

The Messiah-Prince of the Covenant:
Hermeneutical Key to Identifying the Latter King of the North in Daniel 11

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In consideration of the renewed interest in Daniel 11 and its interpretation among Adventists I humbly present these 30 thesis points and an appendix at the request of Dr. Conrad Vine. I am prepared to expand upon these in a larger paper and offer to present on this at any occasion should I be asked. I have a lot of sympathy with both major identifications of the “King of the North” and I hope that these points can show sensitivity to the importance and motivation people have for coming to these two different identifications as well as proposing a hermeneutical key to show why there is an internally and externally consistent reason for pivoting from literal to spiritual in the prophecy of Daniel 11.

1. Within Seventh-day Adventism, there are two major hypotheses as to the identity of the King of the North in the second half of Daniel 11 and they each have their own attendant hermeneutical strengths and weaknesses.
2. All historicist commentators within Seventh-day Adventism agree that the King of the North in the first half of Daniel 11 pertains to the literal power/s to the north of literal Israel.
3. All historicist commentators within Seventh-day Adventism agree that the prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, 8-9 and to some extent Daniel 11-12 build on an expanding principle of repeat and enlarge.
4. The view that takes the King of the North in the latter half of Daniel 11 as literal has as its strength an apparent consistency with the literal application of the first half of the chapter.
5. The weakness of the “literal” view is that it deviates from the pattern of the prophetic outline established in the earlier prophecies in Daniel.
6. The view that takes the King of the North in the latter half of Daniel 11 as spiritual has as its strength a strong correlation between the description, behavior and actions of that power with the Little Horn from Daniel 7 and 8.
 7. The weakness of this “spiritual” view is in its apparent inconsistency with the literal identification of the King of the North in the earlier part of the chapter.
8. The fundamental question is over whether there can be found a hermeneutical key for making a switch from literal identification to spiritual identification within apocalyptic prophecy, thus resolving the impasse.
 9. This key is found in reading Daniel 11 in the light of the previous prophecies in Daniel.
10. Daniel 2 contains a very basic outline of four empires followed by divided nations with the hint of a church-state union under the symbols of mixed iron and clay.

11. Daniel 7 repeats this outline and enlarges upon the church-state union with the focus on the “Little Horn” giving a three and a half prophetic years time frame for its temporal supremacy.
12. Daniel 8 repeats this outline (minus the first kingdom) and presents a 2300 prophetic evening-morning time frame for the beginning of the Judgement (the “Time of the End”)
13. Daniel 9 is indelibly connected to Daniel 8’s prophecy and presents of a probationary period of 490 years set aside for literal Israel out of the larger 2300-year prophecy.
14. That this is a probationary period can be deduced by the following features:
 - a. The chapter occurs within the context of Daniel considering the earlier judgement upon Jerusalem and the 70 years captivity.
 - b. The chapter is set against the backdrop of the Day of Atonement/Judgement motif from Leviticus 16.
 - c. The 490 years are “cut off/determined for [Daniel’s] people” which indicates a period of probation.
 - d. It includes a list of six KPIs that Daniel’s people are required to achieve within that time.
 - e. It ends with desolations upon that people in the event of failure.
15. The culmination of the 490 year probationary period for literal Israel in Daniel 9 is the ministry of “Messiah the Prince” who would be cut off and who in fulfills the KPIs in Israel’s stead.
16. It is this last prophecy of Daniel 9 which when overlaid on top of Daniel 11 presents us with our hermeneutical key for a switch between literal and spiritual.
17. The cutting off of Messiah the Prince in Daniel 9:26-27 is parallel with the breaking of the Prince of the Covenant in Daniel 11:22 within 3.5 years of which the probation for literal Israel is expired.
18. The close of literal Israel’s probation involved branches being cut off from the olive tree of God’s covenant people and new branches being grafted in.
19. God’s covenant remained, but a change had taken place whereby literal Israel had transitioned to spiritual Israel.
20. This transition is implicit in Daniel 11 as the covenant people are referenced after the Prince of the Covenant is broken in verse 22, even though the probation for literal Israel was finished.
21. If literal Israel has transitioned to spiritual Israel, we have a hermeneutic precedent for the literal passing into spiritual. If this is the case, then there can be no literal “King of the North” or “King of the South” if God’s covenant people of spiritual Israel are no longer bound in a geographical area.
22. Other Scriptures anticipate or extrapolate on how the Cross event featured a pivot from literal kingdom to spiritual kingdom as well as other spiritual-literal interplays.

- a. Jesus' discussion of spiritual temple in John 4:21-24 confirmed by the primacy of the Heavenly Sanctuary in Hebrews, Revelation.
 - b. Jesus described His kingdom as "not of this world" implying that a spiritual kingdom was to supplant a literal kingdom.
 - c. Paul spoke of spiritual Jews as those circumcised in the heart and in a play on words of the meaning of the name "Judah" spoke of those who live up to the name meaning "praise of Yahwa".
 - d. Paul also wrote that not all who are of Israel are true Israel.
 - e. James wrote to the Christians as the "twelve tribes scattered abroad" and it is generally understood to be speaking to all Christians as the northern Israel tribes were no longer known.
23. Revelation presents a confirmation of this hypothesis of literal identification transitioning to spiritual identification as the prophecies of the book of Revelation speak to events occurring after the breaking of the Prince of the Covenant.
24. In Revelation, both Egypt (previously the literal "King of the South") and Babylon (previously the literal "King of the North") feature, yet here they are both symbolic and decidedly not literal.
25. Egypt features in Revelation 11 where a single city is identified as Egypt as well as Sodom as well as the place where Jesus was crucified (Jerusalem), three different literal geographical locations (one a whole nation in northern Africa and two cities in various locations in Canaan).
26. Babylon is the name given to the end-time enemies of God's covenant people even though literal Babylon was no longer a geopolitical power at the time Revelation was written or thereafter. (Peter's reference to the "Church that is at Babylon" is also largely understood by New Testament scholars to be a similar dysphemism for Rome.)
27. These spiritual, symbolic identifications in Revelation give confirmation to the switch in Daniel 11 which is now based upon a key hermeneutical consideration based on repetition and enlargement.
28. The precedent of a switch from a literal to a symbolic referent is also found in other Hebrew prophetic passages such as Isaiah 14 (switch from literal king of Babylon to spiritual Satan), Ezekiel 28 (switch from literal king of Tyre to spiritual Satan) among others, demonstrating further foundation for seeing this in Daniel 11.
29. Final confirmation for this pivot from literal to spiritual is found in the parallels that can now be better appreciated between the "King of the North" in Daniel 11 and the "Little Horn" of Daniel 7 and 8 as well as the "Man of Sin" in 2 Thessalonians 2 and other passages (see Appendix).
30. While we can appreciate the motivation for consistency behind the "turkey" identification in Daniel 11 and can understand how it was arrived at, this hermeneutical key shows that there is a broader consistency that we can now access that bridges internal consistency within the chapter and external consistency to the other prophecies and the wider teaching of Scripture. This view of Daniel 11 is truly Christocentric, for it is the Cross of Jesus that pivots from the literal to the spiritual, from the old to the new, both prophetically and soteriologically. This should always be our lens for viewing the mysteries of Scripture.

Appendix – Parallels between Daniel 11 and other relevant passages

Daniel 11	Parallels with Daniel 8/9 and other places
Daniel 11:2 – Three more kings shall arise in Persia	Daniel 8:20 – Kings of Media and Persia
Daniel 11:2 – The Kingdom of Greece	Daniel 8:21 – King of Greece
Daniel 11:3 – A mighty king	Daniel 8:8 – Great horn... strong
Daniel 11:3 – Rule with great dominion	Daniel 8:8 – Became exceedingly great
Daniel 11:4 – Kingdom shall be broken	Daniel 8:8 – The great horn was broken
Daniel 11:4 – Toward the four winds of heaven	Daniel 8:8 – Toward the four winds of heaven
<i>Daniel 11:5-19 describes the conflicts between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings up until Antiochus the Great encounters the Romans</i>	
Daniel 11:21 – In his place shall arise a contemptible person	Daniel 8:23 – A king of bold face... shall arise
Daniel 11:22 – He shall come in peacefully	Daniel 8:25 – By peace he shall destroy many
Daniel 11:24 – He shall enter peacefully	
Daniel 11:22 – The Prince of the Covenant	Daniel 8:11 – the Prince of the Host
Daniel 11:23 – Skilled in Intrigue	Daniel 8:23 – One who understands riddles
Daniel 11:23 – He will act deceitfully	Daniel 8:25 – By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand
Daniel 11:24 – He shall devise plans	
Daniel 11:25 – Plots will be devised	
Daniel 11:27 – Shall speak lies	
Daniel 11:31 – Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress	Daniel 8:11 – The place of his sanctuary was overthrown Daniel 8:12 – A host will be given it
Daniel 11:31 – Take away the daily	Daniel 8:11 – The daily was lifted up
Daniel 11:31 – Set up the abomination that makes desolate	Daniel 8:13 – Transgression that makes desolate
Daniel 11:33 – Wise among the people... shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder	Daniel 8:10 – Some of the host and... stars it threw to the ground and trampled on them Daniel 8:24 – Destroy... the people who are the saints
Daniel 11:34 – When they stumble, they shall receive a little help	Revelation 12:16 – The earth came to the help of the woman
Daniel 11:35 – Until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time	Daniel 8:19 – For it refers to the appointed time of the end
Daniel 11:36 – The king shall do as he wills... shall prosper	Daniel 8:11 – It will act and prosper
Daniel 11:36 – He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god	Daniel 8:11 – It became great, even as great as the Prince of the host
Daniel 11:36 – Shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods	Daniel 7:25 – He shall speak words against the Most High Revelation 13:6 – It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God
Daniel 11:36 – He shall prosper until the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done	Daniel 8:19 – The latter end of the indignation Daniel 9:27 – One who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator
Daniel 11:37 – He shall pay no attention to the God of his fathers	Daniel 7:25 – Shall speak words against the Most High
Daniel 11:37 – The One desired by women	Daniel 8:25 – Rise up against the Prince of princes Isaiah 4:1-4 – And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day...
Daniel 11:37 – He shall not pay attention to any god but shall magnify himself above all	2 Thessalonians 2:4 – Who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.
Daniel 11:38 – He shall honour a god of fortresses	Habakkuk 1:11 – [The Chaldeans]... whose own might is their god
Daniel 11:38 – He will honour with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts	Revelation 18:11-13 – No one buys their cargo anymore, cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.
Daniel 11:39 – He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god	Daniel 8:24 – His power shall be great, but not by his own power
Daniel 11:39 – He shall make them rulers over many	Revelation 13:3 – The whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast
Daniel 11:40 – At the time of the end	Daniel 8:17 – The vision is for the time of the end
Daniel 11:41 – Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites	Isaiah 11:14 – They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them.
Daniel 11:44 – News from the east and the north shall alarm him	Revelation 16:2 – To prepare the way for the kings from the east
Daniel 11:44 – He shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction	Daniel 8:24 – He shall cause fearful destruction
Daniel 11:45 – He will come to his end, with none shall help him	Daniel 8:25 – He shall be broken, but by no human hand
Daniel 11:1 – The word was true	Daniel 8:26 – The vision... is true
Daniel 12:4 – Shut up the words	Daniel 8:26 – Seal up the vision
Daniel 10:14 – The vision is for days yet to come	Daniel 8:26 – It refers to many days from now
Daniel 10:1 – He understood the word and had understanding of the vision	Daniel 8:27 – None understood it