North to do so. In vs. 40b we read that the king “shall rush upon him like a whirlwind.” In vs. 40c the king “shall come into countries.” And in vs. 40d he “shall overflow and pass through.” One might assume that everything described in vs. 40 occurs in vs. 40, but actually this cannot be. The events occur in vss. 41-43 or 44-45. Each clause of vs. 40 points forward out of sequence to a verse group in the rest of the section, except for vs. 40a, which is not repeated.

Verses 41-43

Verse 41. Either the king of the North attacks the king of the South twice, or he attacks once at a time subsequent vs 41. I say this because vs. 40b says that he shall rush “upon him,” whereas in vs. 41 the king is still on his way to “Egypt” and has not yet gotten to “him.” The attack mentioned in vs. 40b (wind metaphor) does not occur in vs 40b; it occurs later in vs. 42, where “Egypt” is first mentioned.

Separately, saying the Northern response occurs immediately in vs. 40b would imply that the king was not badly hurt in the Southern attack. The verb phrase in vs. 40b is literally “he will butt/gore with him” (*yitnaggah* ‘*immô*). The preposition translated “with him” (‘*immô*) gives the impression that the attack is an evenly matched contest, but the verb itself is singular (*yitnaggah*). Only one king does the goring. The Southern attack is not a contest between equals; it is a one sided mauling. A person who has been gored will not be in a position to fight immediately afterward. The wind metaphor is proleptic. It looks forward out of sequence to an attack which does not occur until the king finally reaches “Egypt” in vs. 42.

If the second metaphor compares the actions of the king of the North with wind, the third compares his actions with water. In a hurricane, water is more damaging than wind. But however this may be, it is the case that the two metaphors describe different responses at different levels of intensity, and therefore at different moments of history. They are not two descriptions of one set of events, nor are they descriptions of multiple events occurring simultaneously. The water metaphor applies at a time later than the wind metaphor. These facts can be mapped respectively onto vss. 41-43 (wind metaphor) and 44-45 (water metaphor).

Verse 40c tells us the king “shall come into countries” and vs. 41 tells us which ones: “the glorious land,” “Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.” In vs. 16 “the glorious land” refers to Judea, which sounds literal. But again, this cannot be. “Edom and Moab” also sound literal. Both terms are singular and could apply to a land, but “Ammonites” is plural and can only apply to people. The problem is that “the Ammonites” no longer exist, so any reference to them in the end time will of necessity be figurative (Ezek 25:10; Zeph 2:9). From this reference point, it will be necessary to apply “Edom and Moab” in the same way, and “the glorious land” along with them.

Verses 42-43. The next three terms we encounter are “Egypt” in vs. 42, and then “Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites” in vs. 43. Of these, “Egypt” is singular and could refer to a land, but “the Libyans and the Cushites” are both plural and can only refer to people. In this case, a literal application would be possible, because there are modern Libyans and Cushites (=Sudanese).

Verses 44-45. The only new term introduced in vs. 45 is “the glorious holy mountain,” which forms a matched pair with “the glorious land” in vs. 41. Together these frame the working parts of the passage between them. By working parts, I mean after the prolepses of vs. 40, i.e., vss. 41-43 and 44-45. “The glorious land” occurs in the first

verse of this group and “the glorious holy mountain” occurs in the last verse. We do not have space here to discuss vss. 16-28, but in vs. 16 we have “the glorious land” and in vs. 28 “the holy covenant.” Together these frame “the prince of the covenant” between them. If we compare what the angel is doing in the earlier section with what he does here, we have table 5.

Table 5
Spiritual Terms

“Glorious land” Vs. 16	“Prince of the covenant” Vs. 22	“Holy covenant” Vs. 28
“Glorious land” Vs. 41		“Glorious holy mountain” Vs. 45

At the beginning of the two verse groups, “glorious land” compares with and is identical to “glorious land,” and “holy covenant” compares with “glorious holy mountain.” If these comparisons are valid, one implication is that “glorious holy mountain” is not literal Jerusalem. Even in vs. 16 “glorious land” is a poetic way of referring to Judea; in vs. 41 it is a spiritual way.

Discussion. We encounter two major terms in vs. 40 (“king of the south,” “king of the north”), four in vs. 41 (“the glorious land,” “Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites”), three in vss. 42-43 (“Egypt [x2], the Libyans and the Cushites”), and one in vs. 45 (“the glorious holy mountain”). Of these, it would be possible to understand five literally (“Edom,” “Moab,” “Egypt,” “Libyans,” “Cushites”), but because of their close syntactic association with “the Ammonites,” which can only be figurative, it would be preferable to understand “Edom and Moab” figuratively. This leaves “Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites” as candidates for literality. The fact that these terms can be applied literally does not mean that they must be. If some terms can be applied literally, but some can only be applied figuratively, it would make sense to apply all ten terms in a figurative manner. Especially so in the context of the metaphors of vs. 40.

What about “king of the south” and “king of the north”? In antiquity Judea was located midway between Syria and Egypt. That’s why Syria was North (it was north of Judea) and Egypt was South (it was south of Judea). But Syria ceased to be an independent nation in 63 BC when Pompey the Great made it a Roman province; Egypt ceased to be an independent nation in 31 BC when Rome became an Empire (after that it was the private real estate holding of the emperor); Judea ceased to be an independent nation in AD 6 when it became a Roman province; and Jerusalem was demolished in AD 70. When rebuilt it was called Aelia Capitolina, such that for many years there was no Jerusalem.

If North and South are defined by relationships among powers that disappear from the prophecy, there is no basis for suggesting that the relationships themselves remain. North/South is a specifically Greek distinction, which follows from the fact that

Greece was a divided kingdom. But Rome was not a divided kingdom, so mapping the divisions of Greece forward onto Rome cannot be considered meaningful in any literal sense. The terms continue being deeply meaningful, but no longer in a literal sense.

Each of Daniel's four empires has some association with Babylon. Medo-Persia conquered Babylon, and Seleucid Greece controlled the territory of Babylon. As for Rome, in AD 195 Septimius Severus invaded Mesopotamia as far south as Ctesiphon, near the site of modern Baghdad, but that's as close as Rome came to establishing contact with the ancient city. The Bible equates Rome in both its phases with "Babylon," but any such connection is purely spiritual. Thus, secular Rome is called "Babylon" in 1 Pet 5:13, and spiritual Rome is called "Babylon" in Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21. If the king of the North in Dan 11:40 is spiritual "Babylon," which he would be if the king of the North is the papacy, it would be reasonable to suggest that "Egypt" in vss. 42-43 is the same as what "symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt" in Rev 11:8. That would be symmetrical with the earlier set of references to spiritual "Babylon."

In making this suggestion I am not spiritualizing a biblical writer's intent; I am allowing a second biblical writer to join the same conversation with the first. "Literalism" is not a biblical word, but the principle of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture is a biblical concept. We see this in the passage quoted at the beginning of this paper. "When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken" (John 2:22). "The Scripture" in this case was Ps 69:9 ("For zeal for your house has consumed me"), and the word that Jesus had spoken was later written down as John 2:19 ("Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"). The disciples were not thinking in terms of Testaments at the time, but when they believed the Scripture (Ps 69:9) and the word that Jesus had spoken (John 2:19), they were doing what we do when we compare Scripture with Scripture. When they did this the surface meaning which had confused them fell away and they understood what Jesus meant.

Revelation

It is a hermeneutical commonplace that the Old Testament should influence our understanding of the New, but Hans LaRondelle introduces a bold corollary to this, i.e., that the New Testament should influence our understanding of the Old. He names a book chapter, "The Key to the Old Testament: Literalism or the New Testament?"⁴ It is a choice every exegete must make, because we cannot have it both ways.

An example that illustrates LaRondelle's point, although I am the one proposing it in this case, is the following well known verse: "One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they

⁴ Hans LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1983), 10-22.

followed the beast” (Rev 13:3). The three clauses of this verse map nicely onto our passage. See table 6.

Table 6
Parallels Between Dan 11:40-45 and Rev 13:3

Dan 11	Rev 13
At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, (vs. 40a)	One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, (vs. 13a)
but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. ⁴¹ He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. ⁴² He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. ⁴³ He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train. (vss. 40b-d, 41-43)	but its mortal wound was healed, (vs. 13b)
But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. ⁴⁵ And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him. (vss. 44-45)	and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. (vs. 13c)

The part about healing in Rev 13:3b requires comment. In vs. 41 the king is positioning himself for an attack he had not yet been able to initiate. In order to strike, he had to get within striking distance. Getting within range is not the same as fighting. Comparing this time of preliminary activity in vs. 41 with the sea beast’s time of recovery is an appropriate use of the parallel. Another connection we should draw is that the king of the North is the same as the sea beast.

Spirit of Prophecy

Parallels

When Dan 11 and Rev 13 are compared in the above manner, they support a spiritual interpretation of our passage. This position is confirmed when we add the Spirit of Prophecy to the comparison. Here I have in mind especially *Great Controversy*, chaps. 35-40. See table 7.

Table 7
 Parallels Between Dan 11:40b-45 and
Great Controversy chaps. 35-40

Dan 11	ESV	GC	Chapter Title
Group A			
40b	[B]ut the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships.	35	Liberty of Conscience Threatened
40cd	And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.	36	The Impending Conflict
41-43	He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. ⁴² He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. ⁴³ He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train.	37	The Scriptures a Safeguard
Group B			
44a	But news from the east and the north shall alarm him,	38	The Final Warning
44b	[A]nd he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction.	39	The Time of Trouble
45	And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.	40	God's People Delivered

We are here studying a bloc of verses and a bloc of chapters. The connection between the early verses and early chapters require thought, but the connection becomes more obvious as we come to the later verses and later chapters. See the graphic in fig. 1.

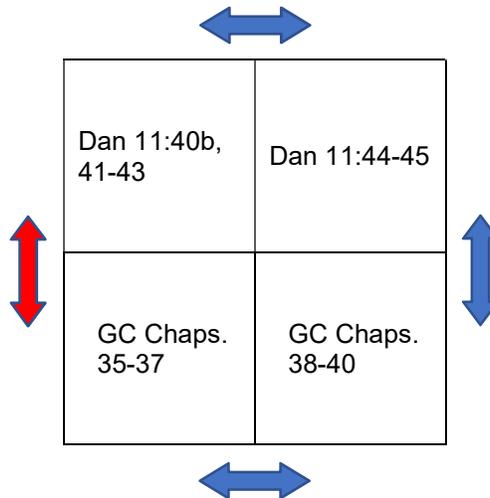


Fig. 1. Let the blue double arrows represent textual relationships that are obvious at first glance, and the red double arrow, those requiring more thought.

My thinking here is that if the earlier and later verses (Dan 11:40b-d/41-43, 44-45) form an internally cohesive sequence, and the earlier and later chapters (GC chaps. 35-37, 38-40) form an internally cohesive sequence, and the later chapters map well onto the later verses (Dan 11:44-45, GC chaps), the early verses should map onto the early chapters.

Dan 11:40b/GC chap. 35 warn that the papacy is gaining in popular favor and will soon be a force to reckon with. Dan 11:40cd/GC chap. 36 show what the issues will be in the conflict when it comes. Two issues that Ellen White mentions in particular are the state of the dead and the Sabbath. Dan 11:41-43/GC chap. 37 show how to resist the king, which is information we need. Some (those in “the glorious land,” vs. 41a) feel the king’s influence as he passes, while others (“Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites,” vs. 41b) are able to resist. “Egypt” is completely overtaken (vs. 42), along with “the Libyans and the Cushites” (vs. 43). Ellen White does not provide a sequence of events that would allow us at any given moment to know what will come next. Instead she tells us how to prepare for whatever that might be. Only those who study their Bibles assiduously will escape.

Dan 11:44a/GC chap. 38 show that, as the remnant study and learn, they share with latter rain intensity what God is telling them, and their warning swells to a loud cry. Dan 11:44b/GC chap. 39 show that the warning brings, first a reaction of fear, then the king’s wrath, and this in turn leads to a time of trouble. Dan 11:45/GC chap. 40 show that God will rescue His saints rather than allowing them to be destroyed. Michael stands up, and when this happens God’s people are delivered. This is the second coming. The first parts of Ellen White’s commentary don’t seem to be closely related to the military-sounding events of the first part of the passage, but the two later verses are quite close to the later chapters, which tells me any connection between earlier verses and earlier chapters will be worth searching out. It’s there; we need to find it.

Notice the connection between Bible study and the final warning. Without their study, the remnant would have no warning to give. This shows that the two groups of verses/chapters are in fact organically related. We cannot say group B maps onto Dan 11:40d/44-45 without also saying that group A maps onto Dan 11:40b-c/41-43.

The point is that we should view the papacy's rise to prominence over the past century precisely as a war. Rome is exerting itself in the most concerted manner to increase its scope of influence, and is doing it successfully. Ironically, few are aware that a war is taking place. The reason for this is that much of the world is unspiritual, and has no concept of spiritual warfare. And for this reason, the world has no defense. And for this reason, the papacy is enjoying almost unlimited success. These things are happening all around us. The prophecy shows us what issues are being contested.

Discussion

In 1854, while the Washington Monument was still under construction and before the above statement was written, Pope Pius IX (1846-78) donated a bloc of fine Italian granite as his contribution to the Monument, but at night a mob came, smashed it, and threw the pieces into the Potomac.⁵

Seventy-four years later, in 1928, a Catholic candidate, Al Smith, ran for president of the United States. Herbert Hoover soundly defeated him (by a 20% margin), but Smith made history by running.⁶ In 1929 Pius XI (1922-39) and Mussolini signed a concordat establishing Vatican City as an independent state and the pope as its secular sovereign. In 1960 the United States elected its first Catholic president (John F. Kennedy, 1961-63).⁷ In 1980 the rise of the trade union Solidarity led to the fall of communism in Poland and then, in 1991, the Soviet Union self-destructed. In both cases the Polish pope, John Paul II (1978-2005), was widely credited with playing a pivotal role.⁸

Since then Billy Graham has declared that, "Pope John Paul II was unquestionably the most influential voice for morality and peace in the world during the last 100 years,"⁹ John Paul II has been invited to address a General Assembly of the

⁵ The granite in question is called the "Pope's Stone." The men who destroyed it were associated with the Know-Nothing party. See "The Pope's Stone Mystery: Is the Evidence in [the] Smithsonian?" (*The Washington Post*, June 1, 1978).

⁶ In 1928 Herbert Hoover's margin was 58.2% to 40.8%.

⁷ In 1960 John F. Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon by a popular vote margin of 118,000 votes out of 69,000,000 cast. See <https://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/JFK-and-Religion.aspx>; <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/1108.html#article>.

⁸ Compare the following accounts. They are widely different. <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/john-paul-ii-poland-s-pope>; <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pope/communism/>.

⁹ "Statement by Evangelist Billy Graham On the Death of Pope John Paul II," April 2, 2005, <https://billygraham.org/press-release/statement-by-evangelist-billy-graham-on-the-death-of-pope-john-paul-ii/>.

United Nations,¹⁰ and in 2004 awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom (With Distinction) by George W. Bush,¹¹ Francis I (2005-) has been invited to address not only the General Assembly of the United Nations¹² but also a joint session of the United States congress,¹³ and – unbelievably – was invited to assist in celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in Sweden (1517-2017). The prestige of the papacy has grown exponentially over the past 100 years. Even if it were not true before, clearly, "Romanism is now regarded by Protestants with far greater favor than in former years" (GC 563). And one of the major issues we face as a result of its popularity will be an onslaught of Sunday laws, passed in the name of protecting secular society.

If legal threats to our freedom of conscience are a threat, it follows that the papacy's rise to popular prominence is a threat. This threat is described in military terms in our passage, but that is not the a complete description of the words' significance. Ellen White has identified what issues we can expect to meet in the final conflict and how we can prepare to face them successfully. As we give our warning with latter rain power, the time of trouble will come, and then Jesus will come.

So Who Is the King of the South?

Determining who the king of the South is in Dan 11:40-45 depends on which verses we're looking at when we ask the question.

In vs. 40 the king of the South is Berthier, because in 1798 Berthier did what kings of the South do, i.e., they attack the king of the North. Taking one step back, we could say that the king of the South at this time was Napoleon who gave Berthier his orders. Or two steps back, it was the government Napoleon represented that gave him their authorization for such actions. But I think we could also say it was the anti-God secularism which animated the Directorate back in Paris. Dan 11:40a is not depicting personal caprice or even government policy, but broad currents of social change.

In vss. 41-43 identifying a king of the South is more difficult. We know that in vs. 40 he forcefully attacks the king of the North, but in vs. 42 when the king of the North finally arrives in "Egypt," there is no hint of resistance. The text merely says, "the land of Egypt shall not escape." This is a result, not a process. We don't know from this verse how it was achieved. We only know that when the king arrives, he makes himself at

¹⁰ "Address of His Holiness John Paul II to the 34th General Assembly of the United Nations," New York, Tuesday, 2 October 1979, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1979/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19791002_general-assembly-onu.html.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Presidential_Medal_of_Freedom_recipients.

¹² Meagan Keneally, ABC News, September 25, 2015, "Pope Francis: What He Told the United Nations General Assembly," <http://abcnews.go.com/US/pope-francis-told-united-nations-general-assembly/story?id=34034426>.

¹³ Peter Baker and Jim Yardley, New York Times, September 24, 2015, "Pope Francis, in Congress, Pleads for Unity on World's Woes," <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/25/us/pope-francis-congress-speech.html>.

home. He rather likes “the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt” (vs. 43). He’s comfortable with that. The things we definitely know from the passage would be consistent with saying there is no king of the South at this point. The role has lapsed. This battle, like the one before in vs. 40a, is entirely one sided. The king of the North in 40a (Pius VI) has no idea how to resist a French army, and “Egypt” in 42 has no idea how to resist in a context of spiritual warfare. More than this, it doesn’t know that spiritual warfare is taking place. It does not know it’s being invaded.

In vss. 44-45 the king marches northeastward at the head of his own Northern forces and the Southern forces he has just conquered. At this point has the king of the North become the king of the South? Yes and no. It would be better to say, because he now controls everything there is to control, that he is not a king of the North or of the South, but a king of this world.

Our task at this conference is not to determine what South is, but to determine who the *king* of the South is. South, at the present time, has no king, because we have not yet gotten to vss. 44-45. And when we do, the situation will be mixed. The king in vss. 44-45 occupies two roles. He marches from the South (like a king of the South), but attacks the people of God (like a king of the North). The fact that there is not always a king of the South is a theme that runs consistently through vss. 16-22, 36-39, and 41-43. In vss. 44-45 we can say that the papacy is a king of the South, but not in the sense of being different from his other role as king of the North. The two roles merge at this point, as do the king’s forces. The whole point of this passage is to show how North and South could fight unitedly as they confront Michael in 12:1.

Discussion

I emphasize that just before the second coming the forces of earth will no longer be fractured, but will become one. Having made this point, there is a tension between saying “the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast” (13:3c), and saying, “the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire” (17:16). On the one hand everyone follows the papacy; on the other, people turns on it with loathing. We can see hints of both processes in our passage, where in 11:44-45a the king leads a mix of Northern and Southern forces toward “the glorious holy mountain” (everyone follows him), and then in 11:45b “he shall come to his end, with none to help him” (everyone turns on him). This meltdown of his influence is closely associated with the second coming itself. As Christ and His angel armies arrive, the king’s subjects all turn on him.

Armageddon is another name for the second coming – the moment at which the two armies engage, one representing all of earth, the other representing all of heaven. These events are spiritual, but real. Armageddon will make WWII sound like firecrackers.

Literalism has a seductive appeal. This is why Jesus found it necessary to warn His followers not to preoccupy themselves with “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt 24:6; Mark 13:7). A large war in the Middle East – even a very large, very significant war involving Muslims and the pope – is a war. And anything we say about the prospect of this happening which goes beyond our biblical mandate is a rumor. People fighting people is not the final conflict. So any example of people fighting people is a distraction in the context of our passage. It doesn’t matter which people. This is the wrong war. Dan 11:40b-c/41-43 is the story of how North finally wins, i.e., how North finally unites the forces of planet earth. North/South is the introduction to the story, not the story itself. The point is that North reaches a point where he commands both sides. And the point of saying this is that he eventually confronts the real second army, which leads to his downfall at the second coming.

Conclusion

If we feel that exegesis means understanding words, that’s one thing; if we feel that exegesis means understanding the One who inspired the words, that’s another. We can study the words of a passage without going beyond the passage, but we can’t know the mind of God without studying everything He has said on a given topic. Ironically, as we expand our horizons in this way, through comparative study, our exegetical options do not expand; they become more restricted. Things that would otherwise be considered legitimate options are factored out, until we have minimum exegetical latitude, but maximum exegetical certainty. Literalism pursues the goal of exegetical certainty, but does not achieve it. A spiritual interpretation, informed by other relevant passages, does.

If the king of the North’s agenda can be shown to be primarily spiritual, it follows that it is not primarily military. It would be possible to debate endlessly the meaning of the angel’s use of military language, with one side saying the events are military and the other side saying they are not. To get past this impasse we need a guiding concept from an outside source, which the Spirit of Prophecy can supply if we will allow it to do so.

The spiritual application given by Ellen White competes for the same space with the Islam application recently proposed by Seventh-day Adventist scholars, and I believe precludes it. It is not just that she fails to mention Islam in her relevant remarks, but that she places so much emphasis on things other than Islam, and here I have special reference to the Sabbath. If the Spirit of Prophecy takes the discussion in one direction and others take it in a materially different direction, I feel uncomfortable with that. If there is a topic on which Ellen White has nothing to say (Islam in the end time), it could be because the Holy Spirit had nothing to tell her on that topic.¹⁴ If an excluded topic is where we insist on bringing our focus as we reach out to the masses of people

¹⁴ At least not here. I think much of what Islamist interpreters say about Dan 11, where it is out of place, could be profitably said in Rev 9 – not excluding 11:14.

who need what only we can share with them, the stronger our arguments become, the greater their potential to distract from what the Holy Spirit wants convey. There is no safety in such a course.