

# Some Context

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There is a question whether it is legitimate to see a shift from literal to spiritual in Dan 11. I submit that it is, but to see why, we need to take a few steps back.

## The Earlier Chapters

In Dan 2 we start with the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar and end with the kingdom of God. Nebuchadnezzar personifies the kingdom he rules, just as the Rock personifies the kingdom He rules. The Rock itself is not the kingdom of God any more than Nebuchadnezzar himself is the kingdom of Babylon. We don't speak of the second coming of the kingdom of God, but the second coming of Christ. Jesus speaks of Himself as the Stone the builders rejected (Matt 21:42), adding that "the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him" (Matt 21:44 ESV). ASV suggests, "it will scatter him as dust." In Dan 2:34 the Stone "cut out by no human hand" struck the image on its feet and "the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away" (Dan 2:35 ESV). This is the first of about 20 references to Christ in the book of Daniel (2:34, 35, 35, 45; 3:25, 28; 7:13; 8:11, 25; 9:25, 25, 26; 10:5, 9, 13; 11:1, 22, 37; 12:1, 6, 7).

The first metal in Dan 2 is gold, the second silver, the third "bronze" (ESV).<sup>1</sup> But even if we call it "brass" (KJV), the metal we describe in this way is not an element, as gold and silver are. Bronze is an alloy made of two different metals, usually copper and tin. The fourth metal (iron, an element) is also combined with something, but clay is not a metal. It could be thought of as ground up rock, so it has a closer relationship to what follows than to what goes before. It is a transitional category anticipating the Rock that brings the sequence to a close. In this sense the progression is gradual.

We have mentioned chemical composition. Consider also the relative value of the metals (more to less), their relative hardness (less to more), the amount of time each occupies in history (shorter to longer: Babylon lasts 70 years [609-539], Persia 202 [539-331], Greece 162 [331-169],<sup>2</sup> secular Rome 707 [169 BC-AD 538], spiritual Rome 1260 [538-1798]),<sup>3</sup> the amount of territory each empire occupies (less to more), and the westward movement of their respective frontiers (Babylon extended to the Mediterranean, Persia to the Aegean, Greece to the Adriatic, Rome to the Atlantic). All of this shows that gradual change is not foreign to Daniel's thought world.

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<sup>1</sup> See Goldingay, John E., *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1998), 31.

<sup>2</sup> The exception that proves the rule.

<sup>3</sup> Much more sophistication could be brought to this chronology, but I'm making a broad point.

In Dan 8 we have the same thing, starting with Persia. “The third year of Belshazzar was probably 548/547 b.c. (Hasel, AUSS 15 [1977] 153–68; see 7:1 Comment),”<sup>4</sup> which means that Babylon only had eight more years before it would fall to Persia in 539. Eight years is nothing on an apocalyptic time scale. Why predict what has already happened? In any event, here again there is a progression human kingdoms on earth to a major spiritual event in heaven. Just as the clay was transitional in Dan 2, the little horn acts as a transitional figure in Dan 8, having both horizontal (8:9) and vertical (8:10-12) interests. The major spiritual event to which the prophecy leads is the cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven.<sup>5</sup>

Dan 9 is not symbolic in other ways, but does use time symbolically and in a way comparable to what we find in Dan 8. Connecting Dan 8 to Dan 9 is supremely important for Adventism, because we only have an ending point for the 2300 days if we have a starting point, and we only have a starting point if we bring Dan 8 and Dan 9 together with respect to time symbolism. The “evening-mornings” of Dan 8 must be studied together with the “seventy weeks” of Dan 9. The word “day” is not used, but “evening-mornings” are days broken into their parts, while “weeks” are days gathered into their groups. It is a connection one will only see by choosing to see it. Dan 8-9 is one prophecy in two parts, or a prophecy and its explanation.

## Relationships Across Chapters

So far we have talked about progressions within prophecies; there is another which takes form across prophecies. The progression I have in mind can be described as an animacy hierarchy.

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. Dan 2        | Metals   |
| 2. Dan 7        | Wild animals                                     |
| 3. Dan 8        | Domesticated animals used in worship (ram, goat) |
| 4. Dan 9, 10-12 | People   |

In this context the absence of symbolism in Dan 11 is an argument in favor of seeing spiritual intent in that chapter. It is not argument for limiting ourselves to what is only literal – exactly the opposite. What some would interpret as unsymbolic and therefore literal is unsymbolic because we’ve moved beyond metals, wild animals, and animals used in worship, and are finally dealing with people, capable of understanding and appreciating God for themselves. The progression is abstract, but entirely understandable. The angel’s use of people rather than symbols at the end of the series indicates the culmination of a gradual series of transitions from totally inert to maximally spiritual. Dan 11 is not the least spiritual in the series of prophecies, but the most spiritual, when studied in the context of Dan 2, 7, and 8-9. If we don’t study it in the

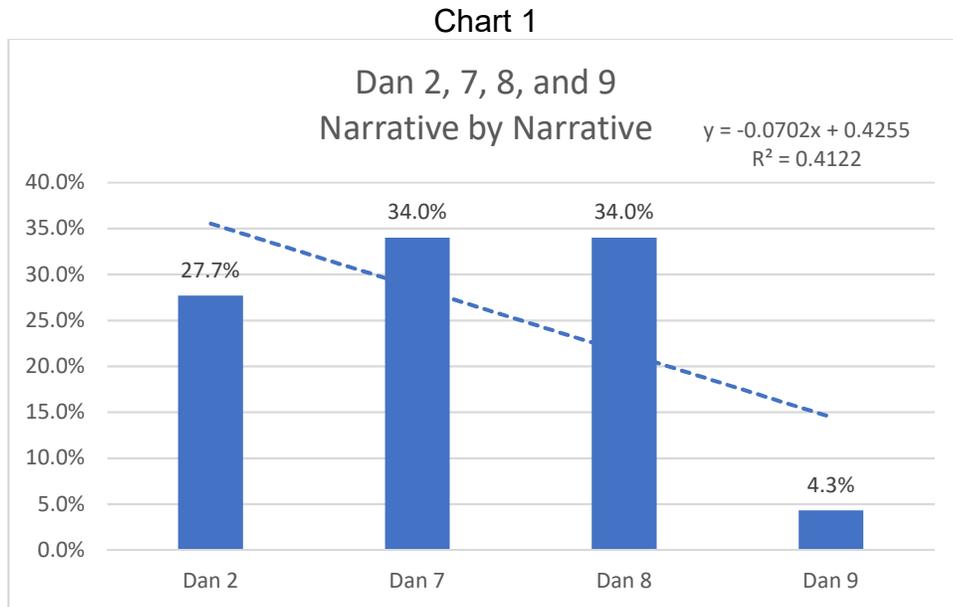
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<sup>4</sup> Goldingay 1998, 208.

<sup>5</sup> This is why “the violent among your own people . . . fail” (11:14), because the sanctuary they think they are cleansing the “sanctuary” Daniel is talking about (8:14), whereas in reality they are merely cleansing the temple in Jerusalem.

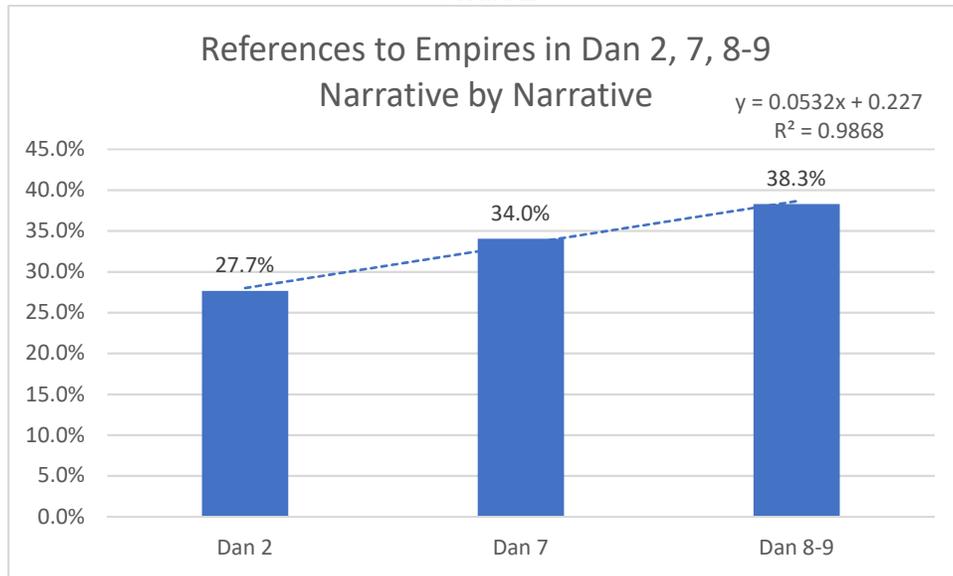
context of Dan 2, 7, and 8-9, we will be doomed to misunderstanding it. It is Dan 11 that contains the most focused representation of Christ that we will find in any chapter. He is not just mentioned in 11:22. He is the center of section, chapter, and prophecy.

It would appear from the proposed hierarchy that Dan 9 is separate from Dan 8. If we think so and count the verses referring to world empires in Dan 2, 7, 8, and 9 from that point of view, what we get is chart 1.



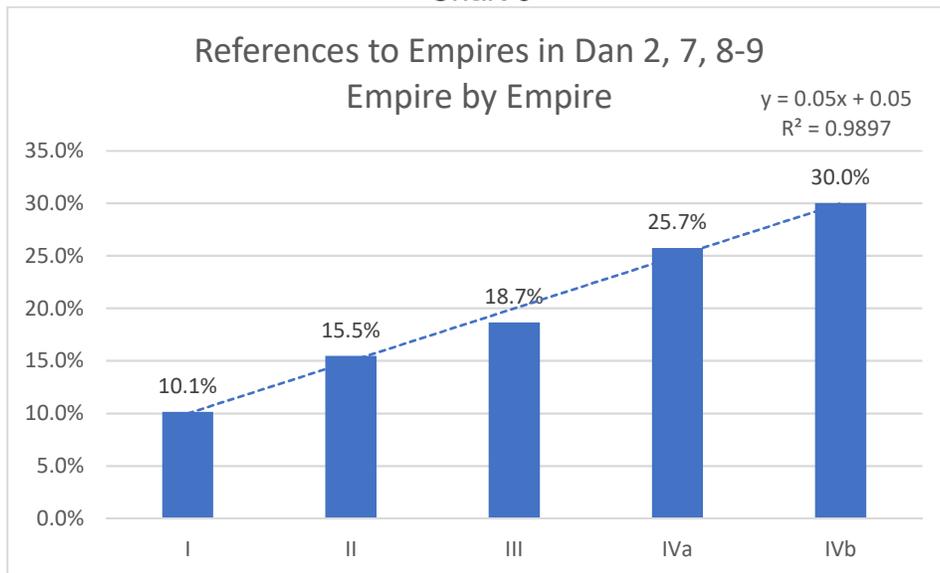
There's not much of a pattern here. But if we combine Dan 8-9 as two parts of one prophecy, or as prophecy and explanation, the result is what we see in chart 2, which exhibits an almost perfect trend line.

Chart 2



Here the number of verses referring to empires steadily increases as we move from Dan 2, to 7, to 8-9. And in chart 3 the number of verses referring to the various specific individual empires increases in a similar manner as we move from empire I, to II, to III, to IVa, to IVb.

Chart 3



None of this is accidental. On many different levels and in many different ways Daniel builds slowly and elegantly to a climax. This occurs over the course of the

prophet's lifetime. Dan 11 is the last of the prophecies and must be studied with these facts in view. Any interpretation which insists that, if we begin here we must end here (where "here" is a literal understanding of Syria and Egypt), there is no precedent for that kind of thinking anywhere else in the book. Acknowledging a shift from literal to spiritual in Dan 11 does not constitute changing horses in the middle of the stream; what does that is demanding in Dan 11 what we can't document from any earlier prophecy.

The same logic which gives us chapter pairings such as 2/7, 3/6, and 4/5 cannot be extended to the last half of the book. Suggesting pairings such as 7/12, 8/11, 9/10, as some have done, even if we later expand this to include 7/8, 9/10, 11/12, misses the all-important connection between 8 and 9, and the chiasmic nature of 10-12. The second half of the book is not arranged the same way as the first half. The relationships we must capture are between Dan 2, 7, 8-9, and 10-12, where the prophecies consist of 1, 1, 2, and 3 chapters respectively. Another progression.

If we really want to acknowledge the closeness of Dan 8 to Dan 11, one way to do this is to map 11:16-28 onto 8:9 and 11:29-45 onto 8:10-12. In this comparison "toward the south" means Egypt and "toward the east" means Syria (see 8:9). This is a preview of the first section of Dan 11 and the wars between the Ptolemies and Seleucids. Toward the south and toward the east, with "the glorious land" in the middle, means toward the southeast. If the little horn comes toward the southeast, he comes from the northwest. Northwest from "the glorious land" at this time in history is Rome.

## The Final Prophecy

At the center of the chapter in 11:22 is a reference to "the prince of the covenant," here identified as Christ. We build out from this center. Two sets of parallels intersect in vs. 16. One starts in Dan 8, the other in Dan 9. The one starting in Dan 8 is shown in table 1; the one starting in Dan 9, in table 2.

Table 1  
Formula וַעֲשֵׂה כְרִצּוֹנוֹ in Four Passages

Ref	Hebrew	English	Empire
8:4	וַעֲשֵׂה כְרִצּוֹנוֹ	He did as he pleased and became great.	II
11:3	וַעֲשֵׂה כְרִצּוֹנוֹ	Then a mighty king will appear, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases.	III
11:16	וַיַּעַשׂ . . . כְרִצּוֹנוֹ	The invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him.	IVa
11:36	וַעֲשֵׂה כְרִצּוֹנוֹ	The king will do as he pleases.	IVb

Table 2  
Comparison of Dan 9:26-27 and 11:16-17

Term	Ref	Term	Ref
נגיד הבא	9:26b	הבא אליו	11:16a
ועד־כלה	9:27	וכלה בידו	11:16b
ישחית	9:26b	להשחיתה	11:17b

If we allow a section to begin in 11:16 and end in 11:28, a pattern emerges with respect to the types of predicates appearing at the beginning of each verse (table 3).

Table 3  
Initial Predicates in Dan 11:16-28

Bloc	Ref	Hebrew	Clause Initial
1	16	וישם פניו ויעש . . . כרצונו	w <sup>e</sup> + yiqtol
	17	וישב [וישם] פניו	
	18	וישב פניו	
	19	וישב פניו	
2	20	ועמד על כנו	w <sup>e</sup> + qatal
	21	ועמד על כנו	
3	22	וזרעות	w <sup>e</sup> + N
4	23	ומן התחברות אליו	w <sup>e</sup> + PP
	24	ובמשמני מדינה <sup>6</sup>	
5	25	ויער כחו	(w <sup>e</sup> + yiqtol)
	26	ואכלי פת־בגו	
	27	ושנים המלכים	
	28	וישוב ארצו	

Notice the number of verses in each bloc (4 2 1 2 4). In these same verse groups the theme of violence is alternately present (+) and absent (-) (+ - + - +). And when the verse number for vs. 24 is correctly placed (in printed editions of the Hebrew it is not, a fact acknowledged in the critical apparatus of both BHS and Kittle), the adverb בשלוח ("in peace," "by stealth," or such) occurs in vss. 21 and 23, on either side of vs. 22, framing vs. 22 between them. It is significant, not only that something provides a

<sup>6</sup> See below for discussion of the verse division at 11:23/24. Correctly understood, the first word of v. 24 is not בשלוח, but ובמשמני. The verse division has been placed incorrectly.

chiastic frame around vs. 22, but that it should be this particular word – a reference to peaceful or nonviolent activity, which provides a dramatic contrast with the violence done to the Prince of the covenant at the center of the section. See table 4.

Table 4  
Literary Symmetries in Dan 11:16-28

Patterns	A	B	C	B'	A'
Predicates	16-19	20-21	22	23-24	25-28
	4	2	1	2	4
Violence	+	-	+	-	+
Inclusio		בשלוה		בשלוה	

In Dan 11 Christ occupies the central verse, of the central section, of the central chapter, of a prophecy that sums up everything Daniel has learned over the course of a long lifetime, and in doing so it occupies the fourth part of the book by chapter count. Change the beginning of the middle section to vs. 14, or 20, or any other verse (some prefer vs. 21) and the entire structure collapses. There's only one way to capture the above symmetries and that is by starting the section at vs. 16 in response to the above series of parallels. In this case הבא אליו ("he who comes against him") in 11:16a is parallel with and refers back to נגיד הבא ("the prince who is to come") in 9:26b, and this in turn follows from Dan 8:9 ("Out of one them came a little horn"). Verse 16 introduces a new power in the prophecy.

It is not enough to say that Christ is mentioned in vs. 22 (or that His followers are mentioned in vs. 22). He is not just mentioned there. Christ in vs. 22 is the fulcrum around which the section revolves, and with it the chapter. His presence at the center of Dan 11 organizes our understanding of the entire prophecy (10-12).

## The Last Verses

Four times in the chapter North fights South, then the people of God. This is a well-established theme in the chapter, which can be seen even in the first section. See table 5.

Table 5  
Wars Against the South and Against God's People

Empire	North/South	North/People of God
III	Vss. 2b-15	Vs. 14 <sup>7</sup>
IVa	Vss. 25-28a	Vs. 28b
IVb before the wound	Vss. 29-30a	Vs. 30b, 31-35, 36-39
IVb after the wound	Vss. 41-43	Vss. 44-45 <sup>8</sup>

Separately, the “wound” referred to in connection with empire IVb on the last two rows of table 4 (above) is the goring administered by the king of the South in vs. 40a. This same wound is referred to elsewhere as “a mortal wound” in Rev 13:3a. Being gored is a serious injury. Rev 13:3 in all of its clauses maps neatly 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. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. <sup>43</sup> 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. <sup>45</sup> 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)

<sup>7</sup> The pattern in vss. 14-15 is that some rise up against the king of the South (14a), while others rise up against the king of the North (14b). Then the king of the North shall “take a well-fortified city” from the king of the South (15a), and the king of the South has “no strength to stand” against the king of the North (15b). The pattern to notice involves objects rather than subjects (South, North; South, North). “The violent among your own people” (11:14b) are the Maccabees, who succeed militarily in an all-out war against Syria, but fail “to fulfill the vision” (14b) because the sanctuary they cleanse so successfully is on earth, while the sanctuary they think they’re cleansing is actually in heaven. They fail, not in what they do, but in what they think they accomplish by doing it. The “vision” of 11:14 is the vision of 8:14. The Maccabean conflict as an all out war, which has a level of significance in history and in the prophecy that cannot be ignored.

<sup>8</sup> Here it’s not just North.

In this comparison, Rev 13:3b (the healing of the wound) corresponds to Dan 11:41-43 (a period of recovery from the Southern attack). It is a conflict between North and South because North has lost the absolute power it had once enjoyed in vss. 36-39 and now seeks to regain it. The effort is eventually successful and North conquers South, such that the king of the North now becomes more than just a king of the North, rather a king of this world. After his victory all Southern territory is his territory and all Southern forces are his forces (11:43). In his mind this is not the great objective he has in mind, but merely a preliminary goal. The section is not over. Verses 44-45 remain.

In earlier sections a Northern victory over the South is followed by a separate war against the people of God. What gives this fourth iteration of the pattern special interest, however, is that now in the ensuing war against the people of God, the king commands not only his own forces, but also those of his former enemy (see Rev 13:3; 16:14, 16; 19:19).

This fact is unique in Dan 11:44-45, but in other ways the passage continues to evoke earlier precedents. When the war begins the king feels first fear, then rage. This happened in vs. 30 and it happens again in vs. 44.<sup>9</sup> See table 7.

Table 7  
The Pattern of Fear Followed by Rage

Dan 11:30	Dan 11:44
For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be <b>afraid</b> and withdraw, (30a)	But news from the east and the north shall <b>alarm</b> him, (44a)
and shall turn back and be <b>enraged</b> and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. (30b)	and he shall go out with great <b>fury</b> to destroy and devote many to destruction. (44b)

When Michael stands up (Dan 12:1), Daniel does not tell us what He does next, but Revelation does. After leaving the throne He had occupied in Rev 19:5, the Son mounts a white horse (19:11). “And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses” (Rev 19:1). They follow Him to the earth. In the ensuing war all the forces of earth are “assemble[d] . . . for battle on the great day of God the Almighty” (16:14). That’s one army. At this point all they can do is assemble, because the other army has not yet arrived. When it does, that’s the second coming.

It is essential that we understand the relationship between vss. 41-43 and 44-45. These are not two passages; they are one passage, and we must see what unifies them or miss the angel’s intent. The two main verse groups (41-43, 44-45) are quite different. On the one hand North and South fight each other (41-43); on the other hand – as a result of the king’s Northern victory – they fight together on the same side (44-45).

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<sup>9</sup> The passages are parallel, but not entirely parallel. In vs. 30a the king’s fear has to do with the South; in vs. 44, it has to do with the “news from the east and the north,” which concern God’s people.

Verses 44-45 are a result of what happens in 41-43; vss. 41-43 are a preparation for what happens in 44-45.

The significance of vss. 41-43/44-45 is clarified in the last eight chapters of *Great Controversy*. We here focus first on chaps. 38-40. Chapter 38 is “The Final Warning,” which corresponds to the “news from the east and the north [northeast] that alarms him” (44a), i.e., it alarms the king. Chapter 39 is “The Time of Trouble,” which corresponds to the next clause, which says, “he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction” (44b). Chapter 40 is “God’s People Delivered,” which corresponds to the verse after that, stating that the king “shall come to his end, with none to help him” (45b).

If the events of vss. 44-45 are a result of something that happens earlier, vss. 41-43 are a preparation for what happens later. Verses 41-43 show a general who is amassing forces for a great battle. The problem is that some of the troops he needs still oppose him, so one part of gathering them (“to assemble [συναγαγεῖν] them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty” [Rev 16:14]) is that he must first conquer them. How he does this is the subject of vss. 41-43. Here is the context for *Great Controversy*, chaps. 35-37.

Chapter 35 is “Liberty of Conscience Threatened (Aims of the Papacy),” which shows us the nature of the battle we are dealing with. Verses 40b-d set forth proleptically what is coming in the immediately following verses. Chapter 36 is “The Impending Conflict,” which corresponds to vss. 41-43. The conflict is still impending because it hasn’t started yet. This is why I say vss. 41-43 are not themselves the main battle, but a preparation for the main battle, described in vss. 44-45. Chapter 37 is “The Scriptures a Safeguard,” which gives us, not a preview of events, which would be of little value, but information as to how we can protect ourselves from the king’s attacks – whatever form that might take – and come out successfully in the end.

The issues in the final conflict are spiritual in nature. They involve Scripture’s first truth (the creatorship of God) and Satan’s first lie (that the dead are not dead). The king’s purpose is to assemble a base of support that will make it possible to enforce compliance with his anti-law of God agenda, through civil legislation if need be, and to cause the whole world to marvel and to follow. The plan works, because in Rev 13:3 we read that “the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.” Verses 41-43 are the process by which the king causes the whole earth to marvel and to follow, and for him this is truly a battle, with every move carefully planned and executed in respect to grand strategy, strategy, and tactics.

For those he is conquering, on the other hand, the whole thing is a nonevent. They don’t know a war is taking place. When the king gets to “Egypt” in vs. 42, “Egypt shall not escape,” but there is no record of Southern resistance. The reason why the South doesn’t respond is that it is unspiritual and therefore has no concept of spiritual warfare. But the South is very definitely being invaded, and when the king has finally consolidated his base of support, he is then free to pursue his ultimate objective, which – although it is not his objective now – is to attack and remove the remnant from the earth. In the end Christ does this for him (He removes the remnant from the earth), but

in the process the attacker becomes the attacked, as Christ unleashes His power against this enemy, who should have been His friend. The war itself is summarized in a single clause: "Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him" (45b). In this clause we have evidence that the second army has finally arrived, because in this clause we have evidence of what it does when it gets here.