

Seven Reasons to Dismiss the Classical Adventist View of Daniel 11:40-45

———— Weighing the Validity of Each ————

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by Ken LeBrun

I am here representing what we like to call the Classical Adventist View of Daniel 11:40-45—the early view that was held by the church at large for three quarters of a century. You may have heard it referred to as the Uriah Smith view. The purpose of my presentation is to evaluate the usually stated reasons for the comparatively little attention now given to this view. I will weigh the validity of what are probably the top seven reasons why this view is often ignored:

1. Because it lacks academic endorsement
2. Because of its association with Uriah Smith
3. Because world events have disproved it
4. Because eschatological prophecy must be understood figuratively
5. Because it ignores Revelation's end-time scenario
6. Because James White opposed it
7. Because it deviates from the outline of Daniel's earlier prophecies

The first reason to dismiss the Classical Adventist View of Daniel 11:40-45 is that **it lacks academic endorsement**. Each of the other major views is supported by recognized scholars, professors, PhDs, theologians. But so far at these annual conferences, none of the main speakers representing the denomination's early view have anything more than a bachelors degree.

Why this is so, I am not entirely sure. Certainly we would welcome the insights a historian or a Hebrew scholar would be able to contribute to our position. We are not afraid of critical

examination. We simply want the truth. I personally have greatly appreciated all the insights that have been shared by the presenters and panelists at this conference each year. I have learned a lot. And it is encouraging to us that no historical or linguistic evidence shared by the scholars here has yet disproved the simple, natural application of the text as we understand it.

So, although the theologians have come to different conclusions, their work has benefited our cause. History is history. It cannot be changed. Language is language. It means what it says. This shows us that the difference in our views is not to be found in the material that has come to light, but rather in the interpretation and application of that material.

Let me summarize my point:

- a. The contribution of scholars, even of those with different conclusions, has in no way threatened the natural application of the text as we see it.
- b. Scholarship's best contribution to the discussion is to be found in the data they uncover, not in the conclusions they draw from that data.
- c. The scholars often disagree with each other's conclusions, which means that their conclusions cannot all be right.
- d. Truth is not to be determined based upon how many scholars subscribe to it. The question, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?"¹ has never been a safe criterion.
- e. "The Bible was not written for the scholar alone; on the contrary, it was designed for the common people" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 89). "And the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus" (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 331).

So, is the lack of academic endorsement a reason to dismiss the classical Adventist view of verses 40-45? The answer has to be, "No."

¹ John 7:48

A second reason given for dismissing the classical Adventist view of Daniel 11:40-45 is **its association with Uriah Smith**. Uriah Smith has gotten a lot of bad press in recent years. After all, wasn't he on the wrong side of the important 1888 issues? And what's even worse than that, he actually believed that Christ was a created being. Those two errors alone are sufficient to cause us to be wary of his teachings. But to top it all off, the scenario anticipated in his application of Daniel 11:45 to Turkey never materialized. So why shouldn't he deserve bad press?

Let's assume for a moment that Elder Smith does deserve a negative reputation. Does that, of itself, disprove everything he taught? Should we throw out the seventh-day Sabbath because Uriah Smith believed in it? Should we deny the soon coming of Jesus because Uriah Smith preached it? Of course not.

But, you say, the truths of Sabbath and the Second Coming were upheld by the church at large, not just by Uriah Smith. Well, the fact of the matter is that the literal, civil-ruler approach to Daniel 11, without the use of figurative interpretations, was also held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a whole. This was in no way just a Uriah Smith thing. Smith's name *is* most often associated with the view. But that's only because his book enjoyed a wider and longer circulation than did any of the others. The prophetic applications he published represented the general consensus of the leading ministers in the church. Smith had no more exclusive ownership of the Eastern Question view of Daniel 11 than he did of the Sanctuary or State of the Dead truths. So let's not automatically dismiss his belief in the Eastern Question based on its association with him unless we're prepared to do the same for everything else he taught.

But is Uriah Smith's current unpopularity even deserved? His opposition to the 1888

message cannot be forgotten. M. M. Campbell lists eight dated letters² written to Smith by Ellen White between 1889 and 1893 containing reproof and appeals for reformation. She urged him to accept the God-given message brought by Waggoner and Jones. A final letter written to him on June 6, 1896 by Marion Davis told him that Sister White had been shown in vision the night before that the law in Galatians 3:24 was referring especially to the moral law.

After that 1896 letter, no further communication on the matter from Ellen White or her staff to Uriah Smith appears in the 1988 four-volume set of Spirit of Prophecy documents covering the 1888 Conference and the years following. Did he accept her counsel? Was his course changed? Of that we can be quite certain.

We find a letter written from Sister White on July 3, 1900 to Brother and Sister Smith.³ No reproofs are given, no warnings of danger. Nothing is said about him being on the wrong track. Instead, she now addresses him as a colleague and confidant:

“Speak for me, Brother Smith, to the churches. Tell them the Lord’s work is to go forward in the churches.”

She closes her letter, saying,

“I cannot write more now. I am, my brother and sister, in unity with you. Let us strengthen one another in the work to give the certain third angel’s message everywhere. Love to your family.”

Then, a year and a half later, in February, 1902, Sister White wrote to Brother and Sister Haskell about Elder Smith:

“Elder Smith was connected with us at the beginning of the publishing work. He labored in connection with my husband. We hope always to see his name in

² M. M. Campbell, “The Confessions of 1888.” <https://www.scribd.com/document/111181470/The-Confessions-of-1888-By-M-M-Campbell>. Accessed August 25, 2021.

³ Ellen G. White, Letter 94, 1900.

the *Review and Herald* at the head of the list of editors; for thus it should be. Those who began the work, who fought bravely when the battle went so hard, must not lose their hold now. They are to be honored by those who entered the work after the hardest privation had been borne.

“I feel very tender toward Elder Smith. My life-interest in the publishing work is bound up with his. He came to us as a young man, possessing talents that qualified him to stand in his lot and place as an editor. How I rejoice as I read his articles in the *Review*—so excellent, so full of spiritual truth. I thank God for them. I feel a strong sympathy for Elder Smith, and I believe that his name should always appear in the *Review* as the name of the leading editor. Thus God would have it. When some years ago, his name was placed second, I felt hurt. When it was again placed first, I wept, and said, “Thank God.” May it always be there, as God designs it shall be, while Elder Smith’s right hand can hold a pen. And when the power of his hand fails, let his sons write at his dictation.”⁴

What about Smith’s Christology? Should those views disqualify him as a worker? It is true that for a time he did consider Jesus to be a created being. In 1865 he wrote concerning the phrase “the beginning of the creation of God” in Revelation 3:14,

“Not the beginner, but the beginning, of the creation, the first created being, dating His existence far back before any other created being or thing, next to the self-existent and eternal God.”⁵

But as time passed, and new editions of his work came out, his position began to change. By the 1880s he was arguing against his earlier view. In his fully developed *Daniel and the Revelation* we find the following explanation of Revelation 3:14.

“Some understand by this language that Christ was the first created being, dating his existence anterior to that of any other created being or thing, next to the self-existent and eternal God. But the language does not necessarily imply that he was created; for the words, ‘the beginning of the creation,’ may simply signify that the work of creation, strictly speaking, was begun by him.... Others, *and more properly we think*, take the word to mean the ‘agent’ or ‘efficient cause,’ which is one of the definitions of the word, understanding that Christ is the agent through whom God has created all things, but that he himself came into existence

⁴ Ellen G. White, Letter 47, 1902.

⁵ Uriah Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assn., 1865), 59.

in a different manner, as he is called ‘the only begotten’ of the Father. It would seem utterly inappropriate to apply this expression to any being *created* in the ordinary sense of that term. For ‘beginning,’ read ‘beginner.’ ”⁶

Thus Smith clearly rejected his earlier Arian position. He still considered Jesus to be begotten of the Father, but this should not flag him as any more heretical than his contemporaries.

According to Erwin Gane’s research, no Trinitarian declaration could be found, written by an Adventist writer, prior to 1898.⁷ So, why should we expect Uriah Smith to be any different?

In regard to Smith’s expectation for the fulfillment of Daniel 11:45 we are brought to our third point. The third reason given for dismissing the classical Adventist view is that **world events have disproved it**. Those who have only read the 1944 revision of Smith’s *Daniel and the Revelation*, with only eight sentences of comment on Daniel 11:45, may not realize that earlier editions of the book contained eleven pages of commentary on that verse. All of that material was removed from the current edition because the expectation described never happened. This is, perhaps, the biggest reason why scholars today have flatly written off and dismissed the classical Adventist view of verses 40-45. The anticipated scenario never materialized.

So, what we are saying is that Seventh-day Adventist Bible students abandoned their previous approach to this prophecy when the chances of such a thing ever happening seemed to be basically zero. This complete change of direction in our approach to Daniel 11 is a textbook example of interpreting the Bible according to the newspaper.

⁶ Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, 1897 Edition, p. 370. Emphasis supplied.

⁷ Erwin R. Gane, “The Arian or Anti-Trinitarian Views Presented in Seventh-day Adventist Literature and the Ellen G. White Answer,” p. 65.

The danger of this kind of reaction to changes in world affairs may be illustrated with reference to another prophetic expectation of Adventists: a national Sunday law. As early as January, 1847, Joseph Bates had connected the mark of the beast with the observance of Sunday.⁸ Thus from the very beginning of our movement we have anticipated the enforcement of Sunday worship.

In the United States, Sunday legislation and enforcement “reached a peak in the middle 1880’s, when a number of SDA’s in widely scattered localities were brought to court and penalized heavily for alleged violations of Sunday laws.”⁹ In 1888 a bill was brought before Congress to make Sunday a national day of rest. It was defeated, partly because of the efforts of our church leaders. The next year the Seventh-day Adventist Church established the Religious Liberty Association “to oppose Sunday legislation and assist those who were brought into court because of violation of Sunday laws.”¹⁰ The events in our nation were confirming our prophetic interpretations.

But by the early 1900’s most Americans had begun to adopt an increasingly liberal attitude toward Sunday activities. “Stringent Sunday laws gradually became outmoded.”¹¹ It ceased to be a public issue. Should we then conclude that our interpretation of Revelation was incorrect, because here we are a hundred years later and our expectations never materialized? Of course not. Our faith in the sure word of prophecy is not shaken by the delay of its fulfillment. Though Congress has not passed a Sunday law, we have maintained our confidence that it most certainly

⁸ Joseph Bates, *The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign*, second edition, January, 1847, p. 59.

⁹ *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1966 edition, p. 1029.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 1273.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

will. In the same way, just because the power controlling the northern region of the former Greek empire of Alexander the Great has not yet planted the tabernacles of its palace in Jerusalem, that fact should not influence us to revise our hermeneutical approach to Daniel 11 to search for new interpretations. Genuine faith in God's word is never affected by the ever-fluctuating political state of affairs in our world.

Many of today's scholars have largely concluded that our pioneers were wrong—that all their preaching and writing on the Eastern Question was a misguided and ultimately embarrassing mistake. Anxious to distance ourselves from those earlier "errors," we often exaggerate the extent of the error. But a closer, more open, analysis of the way our early brethren presented the subject will challenge our offhanded assumptions that they were wrong.

Let's take a look, for a moment, at what Uriah Smith actually *said* about Daniel 11:45. I will reference the 1897 edition of *Daniel and the Revelation*. On pages 280 and 281 he wrote,

“The predictions of the preceding verse having been fulfilled within the memory of the generation now living, we are carried by this one past our own day into the future; for no power has yet performed the acts here described.”

Before we continue reading, let's be sure we know what he just said: “The acts here described.” He is talking about the *acts described* in verse 45. What are those acts? The power spoken of in this verse plants the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain, then he comes to his end and no one helps him. That's all the verse says. According to Uriah Smith, those specifically named acts had not yet been performed. Is he correct? Yes, most of us can agree on that. Let's keep reading.

“But it is to be fulfilled; and its fulfillment must be accomplished by that power which has been continuously the subject of the prophecy from the 40th verse down to this 45th verse.”

How is he doing? Is he still okay? Most of us are still in agreement.

A simple reading of Daniel 11, in which every word is allowed its natural meaning, leads us to believe that the king of the North is—well, just that, the king of *the North*. In context, that would be the northern region of Alexander’s empire. Chapter 11 being wholly explanatory, we should expect its language to be straightforward and clear. Consistent with that principle, Smith continues:

“If the application to which we have given the preference in passing over these verses, is correct, we must look to Turkey to make the move here indicated.”

Then he says,

“And let it be noted *how readily this could be done.*”¹²

The next ten pages simply illustrate *how easily the acts described in verse 45 could be fulfilled* in his day, given the political situation in that part of the world at the time.

Those ten pages are *not an explanation of the verse*. Smith does not present the information he shares there as an interpretation of the passage. He simply submits it as a scenario under which the acts specifically described in the verse “could” be fulfilled in his day. The non-fulfillment of that possible pathway does not constitute a failure of the church’s understanding of *the meaning of the verse itself*. Their understanding of the acts described in the text has not been proven wrong.

In his readiness to discredit the classical Adventist view, the careless critic will confuse Smith’s *interpretation of the text* with his *description of how the foretold events could easily play out*. But anyone who understands proper exegesis will know that *the meaning of the terms* in a prophetic passage and *how that prophecy might be fulfilled* are two entirely separate questions. It

¹² Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, 1897 Edition, p. 281. Emphasis supplied.

is not our pioneers' expectation of an imminent fulfillment of the prophecy that we should be judging, but rather their methodology in reading the text. Were they employing sound hermeneutics? That brings us to point Number 4. But to summarize this third point, we must conclude that the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, though eliminating the pathway to the prophecy's fulfillment that our pioneers foresaw, has, nevertheless, not disproved the understanding of *the meaning of the text* that they held.

The fourth reason commonly given for dismissing the classical Adventist view of Daniel 11:40-45 is the assertion that **eschatological prophecy must be understood figuratively**. This seems to be the underlying presupposition that a large number of scholars today bring to the text. The idea is that terms normally calling for a literal and local application, when applied in an eschatological context, become spiritual and universal. But when exactly does this hermeneutical transition take place? At the cross? In AD 34? In AD 70? In 1798? I guess it depends on who you ask. For Mervyn Maxwell, the change happens at the close of the seventy weeks.¹³ For Jacques Doukhan the transition from literal to abstract and metaphorical begins way back in verse 5.¹⁴

In explaining their reason for shifting from a literal to a spiritual application, commentators often bring up discussion points related to Israel, Babylon, and Egypt. In dealing with end-time prophecies concerning *Israel*, Adventist writers usually take a couple of approaches. Some of the prophecies pertaining to Israel are passed off as conditional, and therefore will never be fulfilled. Other prophecies regarding Israel are re-directed to the Christian church in a form of replacement

¹³ C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, Vol. 1, p. 280.

¹⁴ Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, p. 171, 172.

theology. In either case, because of the Jews' rejection of Christ, none of the promises for Old Testament Israel can be fulfilled for them. I'd like us to examine that thought.

Even a rudimentary exposure to the relevant texts reveals that God's promises to Israel were not all conditional. Psalm 89 contains God's specific promise to David. Verse 19 of that chapter would be a good place to start reading. But for brevity we'll begin with verse 28.

“My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.”¹⁵

Notice that this promise was not dependent upon Israel's faithfulness. “If his [David's] children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments,” even then God says, “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.... *His [David's] seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.*” Israel's disobedience would not alter God's promise that David's throne would endure for ever.

In Jeremiah 31 we again see Israel's future as a nation compared to the sun and the moon. We'll begin in verse 35.

“Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from

¹⁵ Psalm 89:28-37

being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the Lord; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel *for all that they have done*, saith the Lord.”¹⁶

This passage names two conditions upon which God’s promises to Israel depended. The first condition is the continued existence of the sun, moon, and stars. If those depart, then Israel will cease from being a nation for ever. The second condition is, “If the heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath.” While modern science has learned a lot about the universe, it certainly has not measured every part of it. And while we know a lot about the earth’s geology, we have not been able to completely search it out. But those humanly impossible achievements are the conditions stipulated for God casting off the seed of Israel. Notice especially that Israel’s behavior—“all that they have done” (verse 37)—would not cause God to cast them off as long as the heavens and earth remain as they are.

God says, I have “sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David” (Psalm 89:35). But when we say that those promises have been transferred to some other group than the descendants of David, we are making God lie unto David.

The fact is, when Michael stands up and takes the kingdom, it will be *the very kingdom* that God established under David. The genealogy of Jesus was recorded by both Matthew and Luke to demonstrate that, through two different lines, Jesus is David’s rightful heir. Gabriel told Mary, speaking of Jesus, that “the Lord God shall give unto him *the throne of his father David*: and he shall reign over *the house of Jacob* for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Luke 1:32, 33. If we intend to belong to Christ, we’re going to have to be subjects of the kingdom over which He reigns. And that kingdom is the house of Jacob, also known as Israel, and His throne is

¹⁶ Jeremiah 31:35-37. Emphasis supplied.

the throne of David. The whole point of Romans Chapter 11 is to say that God has *not* cast off Israel, and the only way for Gentiles to be included is by being grafted into the stock of Israel.

We often talk about “Spiritual Israel,” as if it means something other than real Israel. But when a Canadian moves to the United States and completes the process of becoming an American citizen, we don’t label him a “spiritual American.” When the immigration process is finished, he is then a *full* citizen of the United States of America. So, when we Gentiles are grafted into the stock of Israel, we become bona fide citizens of the house of Jacob. That’s why, in Revelation Chapter 7, as soon as God’s people are sealed and probation closes, and Michael stands up and takes the kingdom, His subjects are all numbered with the tribes of Israel, regardless of their previous citizenship. Their naturalization process is complete. They are genuine members of Daniel’s people.

We are too accustomed to reinterpreting what God says to make it fit our own ideas, rather than letting His word mean what it actually says. When Gabriel said to Daniel, “thy people,” he meant just that, the house of Israel.

In his 1875 “Sermon on the Two Covenants,” J. N. Andrews said,

“The language of inspiration is very explicit in stating that the new covenant is made with the same people that were the subjects of the old covenant. Thus Jeremiah, speaking in the name of the Lord, says: ‘I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah’ [Jeremiah 31:31]. And he further alludes to the fact that the new covenant is made with the Hebrew people when he adds: ‘Not according to the covenant that I made with *their fathers* in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt’ [verse 32]. And yet again he identifies the Hebrew people when he says: ‘This shall be the covenant that I will make with *the house of Israel*’ [verse 33]. And Paul quotes at length, in Hebrews 8, this entire statement of Jeremiah respecting the old and new covenants’ being severally made with the Hebrew people.”¹⁷

¹⁷ J. N. Andrews, *Sermon on the Two Covenants*, 4.1.

Developing this further, Andrews explains,

“The Gentiles were made partakers of the spiritual things which God had wisely and justly placed in the hands of Israel. Romans 15:27. But being thus brought nigh by the blood of Christ, Paul says of those who were Gentiles ‘*in time past*’ (but not now) that they were ‘no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.’ They were no longer Gentiles, but Israelites. They became sharers in the name and in the riches of Israel. And it is by this adoption into the commonwealth of Israel that they became sharers in the blessings of the new covenant.”¹⁸

With this understanding, all the Old Testament promises for Israel “are yea, and in him Amen” (2 Corinthians 1:20). They are neither canceled nor reassigned. When we realize that Daniel 11 extends to the signal for Michael to stand up and restore the kingdom and throne of David we can better appreciate the literal significance of Gabriel’s introduction to the Chapter: “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall *thy people* in the latter days.”¹⁹ There is no need to manufacture a spiritual interpretation just because we are talking about the end of time.

This is not Zionism. The current nation of Israel in Palestine is not the continuation of David’s kingdom. God has made no promises to them as a nation. The Jews in Christ’s day also forfeited their status with God, bringing about the collapse of their nation. Through Ezekiel God declared concerning the crown of Judah, “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”²⁰ Not until Christ receives the kingdom at the close of His mediatorial work can God’s promises to David be literally fulfilled (See *Prophets and Kings*, p. 451).

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.2.

¹⁹ Daniel 10:14

²⁰ Ezekiel 21:27

We often hear, in discussions of the kings of the north and south in Daniel 11, references to “spiritual Babylon” and “spiritual Egypt.” Since Nebuchadnezzar’s city and kingdom are long gone, any reference to Babylon in an end-time manifestation would need to be understood figuratively. Revelation also speaks of a “great city, which spiritually is called” Egypt.

If Babylon was featured in Daniel 11 in an end-time context, as it is in Revelation, we would have little choice but to understand its meaning in a spiritual sense. But the motif of Babylon, so familiar to us in the Book of Revelation, is never once mentioned in Daniel 11, unless it be imposed onto the text by the reader. The only Seleucid king mentioned in Daniel 11 to ever rule from Babylon was Seleucus I Nicator. But Gabriel notably fails to designate him “king of the North.” By the time the first labeled king of the North appears in verse 6, the Seleucid headquarters was in present-day Turkey. Thus there is nothing in the text itself upon which to construct the notion of Spiritual Babylon.

France, in Revelation 11:8, was said to be “spiritually...called Egypt.” According to the book, *The Great Controversy*, France was therefore “the *nation* represented by Egypt.”²¹ Notice that spiritual Egypt in the Bible represents a *nation*. “The *nation* represented by Egypt,” Sister White says, “would give voice to a similar denial of the claims of the living God”²² as had been expressed by the Pharaoh of Egypt. But according to Revelation 11, France would give voice to those sentiments only for three and a half years.

“It was in 1793 that the decrees which abolished the Christian religion and set aside the Bible passed the French Assembly. Three years and a half later a resolution rescinding these decrees, thus granting tolerating to the Scriptures, was

²¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 269.

²² Ibid.

adopted by the same body.”²³

Those decrees were rescinded on June 17, 1797 when the French government removed restrictions against the practice of religion. When “the time of the end” dawned in February of 1798, it had been eight months since France had been able to spiritually represent Egypt.

But whereas Revelation 11 does feature a spiritual representation of Egypt, we find no mention of a spiritual application in Daniel 11. Daniel 11:42 talks about “the *land* of Egypt,” an expression that indicates *geography*. Verse 43 pictures Egypt as a place possessing “gold and silver” and “precious things.” These are physical, concrete terms. This is completely different from Revelation 11:8 where Egypt is expressly represented spiritually.

The idea that eschatological prophecy must be understood figuratively completely falls apart when we remember the beginnings of our movement. In William Miller’s day, the popular churches had come to believe that Jesus would return spiritually, not literally. Miller’s historical contribution to Protestant thought was to say that the events prophesied would be literal.

“Taking the manner in which the prophecies had been fulfilled in the past as a criterion by which to judge of the fulfillment of those which were still future, he became satisfied that the popular view of the *spiritual* reign of Christ—a temporal millennium before the end of the world—was not sustained by the word of God.

“... Miller found the *literal*, personal coming of Christ to be plainly taught in the Scriptures.”²⁴

The Great Advent Movement was founded on a literal understanding of the words of scripture. James White wrote,

"The only safe and proper rule of Biblical interpretation is to take every passage of the Book of God as meaning what it says, word for word, excepting those cases where the text and context clearly show that a figure or parable is

²³ Ibid. p. 287.

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 321. Emphasis supplied.

introduced for a more clear elucidation of the subject.”²⁵

William Miller wrote,

"How to know when a word is used figuratively. If it makes good sense as it stands, and does no violence to the simple laws of nature, then it must be understood literally; if not, figuratively.”²⁶

And even today the official Seventh-day Adventist position on Bible study methods says,

"Seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied.”²⁷

Many commit the same error today as did the majority of churches in Miller’s day. They turn from the plain meaning of the text to some spiritual interpretation, and disregard the clear language that Inspiration uses in describing coming events. Ellen White tells us,

“Before His crucifixion the Saviour explained to His disciples that He was to be put to death and to rise again from the tomb, and angels were present to impress His words on minds and hearts. But the disciples were looking for temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and they could not tolerate the thought that He in whom all their hopes centered should suffer an ignominious death. The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared. The death of Jesus as fully destroyed their hopes as if He had not forewarned them. So in the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. *The events connected with the close of probation* and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed. Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready.”²⁸

Daniel 11:45 specifically presents “the events connected with the close of probation.” What

²⁵ James White, “Women in the Church,” *Review and Herald*, Vol. 53, No. 22, May 29, 1879, p. 172.

²⁶ William Miller, *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology Selected from Manuscripts of William Miller with a Memoir of his Life*, 1842 ed., Joshua V. Himes, p. 22.

²⁷ *Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods*, Section 4c, General Conference Executive Committee, October 12, 1986.

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 594. Emphasis supplied.

other prophecy in the Bible tells us the very events at which time Michael will stand up? So if Ellen White's statement applies to any prophecy in the Bible at all, it certainly cannot exclude this one. And if that is true, then in this prophecy "the future is opened before us as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ." Figurative language requiring uncertain interpretation is thereby completely ruled out.

It is apparent that the only real reason the last six verses of Daniel 11 are believed to require a figurative interpretation is to allow us to overlay the events described in Revelation 13 onto it. Daniel 11:40-45 has to be treated as spiritual language in order to project onto it a narrative from Revelation, no part of which is actually stated in the words of Daniel 11. That leads us to our fifth point.

The fifth reason to dismiss the classical Adventist view of Daniel 11:40-45 is that **it ignores Revelation's end-time scenario**. As Seventh-day Adventists, we have a keen understanding of the book of Revelation and the issues that will test the world just before Jesus returns. We also know that the books of Daniel and Revelation complement each other. It is understandable, then, that we would want to see earth's final showdown, as Revelation describes it, strongly represented in the prophecies of Daniel. And the last few verses of Daniel 11 seem to be an interesting place to fit that in. But if, as our pioneers did, we take those verses as an overview of the Eastern Question, then Revelation's end-time scenario is left untold. And that can be difficult for our conditioned minds to accept.

The problem, however, is that Daniel 11 doesn't contain any of the information Revelation provides regarding the final scenes. There are no beasts, no image, no mark, no 666, no reference

to worship or compulsion, and no mention of the commandments of God or the faith of Jesus. So, if verses 40-45 are supposed to reflect Revelation 13, it all has to be arbitrarily imposed onto the text. If this is true—if the whole story has to come from outside of Daniel 11—then the chapter itself contributes nothing at all to our understanding of final events. Gabriel’s delineation of prophetic waymarks gets turned into symbols and figures, the true meaning of which is not divulged by his actual words. And the keys to interpreting them are never supplied. This opens the door to any number of subjective interpretations, as this annual conference has shown.

So, let’s step back and reevaluate. What makes us think Daniel 11 has to tell *Revelation’s* story? Is there any reason these verses can’t mean exactly what they say? What’s wrong with the idea that Gabriel may be disclosing exclusive intelligence found nowhere else in the Bible? We all agree that he did that in the first half of the chapter. When we honestly think about it, our insistence on Daniel 11 telling Revelation’s story is all unnecessary. The text itself certainly does not demand it. So let’s cross that objection off our list.

A sixth reason sometimes given for dismissing the natural reading of Daniel 11:40-45 is that **James White opposed it**. This is not an insignificant objection. Of her husband, Ellen White wrote, “I was shown that his relation to the people of God was similar, in some respects, to that of Moses to Israel.”²⁹ She said, “God has given us both a testimony which will reach hearts. . . . He has also given my husband great light upon Bible subjects, not for himself alone, but for others.”³⁰ We, being included in those “others” for whom James was given great light, can

²⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 3 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1875), 85.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

benefit much by taking careful note of what he has written.

On Daniel 11:45 Elder White took a position that differed from his brethren. In November of 1877, as the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 was in full swing, James White published an article in the *Review* intended to calm some of the excitement among our people over the Eastern Question. “But in exposition of unfulfilled prophecy,” he cautioned, “where the history is not written, the student should put forth his propositions with not too much positiveness, lest he find himself straying in the field of fancy.”³¹

“Positions taken upon the Eastern question are based upon prophecies which have not yet their fulfillment. Here we should tread lightly, and take positions carefully. . . . It may be said that there is a general agreement upon this subject, and that all eyes are turned toward the war now in progress between Turkey and Russia as the fulfillment of that portion of prophecy which will give great confirmation of faith in the soon loud cry and close of our message. But what will be the result of this positiveness in unfulfilled prophecies should things not come out as very confidently expected, is an anxious question. . . . Those looking at the Eastern question will probably be disappointed.”³²

James then compared Daniel’s prophecies in Chapters 2, 7, and 8 in which the last earthly power mentioned is Rome. Then he asked, “Does the eleventh chapter of the prophecy of Daniel cover the ground measured by chapters two, seven, and eight? If so, then the last power mentioned in that chapter is Rome.”

Observing that Palestine is no longer a glorious land, but that the United States is, he suggested, “Is there not more probability that the seat of the beast will be moved to our country, than that the seat of the Turkish government will be moved to Palestine?”

In October of 1878 James wrote another article in which he again compared Daniel’s

³¹ James White, “Unfulfilled Prophecy,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 50, No. 22, November 29, 1877, p. 172.

³² *Ibid.*

prophecies. "...If the same field and distance are covered by these four prophetic chains, then the last power of the eleventh chapter, which is to 'come to his end and none shall help him,' is Rome."³³

Finally, on July 22, 1880, James wrote,

"The eleventh chapter of Daniel closes with the close of *the fourth monarchy*, with these words:—

" 'And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; [mountain of delight of holiness, Heb. Marg.]; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.' "³⁴

While it is clear that James White believed that Daniel 11 culminates with papal Rome, he does not explain how the chapter progresses to that point. In other words, he places Rome at the end where he feels it belongs, but he offers no road map within the chapter itself to get there. He clearly doesn't take the path of figurative language, for he says,

"And there is a line of historic prophecy in chapter eleven, where *the symbols are thrown off*, beginning with the kings of Persia, and reaching down past Grecia and Rome, to the time when that power 'shall come to his end and none shall help him.' "³⁵

Elder White used a literal approach to the chapter. He apparently understood the references to North and South to be geographical, not symbolic, for he published an excerpt from a *Bible Examiner* article in the December 12, 1854 *Review and Herald* that stated the following:

"We do not believe that Russia is 'the king of the north.' It is our opinion that any power that reigns over *Syria* is—for the time being—'the king of the north,' spoken of Daniel xi ; hence that the Turkish Dynasty is *now* that power. If Russia, Austria, England, or France should become possessed of supreme power over Syria, *then* it—which ever it might be—would become 'the king of, the north.' "

³³ James White, "Where Are We?" *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 52, No. 15, October 3, 1878, p. 116.

³⁴ James White, "The Time of the End," *The Signs of the Times*, Vol. 6, No. 28, July 22, 1880, p. 330. Emphasis supplied.

³⁵ James White, "Where Are We?", *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. 52, No. 15, October 3, 1878, p. 116. Emphasis supplied.

Till then none but the Turkish Dynasty occupies that position, in our opinion.”³⁶

In 1859 James White published his book, *The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation 8 and 9*. In his introductory comments, he says,

“In giving an outline of this subject, I shall, for the most part, follow Keith, in his ‘Signs of the Times,’ on the first four trumpets. I should be glad to give his remarks and historical quotations entire, would my limits, which are prescribed for this work, admit it.”

When he came to “The Fifth Trumpet, or First Wo,” he quoted the following from Mr. Keith:

“There is scarcely so uniform an agreement among interpreters concerning any part of the apocalypse as respecting the application of the fifth and sixth trumpets, or the first and second wo, to the Saracens and Turks....³⁷

“We have passed the period, in the political history of the world, when the western empire was extinguished; and the way was thereby opened for the exaltation of the papacy. The imperial power of the city of Rome was annihilated, and the office and the name of the emperor of the west was abolished for a season. The trumpets assume a new form, as they are directed to a new object, and the close coincidence, or rather *express identity* between the king of the south, or the king of the north, as described by Daniel, and the first and second wo, will be noted in the subsequent illustration of the latter.”³⁸

Notice what he said. There is an “express identity” between Daniel’s kings of the south and north and the first and second woe. The first woe describes the Saracens, the Arabs who controlled the whole southern shore of the Mediterranean, including Egypt. And the second woe depicts the Turks. So there in Revelation 9, according to James White, we have the king of the South and the king of the North, the Saracens and the Turks.

In 1875 James White published the third edition of his work on the seven trumpets, revised

³⁶ “Discordant Opinions,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Vol. VI, No. 17, December 12, 1854, p. 134. The original source was the *Bible Examiner*, published by George Storrs, December 1, 1854, pp. 312, 313. The final paragraph of the *Bible Examiner* article, which claimed that no prophecy makes it necessary to put off the second coming a single day, was omitted in the *Review and Herald* reprint, suggesting that James White as editor excluded the part with which he could not agree.

³⁷ James White, *The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation 8 and 9*, (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Review and Herald Office) 1859, p. 30.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 31. Emphasis supplied.

and enlarged, now entitled, *An Exposition of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation VIII and IX*.

When he came to the fifth trumpet, he expressed in the following words his agreement with Mr. Keith's assessment: "For an exposition of this trumpet we shall again extract from the writings of Mr. Keith. This writer truthfully says:—...."³⁹ Then he continued with the same quotation, referenced above, in which he points out the "express identity" between the kings of the south and north in Daniel 11 and the Saracens and Turks in Revelation 9.⁴⁰ This was just two years before the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, which elicited Elder White's *Review and Herald* article cautioning against any anticipation that the fulfillment of Daniel 11:45 would result from that conflict.

I find it interesting that in the November 29, 1877 *Review and Herald* article just mentioned, Elder White actually made no reference to "the king of the north," but simply stated that "the last power mentioned in that chapter" is Rome. Maybe he could logically separate in his mind the king of the north from the power in verse 45. That would be consistent with his recently published literal understanding of the king of the north. Or, maybe he never really tried to figure it all out. Blessed as he was with great light upon Bible subjects, Elder White was primarily an administrator. And, as it turns out, his statements in 1877 and 1878 stemmed more from administrative concerns than from a methodical determination to carefully trace the progression of waymarks in Daniel 11.

A letter written by Elder W. C. White on May 12, 1930, to L. E. Froom explains what was going on. It is twelve paragraphs in length, but to get the full picture, I will share the entire letter.

³⁹ James White, *An Exposition of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation VII and IX*, (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association) 1875, p. 55.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 56.

“Regarding the views of Elder James White on the king of the north, I can only give a brief outline of a very interesting experience. In order to give anything which approaches to a correct view of this experience, you must take into consideration that Elder White was an Adventist preacher for many years before he was a S. D. Adventist, and by study of the literature of the 1844 movement, you will find that prominent writers took the position that Rome was the king of the north, and in this undoubtedly Elder White was to a considerable extent in agreement.

“Another matter you must consider is this, — Elder White was not primarily a theologian. He was a business man, a publisher, and an administrator of Conference affairs, and did not have time to give to theological questions that study which he greatly desired to do.

“From 1872 to 1878 his soul was filled with the burden of helping S. D. Adventists to understand and accept the necessary burdens of the broadening work which was laid before them through revelation. The Battle Creek College was built largely with borrowed money. During 1872 and 1873 Elders Haskell and Butler obtained many pledges for the college, but we did not have at that time such a system as we now have for following up and making collections.

“With the assurance felt by our leading men in these pledges, the college was largely built with borrowed money. Our people were in the habit of depositing their money with the Review and Herald and the Review and Herald lent many thousands to the college and the sanitarium.

“During 1877 and 1878 Elder White carried a tremendous burden of soul over the matter of securing payment of the pledges and clearing the college from debt, and he came up to the General Conference of 1878, held in the Battle Creek fair grounds in a big pavilion standing very near where Dr. Kellogg's mansion now stands (on Wood Street — now gone), with the determination to do everything in his power to help our brethren to get broader views and to make greater sacrifices.

“During the earlier part of this year or possibly the last of 1877, there appeared in the *Review* an article by Elder Uriah Smith under the title ‘Without Excuse.’ This you will read with deep interest because it intimates that the existing war between Russia and Turkey was probably the beginning of Armageddon. This might have passed like many other *Review* editorials without serious results, but at the beginning of the great camp meeting in which was combined the annual session of the General conference and the Michigan Conference and the annual meetings of the Review and Herald and the sanitarium and the college, with representatives from all parts of the field, Elder Smith in one of his earliest discourses presented in a very thrilling way the same thoughts as were in the editorial.

“To Elder White this was a great shock because if the logic of Elder Smith's discourse was taken seriously the people would naturally conclude that Elder White's burden was too late in the day and entirely out of place.

“The natural result of the full acceptance of Elder Smith's article and sermon

would be for our brethren to say that the end is at hand. Take an armful of tracts, go out and distribute them, and then watch for the Son of Man in heaven. The acceptance of this view would undermine all the plans and all the efforts that Elder White was making to clear the debt from our institutions, and to get our people to adopt broader views and make stronger efforts for the promulgation of the truth.

“In response to this, Elder White walked into the pulpit and presented the old, old view regarding the king of the north.

“Both Elder Smith and Elder White were seriously in error in presenting their views without counsel, but Elder White was the most in error because it was his discourse that made it plain to the people that our leaders were not in agreement. The day following or possibly the second day during the season of prayer in their tent, Sister White was taken off in vision and shown very many things which you will find in the published testimony as given at that date, and among other things she was given a severe reproof for Elder White for taking a course that would lead the people to observe differences of opinion and to cherish lack of confidence.

“During the few months preceding this meeting I had read *Thoughts on Daniel* and *Thoughts on Revelation* by Elder Uriah Smith. I loved the writer; I admired his style; I loved his teaching; and I was shocked when Elder White presented another view regarding the king of the north. One day I said to him, ‘Father, I have just read Elder Smith's books and his exposition seems clear to me. Do you really believe that Rome is the king of the north?’ His answer was, ‘I think Elder Smith is going too fast in his exposition, and I thought it was time to present something to check the current of belief that what is transpiring was the beginning of Armageddon.’

“In later years men have argued that Elder White and Elder Wilcox and others holding somewhat similar views were wrong because Elder White was reproved, but I was never able to find any evidence that the vision given at the camp meeting in 1873 threw any light on the doctrinal controversy, but it did through [sic] a flood of light upon the way our brethren should treat one another in presenting Bible doctrines.”⁴¹

In an earlier letter to Elder John Vuilleumier, Willie White explained,

“In father’s efforts to arouse our brethren to clear off the B. C. College debt, and to raise money for the B. C. San. and for the European Mission, and for the proposed British Mission, and other things, he had met the plea, ‘It is too late, Eld. White to plan for all these things. TOO LATE, TOO LATE.’ And when he heard Eld. Smith’s presentation, fear seized his soul, and he threw in his exposition on Daniel 11, *not so much that he really believed it*, as that he thought

⁴¹ William C. White letter to L. E. Froom, dated May 12, 1930. Found in Ellen G. White Publications Office Document, “Differences in Doctrinal Views Held by Uriah Smith and James White (King of the North),” 1966, by Arthur L. White.

it would check a movement that he thought was bordering onto fanaticism, and might lead to the hindrance of the work to be done. He was reproved by the Lord for bringing in distrust as to the unity of the leaders, and sank down in discouragement, and thus the great financial campaign collapsed.”⁴²

So, it was “not so much that he really believed it,” but because of his administrative concerns, that he threw in his alternate view. At least that is the impression he gave to his son.

Considering James White’s lack of an organized exposition of Daniel 11:40-45, and his *privately stated* practical motivation for dampening some of the excitement generated over Turkey’s potential actions, we cannot count his opposition as a sufficient reason to dismiss the classical Adventist view. His *publicly stated* reasoning, however, for applying Daniel 11:45 to the papacy, does deserve consideration. That is what we will address in our seventh point.

The seventh reason to dismiss the pioneer view of Daniel 11:40-45 is that **it deviates from the outline of Daniel’s earlier prophecies**. The main objection here seems to be the introduction of Turkey into the prophecy, a power that appears nowhere else in Daniel.

To answer this concern, we need to remember what Chapter 11 is all about. Unlike Daniel’s earlier prophetic chapters, Chapter 11 is not an overview of successive kingdoms. In Chapters 2 and 7, and also in the first part of Chapter 8, we see clear-cut symbols that unmistakably distinguish one kingdom from the next. The principal components that make up those lines of prophecy are *kingdoms*, sovereign political units. But when we get to Chapter 11, the noted designations become *geographical*. Political distinctions are blurred, and in some cases, are barely recognizable. The constituent units that make up Chapter 11 are individual *kings*—the

⁴² Letter from William C. White to Elder John Vuilleumier, March 6, 1919. Emphasis supplied.

dominant rulers within the designated territories at the time. It is no longer about the *kingdom* as a whole. It's about whoever is ruling within that territory. His nationality is insignificant. Even his name is unimportant. It is the position he holds within the territory that receives mention. And the *purpose* for the delineation of events in Chapter 11 is not to demonstrate God's control of the rise and fall of nations, but to erect mileposts for the people of God, waymarks leading to a destination.

Gabriel talks about the rulers who would be playing a part in that progression of events. All along, he has to include players not mentioned in the earlier chapters. So it is not surprising at all that the marker he attaches to *the close of probation* is likewise an action of the ruler of the designated geographical territory at the time.

And there is good reason for this. In Chapter 9 the 2300-day prophecy has prompted Daniel to pray about two specific things connected with the sanctuary: the Jewish people, and the city of Jerusalem.

“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.” (Verse 16)

“O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

“And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God.” (Verses 19, 20)

Daniel wasn't praying for the Gentile church. He was praying for his own people, the nation of Israel, and for Jerusalem, the holy mountain of God. Those two things. But keep in mind that his prayer was prompted by the prophecy about the cleansing of the sanctuary. He wanted to

understand the cleansing of the sanctuary as it specifically related to his own people and the city of Jerusalem. So Gabriel shows up two more times in the book of Daniel to make that connection clear. In Chapter 9 he provides the key for determining when the cleansing of the sanctuary would *begin*. And in Chapters 10-12 he gives the sign that would indicate when the cleansing of the sanctuary would *end*. In both cases, the indicators that he provides have to do with Daniel's people and the city of Jerusalem, the two things on Daniel's mind. The cleansing of the sanctuary would *commence* 2300 years from the decree to restore and build *Jerusalem*, the first 490 years of which were cut off for the *Jewish people*.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”⁴³

Likewise, the cleansing of the sanctuary would *conclude* when something specific happens to *Jerusalem*, and its conclusion is stated in terms of its impact upon *Daniel's people*.

“And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”⁴⁴

Only by tracing the literal actions of literal kings in real geography could Gabriel provide the information about Jerusalem and the Jewish people that Daniel had expressed such concern

⁴³ Daniel 9:24, 25

⁴⁴ Daniel 11:45 - 12:1

about.

But through it all, Chapter 11 actually lines up perfectly with Daniel’s earlier chapters. I refer here to the chart I presented in my 2018 Daniel 11 conference paper:

	Chapter 2	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 11
Babylon	Gold	Lion		
Medo-Persia	Silver	Bear	Ram	11:2
Greece	Brass	Leopard	Goat	11:3-19
Rome	Iron	4th Beast	Little Horn	11:20-29
Middle Ages	Iron & Clay	Horns	Little Horn	11:30-39
Time of the End	Stone	Judgment	Cleansing	11:40 - 12:3

Please notice that the period of papal supremacy in each of Daniel’s visions is the *Middle Ages*. But Daniel 11:40-45 is about the *Time of the End*, from 1798 onward, in which none of Daniel’s earlier chapters focus on the papacy. To artificially insert the papacy into the *Time of the End* portion of Chapter 11, when none of Daniel’s earlier prophecies do so, would violate the established pattern. The truest consistency within the prophetic periods is reflected in our Adventist pioneers’ approach to Daniel 11.

In this presentation I have addressed seven common *objections* to the classical Adventist view of Daniel 11:40-45. For a look at the view itself, and its *merits*, I refer you to my 2018 Daniel 11 conference paper. There you’ll see how perfectly history answers to every specification of the prophecy. The paper is posted on the website, www.Daniel11Prophecy.com under the 2018 conference papers. The title is, “Identifying the King of the South through a Natural Reading of Daniel 11.” I invite you to objectively examine the evidence presented there.

Conclusion: Having considered each of the above objections, there really is no reason at all to dismiss the classical Adventist view. It has not been proven wrong. It enjoys a rich heritage of historical support in this denomination, and it will continue to have a strong voice in the ongoing discussion of Daniel Chapter 11.