

Statement No. 12
Imperial Rome Not Identified by the Text itself as King of the North
Statement Sponsor
John Witcombe

Statement: There is unity of belief that the leader of Imperial Rome is identified in Daniel 11 as a raiser of taxes, and a vile person. There is no mention of the phrase, “king of the north” in connection with any of the prophecies in Daniel 11 that relate to Imperial Rome. For this reason we should not call Imperial Rome the king of the north.

Perhaps the reason why the angel Gabriel never directly called the ruler of Imperial Rome the *king of the north* is because the ruler of Rome ruled both the north and the south from the west in Rome, Italy. And so Gabriel identifies the ruler of Rome as a *raiser of taxes* (Daniel 11:20) or a *vile person* (Daniel 11:21) rather than *king of the north*.

If we are looking for the true interpretation of a Bible prophecy, it is **mandatory** that we not add details that the prophet did not place in the text. If we choose to label Imperial Rome the king of the north and if the text doesn't definitely define it so, we can be absolutely certain that we will not arrive at the correct interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel 11 downstream from that point where we added detail that the angel did not place in the text. If we add to the words of any prophecy, we are actually on forbidden ground. Some want to add the words, “of the north” to the king of verse 36. It's far better to just leave it as the angel saw fit to name this king and add no prepositional phrase to this word.

Revelation 22:18, 19 “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

A scholar and I were discussing this issue of Rome being labeled as the king of the north and he wrote to me the following:

“The ‘king of the north’ is not explicitly mentioned until verse 40, however, in verse 25 the fact that Rome wars against the ‘king of the south’ clearly implies that Rome here is viewed as the king of the north.”

It is okay for us to do our best to venture interpretations on what is actually stated in the text, but once we either imply or add detail to the text in support of a preconceived outcome, I believe that we have crossed a forbidden red line. We no longer have a level playing field making it impossible for divergent interpretations to press forward in the goal of coming into unity of message. If another person reasons that Imperial Rome should really be given the label “king of the south” for whatever reasons he is able to come up with, it can readily be seen that these two views that arise from these assumptions will never meet. So if we can all agree to not add detail to Daniel 11 that is not explicitly stated, we will have a better chance of uniting on the message that we are to present to the world.