

Hermeneutical Horses
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Daniel's prophetic dreams and visions all follow the same format. First the dream/vision is given, and then the content of the dream/vision is interpreted by God through Daniel or Gabriel. To establish the book's pattern, we'll first review how Daniel's previous prophetic chapters are given and interpreted, and then apply the established pattern to chapter 11.

In the second chapter, after relating Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel offers the interpretation. "This *is* the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king."

Daniel's interpretation explains the symbols given in the dream. Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold. Medo-Persia is the arms and chest of silver, and so on until the stone hitting the feet and becoming a great mountain is described as the setting up of the kingdom of God. The entire interpretation describes literal, future events and does not introduce any new symbols that need to be further interpreted.

Daniel chapter 2 establishes the pattern by which the rest of the dreams/visions of the book are interpreted. It is symbolic dream followed by literal interpretation.

In chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar desires to know the meaning of his symbolic dream. "Tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof." Daniel relates the meaning of the dream's symbols as literal events to take place in the life of the king. Daniel's interpretation is confined to explaining the symbols of the vision. Thus, in relating the meaning of the symbolic dream, Daniel does not introduce any new symbols. His interpretation describes only literal, future events in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. It is symbolic vision followed by literal interpretation.

The same is true for chapter 5. Daniel interprets the symbolic handwriting by describing literal, future events in the life of Belshazzar. Daniel first reads the symbolic writing and then relates its meaning. "This *is* the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it," etc. Daniel adds no new symbols that need to be further interpreted. The described

events took place that very evening, confirming Daniel's literal explanation. It is symbolic vision followed by literal interpretation.

In chapter 7, once Daniel had seen the various beasts, horns and heavenly throne room scene, he asks for the truth of the dream. "I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things."

Daniel asks to know "the truth" of the symbolic vision and is shown "the interpretation of the things." The "truth" is the literal interpretation of the vision's symbols which Gabriel clearly explains. The four beasts are four kings, the ten horns are ten kings or kingdoms and the little horn is another kingdom that shall arise.

The symbolic vision is followed by a literal interpretation of the symbol's meaning with no new symbols that need further interpretation. Though Gabriel makes some use of metaphor, such as "devour the whole earth," "wear out the saints," "overflow" or "stretch forth his hand," this does not change the overall literalness of the interpretation. Nor does the time correlation of a day for a year. It appears from chapter 8 that Daniel was already familiar with this principle. Ellen White intimates this when she says Daniel, "...could not understand the relation sustained by the seventy years' captivity, as foretold through Jeremiah, to the twenty-three hundred years that in vision he heard the heavenly visitant declare should elapse before the cleansing of God's sanctuary."

While still in vision, Daniel understood the 2300 days to be 2300 years without needing Gabriel to interpret their meaning. This caused him to faint and be "sick *certain* days" when Gabriel announced that the vision of the evening and morning was true. The cause of his perplexity was his inability to reconcile the 70 years he read about in Jeremiah and the 2300 years he heard the angel say in vision, prompting his chapter 9 prayer.

And geography plays a part in the interpretation of the horns in Daniel's visions. The ten horns of chapter 7 come "out of this kingdom" and refer to the divisions of the Roman Empire. The same is true of the little horn that "came up among them" referring to its geographic location in Europe. These points are commonly made during evangelistic meetings to identify the ten horns and the little horn as

arising in Europe. Additionally, the four horns of the 'he' goat "stand up out of the nation" and refer to the geographic, directionally-labeled, divisions of Greece.

In chapter 8, the same vision/interpretation format is followed. "And it came to pass, when I, *even* I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between *the banks of Ulai*, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this *man* to understand the vision."

Daniel "sought for the meaning" of the symbols. Gabriel's task was to make Daniel "understand" the meaning of those symbols. Gabriel states the two-horned ram represents the kingdom of Medo-Persia. The rough goat represents the kingdom of Greece. Daniel wants to know the meaning of the symbols and Gabriel relates the meaning as literal kings, kingdoms and events.

Because of the vision's impact on Daniel, Gabriel resumes his interpretation at a later date. From this point forward in the book, Daniel is seeking the meaning of the symbols given in chapter 8 and Gabriel is seeking to fulfill his divinely assigned task of making Daniel understand the vision, which brings us to chapter 9. Gabriel returns in chapter 9 to give Daniel "skill and understanding." "Therefore, understand the matter, and consider the vision." The vision to "consider" is the vision of Daniel 8. After stating his purpose for returning, Gabriel relates literal, future events. The beginning point of the 2300 years, the restoration of Jerusalem, the coming of the Messiah, His death, the second destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary, and the eventual pouring out of "that determined" "upon the desolate" or "desolator" of the sanctuary. This further interpretation of Daniel 8 does not contain any new symbols but is a relation of literal, historic events. It is symbolic vision in chapter 8 followed by literal interpretation in the subsequent chapters.

The dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, the experience of Belshazzar, and the visions of Daniel were all interpreted by explaining the meaning of the symbols as literal nations, kings and events. The symbolic portion was given first, followed by an explanation of the symbols that was literal throughout. God gave them the interpretation and their task was confined to relating it to us. This is the hermeneutic of Daniel proven by the format of book.

How, then, should we understand Daniel 11, since the chapter contains no symbolic vision involving various metals, beasts, or horns? First, we must recognize that Daniel 11 is related, not only to chapters 10 and 12, but to chapters 8 and 9. Chapters 8 through 12 are a unit, not just 10 through 12. In other words, Daniel 11 is a detailed interpretation of Daniel 8. Here's why.

The vision of chapter 8 is "for many days." When Gabriel returns in chapter 10, he refers back to the vision that "is for many days." This is the vision of chapter 8, since there's been no intervening vision described as "for many days."

When Gabriel returns in chapter 9, he narrowly focuses on the literal events of the first 490 years. Nearly 80% of the 2300 years is not sufficiently addressed. Gabriel then returns in chapter 10 to finish the interpretation. He asks Daniel, "Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee?" Before Daniel answers, Gabriel explains. "But I will shew thee that which is noted [recorded] in the scripture of truth: and *there is* none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince."

Gabriel comes to explain a vision previously "noted" or recorded in the Scriptures, yet fully understood only by Gabriel and Michael. That vision was chapter 8 since Daniel had been instructed to "shut up the vision" and that "none understood *it*." Though later, Daniel had portions of the vision explained to him, he did not fully understand it. The vision was one that only Michael and Gabriel fully understood. In chapter 12, at the end of the visit by Michael and Gabriel, Daniel is again told to "shut up the words." This clearly indicates that the vision Gabriel had been interpreting was the vision of chapter 8. It was the vision that was "for many days" and was to be "shut up." It was the vision relating to "the latter days." There are many more details that knit these chapters together and can be found in my posted document.

Gabriel had been commissioned by God to "make this man to understand the vision." In both cases when Gabriel returns to fulfill his commission, he uses nearly the identical language. "I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding" in chapter 9 and "Now I am come to make thee understand..." in chapter 10.

We understand that chapter 9 is a partial interpretation of chapter 8 because (1) there is no symbolic vision in chapter 9, (2) Gabriel says he is returning to give Daniel understanding in answer to his prayer, (3) Gabriel refers to chapter 8 when he says “consider the vision,” and (4) the other linguistic ties to chapter 8. We should do the same for chapter 11 for the same reasons. Chapter 11 contains (1) no new symbolic vision, (2) Gabriel acknowledges that he is returning to give Daniel understanding in answer to his prayer, (3) refers to chapter 8, when he says “Now I am come to make thee understand...the vision, and (4) for the other linguistic ties to chapter 8. The connections that knit together chapters 8 through 12 are clear and unmistakable. They demonstrate that Gabriel’s narration of chapter 11 is a literal interpretation of the last recorded symbolic vision in chapter 8.

This also seems to be the view of Ellen White. She comments on Daniel’s chapter 9 prayer in *Sanctified Life* page 49 and following. “Upon the occasion just described [Gabriel’s visit in Daniel 9 where she quotes Daniel 9:4-6,15-19], the angel Gabriel imparted to Daniel all the instruction which he was then able to receive.”

In Daniel 9, Gabriel related the 70-week portion of the prophecy. According to Ellen White, it was “all the instruction which he was then able to receive.” In chapter 10, Daniel understands that the “time appointed was long.” It would be 2300 years and not 70. Gabriel, however, had related events that Daniel did not fully comprehend. Gabriel had not completed his task to make Daniel “understand the vision” by telling him what would be “in the last end of the indignation.” Nor did Daniel understand what would happen to “the desolator” of the sanctuary. Daniel wanted to know more. Ellen White continues, “A few years afterward, however, the prophet desired to learn more of subjects not yet fully explained, and again set himself to seek light and wisdom from God. (Daniel 10:2-6 quoted)... Our Lord comes with another heavenly messenger to teach Daniel what would take place in the latter days.”

Thus “a few years afterward,” Daniel once “again” prayed for “light and wisdom from God” regarding those “subjects not yet fully explained” by Gabriel in his chapter 9 visit. What about the last 1810 years leading to the cleansing of the sanctuary? What would happen at the “last end of the

indignation?” What would happen to “the desolator?” These “subjects” were “not yet fully explained,” and in answer to Daniel’s prayer, Gabriel and Christ return in chapter 10 to further explain the vision of Daniel 8. Gabriel gives that full explanation in chapters Daniel 11 and 12. Daniel 11 and 12, then, are a detailed interpretation of the symbols given in Daniel chapter 8.

In summary...The hermeneutic proven by the format of the book of Daniel is symbolic vision followed by a literal interpretation consisting of literal kings, kingdoms and events. The interpretations of every prophetic chapter in Daniel are literal throughout. Daniel 11 is an interpretation of Daniel 8 confirmed by comparing scripture with scripture within the book of Daniel itself and the comments of Ellen White that relate directly to the book of Daniel. And since it is an interpretation, it describes literal kings, kingdoms and events throughout its entirety, following the pattern set by every other interpretation in the book of Daniel.

We have seen why Daniel 11 must be understood as literal throughout. We’ll now spend our remaining time looking at why Daniel 11 cannot be understood symbolically either in whole or in part.

Some believe that chapter 11 should switch from the initial, literal hermeneutic to a symbolic one. The switch is suggested at various places such as verse 40 because we enter the time of the end, from verse 30,31 because the Papacy is introduced or from verse 23 because it’s after the death of the Messiah. Some have suggested verse 5 and others verse 2. The majority of adherents see the transition in verse 23 or verse 30,31, so we’ll look at those.

A hermeneutic is a principle of interpretation and as such, must be equally applied to all passages and not just when and where we want to. If after the cross, events must be understood symbolically, if geography and direction are irrelevant, why don’t we use this hermeneutic in other chapters of Daniel? Why don’t we symbolically interpret events after the cross in chapter 9? Why are not the people of the prince considered symbolically? Why are not the city, the sanctuary and their destruction symbolic, since all these events happen after the cross? And in chapter 11, after the cross in verse 22, who or what is the King of the South in verse 25? Why should “king” in verse 40 be seen as a symbol and understood as an ideology like Atheism or Islam instead of a literal “king” or

“kingdom” as interpreted in every other instance in the entire book? How is the warfare between armies of verse 25, global, spiritual warfare? If directions have no literal meaning after the cross, where is the king going in verse 29 when he comes “toward the south?” Are the “ships of Kittim” real ships or economics as some suggest in verse 40? If “Kittim” cannot be interpreted as a literal, geographic location since it is after the cross, how is “Kittim” interpreted spiritually and globally? A hermeneutic must be applied across the board otherwise it’s just a private interpretation to facilitate a pre-determined outcome and we have slipped from exegesis to eisegesis.

Others see the introduction of the Papacy in verses 30,31 as a reason for the change. It is stated that the Papacy is a global, spiritual kingdom and not a geographic one, and, that, following verse 30, no specific kings are referred to as in verses 1-29. Again, if this is a true hermeneutic then we must apply it across the board and in other chapters as well. Why are not all the events following the introduction of the Papacy in chapter 7 seen as symbolic? Why are not the great words spoken by the little horn, the wearing out of the saints, the changing of times and laws, the judgment and the kingdom given to the saints all considered symbolic since they all take place after the introduction of the Papacy? And in chapter 11, what about the “arms” in verse 31? Literal or spiritual? Did people spiritually fall by the sword, flame, captivity, and spoil or was it literal? If literal, none of these events were global. They represent literal events confined to Europe. Those who say everything after the cross or after the introduction of the Papacy should be interpreted spiritually and globally, still see verses 33-35 as literal events and not symbolic ones. And there’s no question that the Papacy is a geographic kingdom. It was identified as such in chapter 7 and every year millions of people from all over the world travel to the geographic city of Rome to visit the Vatican.

Now, with respect to not seeing specific kings after verse 30, specific kings can be seen in verse 40. If verse 40 speaks of the deadly wound in 1798, then we have Napoleon and Pius VI, as kings. If the rest of the verse speaks of 1989, then we have Pope John Paul II, Reagan and Mikael Gorbachev as kings. And we’ll know who the U.S. President is once a Sunday Law is enforced. If we were living in the time of verse 45 and looking backwards, we’d see all the specific kings and their deeds in the

previous verses, just as we can by looking backwards from verse 29 through 2. Hindsight is 20/20. Changing our interpretive method because some verses are not specific enough is arbitrary and has no precedent in previous chapters or anywhere else in the prophetic scriptures that I'm aware of. When it comes right down to it, out of the entire book of Daniel, and nearly 87% of chapter 11, the symbolic method is only consistently applied to the final six verses of the chapter, yet there's no compelling reason to do so; it's changing hermeneutical horses in midstream.

Attempting to change the literal hermeneutic to a symbolic one by conjecturing transition points such as after the cross or with the introduction of the Papacy, cannot be sustained by any previous interpretation in Daniel. By saying, "This event means a shift in our interpretive method," we are allowing our interpretation of that event to determine our hermeneutic. That's backwards. Our interpretation of an event **should be** the result of our hermeneutic, not our hermeneutic the result of our interpretation of an event. In addition, these are straw men arguments since all of our spiritual forefathers, regardless of how they understood the final verses, understood that post-cross New Testament Israel represented the church. Yet all understood the last verses of Daniel 11 as literal, not symbolic. All saw the Papacy in Daniel 11, but none saw the final verses as symbolic. All saw them as literal.

The symbolic method assumes that the King of the South and the King of the North in verse 40 are symbols. They interpret these symbols as European nations, namely, France and the Papacy or as ideologies. However, while kings have ideologies, ideologies are not kings. France and the Papacy are Roman horns identified as such in Daniel 7. But Daniel 11 is an interpretation of Daniel 8 and not Daniel 7. Gabriel, in both Daniel 8 and 11, identified the Kings of the North and South as divisions of Greece. They are Greek horns, not Roman horns. Therefore, we should not be looking at the divisions of Rome for our understanding, but rather, under Gabriel's direction, at the divisions of Greece. Furthermore, Daniel 11 is an interpretation, and as such, along with every other interpretation in the book of Daniel, is literal in its entirety.

For many years, I was an evangelist with Amazing Facts and later in the Potomac Conference. Seventh-day Adventists' understanding of prophecy captivated non-Adventists. They could see it in history. They could see it in world affairs. It made sense and they embraced it. The final verses of Daniel 11 culminate in the close of probation and should be clearly presented to the world so they can take their stand before that decisive hour. My fear, however, is that the symbolic view will only perplex the very ones we are attempting to warn and cause them to question whether we truly have the message for this final hour.

Should we present to the public that the King of the South is atheistic France and the King of the North is the Papacy, we would be suggesting to the public that the king of the **north** is a power geographically **south** of the king of the **south** and the king of the **south** is a power geographically **north** of the king of the **north**. The king of the south must travel **south** to attack the king of the north. When the king of the north finally responds to the king of the south, after nearly 200 years, it does not attack the nation that attacked it but attacks an entirely different nation geographically even farther to the **north** than the former king of the **south**. The king of the north must travel **north** to attack the king of the south. The plain, obvious language of the text is testimony against the symbolic view and is the reason the symbolic view must eliminate both geography and direction. And while I don't agree with Smith's interpretation of these final verses, we shouldn't abandon our interpretive methods because the predicted event of moving Turkey's capital to Jerusalem, failed to take place. The Millerites didn't abandon their interpretive methods when the predicted event didn't happen. They continued to use the same interpretive methods to explain what took place in 1844. In fact, it was their critics that argued for the symbolic approach saying the Second Coming was spiritual and the Sanctuary was the Church, neither of which we believe to this day. When we arrive at verse 41, the glorious land is entered. We tell the public that it's not really the glorious land, as we defined earlier in the chapter, but it's now the church and, according to Louis Were, the conscience. In verse 41, the public is told, it's not really Edom, Moab, and Ammon but Catholics and Protestants who leave Babylon and join the Seventh-day Adventist church. In verse 42, the public is informed, it's not really Egypt but Atheism in

general and China in particular. In verse 43, it's not really Libya and Ethiopia, but apostate Seventh-day Adventists who leave the church and join with Babylon. I could be wrong, but at this point in your discourse, there'd likely be many in your non-SDA audience with crossed arms and deeply confused looks on their faces, especially since in the first thirty-nine verses, you so clearly detailed literal events fulfilled in history.

The prophetic portions of the book of Daniel transition, in every case, from symbolic to literal and never from literal to symbolic. The format is always symbolic dream followed by literal interpretation. In every case, the interpretations are literal throughout. Daniel 11 is an interpretation of Daniel 8 and, as in every other interpretation, must be understood as literal throughout. Changing the hermeneutic from literal to symbolic, and then, for just the last six verses, goes contrary to every other interpretation in the book of Daniel and has resulted in much confusion. Daniel 11 is a literal interpretation of Daniel 8 and should not be understood as symbolic in whole or in part.