

Statement No. 6
Civil Rulers in Daniel 11:30-36
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Statement: Prominent Western civil rulers met every specification in Daniel 11:30-36.

We as students of prophecy are so tuned in on certain prophetic entities that it can be easy for us to assume that the only legitimate successor to the Roman Empire is the Roman Catholic Church. When we speak of “Rome” after 476 we automatically think of the papacy. But actually the ten horns of Daniel 7 are the true immediate historical continuation of the Roman Empire in prophecy. And France is the most prominent of the ten. So for French kings to appear prominently in Daniel 11 is just as natural as for the ten horns to appear in Chapter 7.

In abolishing the papal government in 1798, Berthier announced a new Roman republic. And in setting himself up as emperor, Napoleon posed as a revived Roman emperor. France is the most notable continuation of Roman government. It is not a new, unrelated foreign power. So when verse 36 speaks of “the king,” it would naturally mean the king, the most prominent civil ruler. Certainly, all the French kings from Clovis to Louis XVI worked to strengthen the Catholic Church, just as all the Roman emperors¹ from Constantine to Romulus Augustulus had earlier done. But just as that fact did not steal from Constantine or Romulus Augustulus their place in prophetic history, neither does it take away from the French kings their place in corrupting the popes by flattery.

Why do we try to identify specific rulers in Daniel 11? Take, for example, the kings of the North and South in verses 5-15. These kings are not called by their names in Scripture (as was Cyrus in Isaiah’s prophecy). That’s because the prophecy isn’t really about them personally. The chapter traces the *positions* of “king of the North” and “king of the South.” And as different kings assume those *positions*, they get included in the story. Likewise verses 20-36 trace the *position* of the dominant ruler in the West, whoever it happens to be at the time. Louis XIV quite well filled that *position* as “the king” of verse 36. But the *position* he represented continued beyond his death, even till the indignation was accomplished. We supply names for the pronouns in Daniel 11, not because the story is about them individually, but merely to show that those events did in fact take place with real individuals who filled those positions in history.

Verses 30-36 are tied together as a unit by the use of the word “indignation.”

“For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have **indignation against the holy covenant**: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.” (Verse 30).

“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and **shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished**: for that that is determined shall be done.” (Verse 36).

¹ With the notable exception of Julian “the Apostate” (AD 360-363).

The indignation referred to in verse 36 is the indignation mentioned in verse 30. And it is not talking about God's indignation against sin. Rather it is talking about the indignation of the Western rulers against the holy covenant.

Ellen White quotes verses 30-36 as a unit. Verse 30 provides the introduction to this indignation, and verse 36 its consummation (Dictionary definition of consummation: "the point at which something is complete"). I am using that word because "consume" is the how the Hebrew word for "accomplished" in verse 36 is translated more than any other way in the Bible. In other words, the text is saying that the indignation that was introduced in verse 30 reaches its full manifestation in verse 36. The French revolution was the consummation of what was begun in verse 30. Or as Ellen White put it, "The war against the Bible, carried forward for so many centuries in France, culminated in the scenes of the Revolution." *The Great Controversy*, p. 265.

The ships in verse 30 were very real ships, starting with the Gothic invasions of the mid-third century and extending to the Vandal attacks in the fifth century. These naval invasions were a significant representative part of the barbarian invasions as a whole. These barbarian invasions had a tremendous religious impact on the world. With the exception of two pagan nations (Franks and Anglo-Saxons), all the Germanic invaders were Arian Christians. Unless they could be subdued, there would be no hope of the papacy ever gaining supremacy. The "therefore" in verse 30 is all about the response of the Catholic civil rulers to this Arian intrusion. And here, as everywhere else in the chapter, we look for individuals who did the very thing mentioned. We reference the battle of Adrianople (AD 378) because that was the first major Roman defeat by the Goths. But this verse is not limited to that battle. That battle is representative of the larger Arian tidal wave. The "therefore" response of the Catholic civil rulers is illustrated in the work of Theodosius. He did more than any other emperor to fight the influx of Arianism. In 380 he issued an imperial decree defining Trinitarianism as the religion of the empire, and in the following year he called the Council of Constantinople to ratify it. This was followed, over the next decade and a half, by a series of imperial decrees that further enforced the Catholic creed.

Remember, Daniel 11 traces the large movements in history, which may be seen acted out in the specific cases of individual rulers. Another example of how the prediction of verse 30 was fulfilled can be seen in the story of Clovis. He also, like Theodosius, acted in indignation against the holy covenant. And he, like Theodosius, allied himself with the Catholic bishops and used the force of arms to ensure the success of Catholicism. And in doing so he used the very language of the text when he said, "It grieves me to see that the Arians still possess the fairest portion of Gaul. Let us march against them with the aid of God; and, having vanquished the heretics, we will possess and divide their fertile provinces."²

Who took away the daily? The Bible says, "And *arms* shall stand on his part, and *they* shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and *they* shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." The Bible is clear that it was the "arms" that took away the daily and it was the "arms" that placed the abomination that maketh desolate. The arms are the "they" according to the verse. It was the army that did these things. It was a French army that took away the daily and placed the abomination that maketh desolate. The text requires this. Daniel 11 is more detailed and more specific than Chapter 8. Chapter 8 talks about the papal power and also about the "host" that was involved in the taking away of the daily. Chapter 11 develops the role of that "host" and clarifies that it was armed forces that actually accomplished the taking away of the daily. Chapter 12 tells us that that took place in the year 508. So each chapter adds more details to what was broadly stated in Chapter 8.

² Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. H. H. Milman, vol. III, (New York: John W. Lovell Company, 1845), 582.

Prophecy reveals historical developments in both the religious and political realms. In the *religious* realm, paganism merged into the papacy. Paganism and Catholicism are religions; the former morphed into the latter. But in the *political* realm the transition was from the Roman Empire to the barbarian kingdoms. The original form of political Rome, as represented in Daniel 7's fourth beast, transitioned into a new phase of political Rome, as represented in the ten horns on its head. Those kingdoms were the political continuation of Rome. Chapter 11 is concerned with that political development.

Ellen White, in *The Great Controversy*, p. 54, says, "In the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. Paganism had given place to the papacy. The dragon had given to the beast 'his power, and his seat, and great authority.' Revelation 13:2. And now began the 1260 years of papal oppression foretold in the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation."

The statement, "In the sixth century," is here a clear reference to the year 538. That's when the bishop of Rome, by the defeat of the Ostrogoths, actually became "the head over the entire church." And that's when "the 1260 years of papal oppression" began. But Daniel 11:31 happened before 538. In 508, the date of this verse, the papacy had not become firmly established. The bishop of Rome could not yet exercise headship over the entire church. The 1260 years of papal oppression had not yet begun. Arianism at that time surpassed Catholicism as the dominant religion in the West. *Politically*, the Roman Empire had transitioned to the European invaders as of 476; but *religiously* the transition from paganism to Catholicism had been derailed by those Arian invaders, and could not be completed until the Ostrogoths were driven from Rome in 538. The prophetic events of the year 508 must be fulfilled by the power that *was* in power at that time. And that was not the papacy.

It would be historically inaccurate to say that when Western Rome fell, the papacy immediately stepped in to take its place. Historically, it was the Arian barbarians who stepped in to take imperial Rome's place in the West. It was not until 538 that the Arian domination was fully overthrown, and the papacy could assume religious supremacy in the West.

Daniel 7 mentions three horns that must be subdued in order for the papacy to gain the ascendancy: the Visigoths³, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths. In Chapter 11, verses 30 and 31, we find the Bible's account of the subduing of the first of those three horns by the armies of Clovis. This firmly establishes the French monarchy as a prophetic entity.

³ See William H. Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005), 117; and Heinz Schaidinger, *Historical Confirmation of Prophetic Periods*, (Silver Spring, Maryland: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), 5, 6, 29, 30, footnote 97.