

Three Simple Rules to Interpret Daniel 11

"The language of Daniel 11 is considered to be 'literal' in that it isn't symbolic in the same way that the language of chapters 2, 7, and 8 is. There are no multiple-element images, no beasts or horns. Just the same, its language is far from easy. ***It is cryptic, almost like a code...*** For some Christians, matching history to this particular prophecy has become a religious diversion, even a lifelong passion, more fascinating and far more rewarding than doing jigsaw pictures or crossword puzzles." [1]

For the sake of clarity and brevity, I will focus on trying to explain only *the final eleven verses* (11:35-45) of Chapter 11. Bible scholars have already explained the earlier verses. This last section puzzles almost everyone. It's the most fascinating because it is actually happening today. Is the role of Islam described in the Bible? Yes, Daniel 11 describes the Islamic nations as "the King of the South" in verse 11:40. Is the United States of America pointed out as an important player in Bible prophecy? Yes, Daniel clearly explains the US role in Bible prophecy. Is the modern nation of Israel truly a fulfillment of Bible prophecy? So let's begin decoding Daniel 11 with a few basic principles.

Chapter 11 describes history of the Middle East from Daniel's time (6th Century BC)[2] until the end of the world. Daniel even predicted the specific name of "Greece" as the next empire that would overtake the Persian Empire approximately 200 years before it happened (Daniel 8:21). Daniel 11 begins with King Cyrus (see Daniel 10:1), the first Persian King (approximately 536 BC) and ends right before "the Great Prince" delivers his people "everyone whose name is found written in the book (Daniel 12:1)."[3] Therefore the end of Daniel 11, chronologically, is the time right before Christ returns and delivers his people. The New Testament always describes the literal, visible and loud Second Coming of Christ as the same time the Believers will be caught up or delivered. (See I Thessalonians 4:15-18, Matthew 24:26-31.[4])

THREE SIMPLE RULES

The following are three simple rules which will enable us to understand this chapter:

1) ***It is a strictly chronological prophecy.*** So we never go backwards in time (from a previously understood historical fulfillment) in order to interpret Daniel 11.

2) ***Daniel 11 is primarily a geographic description of events.*** It is written to Daniel's people, the former nation of Israel; therefore Jerusalem is always the center of the Jewish world. It calls the "King of the North" that political power (not an individual ruler) that lays predominantly north of Jerusalem and the "King of the South" that political power which lays predominantly south of Jerusalem. Evidence of the geographic emphasis is the Hebrew word *'eret*, translated "countries" or "land." We find this word repeated five times in Daniel 11:40-43, referring to literal lands such as Egypt and Libya.

As an example, Daniel 11:6 states,

"After some years, they will become allies. The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power (or offspring) will not last. In those days she will be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her." (Dan. 11:6)

This verse describes the historical marriage made between Antiochus II Theos (261-246 BC) and Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC). Unfortunately, Antiochus divorced his previous wife, Laodice, in order to marry Berenice. After her father, Ptolemy II, died, Antiochus made the mistake of taking Laodice back. In a woman's rage, Laodice had Berenice, her baby, her attendants and Antiochus murdered. This occurred in approximately 250 BC.

Scholars agree that the King of the North is a political power, the Seleucid Dynasty, not merely an individual king or ruler. The ruler at the time of this prophecy acts as the Head of State, representing his kingdom and dynasty. The events described by Daniel allow us to look at history and geographically pinpoint the ruler who fulfills this event. Then we have a point in time to move forward from (never backward). Because we know the general geographic location (north or south of Jerusalem) and the general time frame (after the last fulfilled event), Daniel 11 is *relatively easy to decode and understand*.

3) *God uses literal, local, earthly events to point us to spiritual, universal truths.*

For instance, the Old Testament Sanctuary, which was set up in Solomon's Temple (and later in Herod's Temple) was "... a copy and shadow of what is in heaven (Hebrews 8:5)." We study the old sanctuary because it helps us to understand how the Heavenly Sanctuary functions today. God meets people where they are. He provides us **signs** on earth that we can literally see in order to help to discern spiritual things that are out of our literal vision.

Daniel 11 is primarily describing the political events, geographically centered in Jerusalem, that help Bible believers to understand where they are in time. It also strengthens our faith as we see how God foresaw and predicted these events. *I believe that we have chronologically reached Daniel 11:43*, because only recently, in 2011, have the leaders of Egypt and Libya (Daniel 11:43) "stepped down" after the insistence of the US President. If we lose this geographical focus of Daniel 11, we misunderstand its simple, straightforward message.

Consistency is crucial when interpreting the Daniel's code. We cannot start out using geographical, political kingdoms that are near Palestine in the early verses and then, in the later verses say, "It is now a 'spiritual' fulfillment that has nothing to do with the region of Palestine." That is not consistent. This is the main error in of previous interpretations.



JESUS' WARNING

In Matthew 24 Jesus gave the disciples many literal signs of the end of the world such as wars, famines and earthquakes. He told them that the gospel message would be proclaimed to all "peoples" (*ethne* in the Greek) and then "the end" would come (Matthew 24:14). Then he said, **So when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation,**' spoken of through the **prophet Daniel**—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (Matthew 24:15,16)

Many Jewish and Christian Bible interpreters have understood this Abomination prophecy in Daniel to have been fulfilled by the Greek King, *Antiochus Epiphanes*, who in 167 BC sent his armies to Jerusalem and ordered the Jewish temple to be consecrated to the Zeus. He decreed that all, on pain of death, should conform to this Greek religion and forget their former beliefs. I will agree that Antiochus did provide a fulfillment that has been understood by the Jews and Christians for many years. But Jesus warned us of a *future event* (Matthew 24:15, 16) when he was on earth (after 31 AD). I am sure he was not warning his followers about *something that had already happened in 167 BC*. Therefore we must seek to understand this future fulfillment, rather than merely living in the past.

Then Jesus described this "great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now."(Matthew 24:21) This warning is also understood as pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by the Roman legions. The historian, Eusebius, wrote that, during a temporary delay of the siege on Jerusalem, the Christians fled the city and were not killed.^[5] This warning has a **triple application** ^[6] not only for 70 AD, but also for the Middle Ages, and the last days

of earth's history. Matthew 24:29, 30 states that "the Son of Man" will be coming "on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory."

Notice that all the signs that Jesus gave in Matthew 24 were **literal**, earthly signs that the believers could actually see. This sign of the "Abomination" has a broader, spiritual meaning as well. But only by understanding the literal, earthly sign, will we then understand the broader, spiritual, universal meaning. So how do you understand the final fulfillment of this sign? If we follow these *three simple rules* for interpretation, it will become very clear how this "Abomination" will again be in the "holy place" for all to see.

1 C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, (USA , Pacific Press, 1985), page 278

2 For those who question that Daniel actually wrote the book in the Sixth Century, please see IV Seventh-Day Adventist Commentary (Hagerstown, MD, Review and Herald Publishing Assn, 1978), page 748.

3 Daniel 12:1, 2 has been understood historically as Christ's Second Coming and the resurrection and deliverance of Christ's followers whose names are written in the "book of life." (See Revelation 3:5, 20:12, 21:27). See the notes following: Geneva Notes (John Calvin) on Daniel 12:1,2 - The angel here notes two things: first that the Church will be in great affliction and trouble at Christ's coming, and next that God will send his angel to deliver it, whom he here calls Michael, meaning Christ, who is proclaimed by the preaching of the Gospel. Daniel 12:2 And many {b} of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt. (b) Meaning all will rise at the general resurrection, which thing he here names because the faithful should always consider that: for in the earth there will be no sure comfort.

4 In Luke 17:26-37, Jesus tells his disciples that as it was in Noah's time and Lot's time, so shall it be in the end time "one will be taken and the other left (verse 34)." They asked "Where, Lord?" He answered "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather (Luke 17:26)." During the Flood or the destruction of Sodom those who are left are dead. Vultures eat dead people, get it? There is no secret rapture anywhere in scripture. The Lord will come as a thief in the night in the sense that no one knows when He will come, but when He comes "every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7)." This Secret Rapture is not the historical Protestant understanding of the Second Coming. Dispensationalism is a relatively new idea that was first proposed by Nelson Darby in the late 1800's and then popularized by Dr. C.I. Scofield in the Scofield Reference Bible. It actually is a derivative of the teachings of the Jesuit scholar Francisco Ribera (d. 1591). (See book entitled *The Secret Rapture- Is it Scriptural?* (Palm Springs, CA, Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Assn., 1989) by Ralph Woodrow for a clear, concise explanation on this subject).

5 Eusebius of Ceasarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, Volume 3, Chapter 5, Section 3

6 The phrase "Abomination of Desolation" is found three times in the book of Daniel, in Daniel 9:27, 11:31 and 12:11. Therefore, I believe there are three clear fulfillments of this prophecy, the first on 70 AD, the second during the Crusades of the Middle Ages, and a final event in the "Time of the End (Daniel 11:40)." A more complete explanation is found in the following video presentation on Youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIXX2NYQs-w>

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