

That Old Turkey View!

Daniel 11:40 Prophecy Conference

Bering Springs, Michigan

October 19-21, 2018

20-minute Sabbath afternoon presentation

by John Witcombe

* The multitude of conflicting views on Daniel 11 that were presented yesterday reveal the fact that we are as prophetically confused as were Cleopas and his friend who were walking to Emmaus that Sunday afternoon.

If Jesus was to come alongside us this afternoon, here is what He might say to us:

* “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:” (Luke 24:25).

He might then point out to us statements from a prophet that would bring prophetic clarity. The choice would then be ours to either remain fools and stubborn of heart or to accept the prophet’s words that would unite us on a correct prophetic understanding.

I am going to highlight this afternoon a statement from the prophet that has the potential to bring all of us into unity.

In the fall of 2011, I was invited to serve on a committee of the North Pacific Union Conference that spent two days examining a view of Daniel 11 being promoted by a pastor within our Union, a view which interpreted the *king of the south* to be Islam.

After giving my report regarding this new understanding, the committee chairman then asked me who I believed the *king of the north* was in Daniel 11:45.

When I told this committee of pastors, church administrators, and evangelists that I believed the *king of the north* was the leader of Turkey, they all laughed, thinking that I was joking.

How was it that I came to believe Uriah Smith’s obsolete Turkey view of Daniel 11?

* I had listened to a lecture on Daniel 11 that Tim Roosenberg gave at a Religious Liberty Rally held in Oregon, and I thought it made good sense.

But when some members of my congregation asked me what I thought of Tim’s teaching on Daniel 11, I decided I really needed to study this chapter out for myself.

It was January of 2010. The Ellen G White CD with the Pioneers writings had recently been released. So I opened up Uriah Smith’s book *Daniel and the Revelation* on my computer to see what he had to say on Daniel 11.

* In the 1912 edition of Smith’s book from which I was reading, his commentary on verse 45 had 3,677 words. In the 1944 edition that most people read from today, Smith’s commentary has been reduced to only 159 words for verse 45.

And it was Smith's full commentary on Daniel 11:45 in the 1912 edition that captured my attention.

I took Smith's interpretation of verse 45 and updated its application to comport with the geopolitical conditions of the 21st century, and then shared my thoughts with a friend.

He emailed back and told me that Smith had gotten it all wrong, and that Ellen White taught that the *king of the north* was the papacy.

Well, that settled it for me. If Ellen White said that the papacy was the *king of the north*, then end of discussion. I'm going with what she taught.

But when my friend shared his Ellen White statement of support for the papal view, I didn't see any evidence for her support of that view, and thus began a two-year email conversation with several friends that racked up over 500 pages of correspondence.

The more I dug into Daniel 11, the clearer and more sensible Smith's view became. But just because something is sensible to me, doesn't make it correct.

I don't trust my own wisdom to get things right. Human wisdom, I believe, is at the root of our current disunity on Daniel 11:45. Listen to what Ellen White had to say about unity:

* "If the professed followers of Christ would *accept God's standard, it would bring them into unity*; but so long as *human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word*, there will be divisions and dissension." {*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 124}.

I have chosen to include the writings of Ellen White as part of God's standard.

I believe that we will be brought into unity on Daniel 11 solely on the condition that we choose to submit human wisdom to the authority of the inspired writings.

The founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were just as divided on their understanding of doctrinal issues as those of us here are divided on our understanding of Daniel 11. Reporting on one of the Sabbath Conferences of 1848, Ellen White wrote:

* "Our first general meeting in western New York, beginning August 18, was held at Volney, in Brother David Arnold's barn. About thirty-five were present,--all the friends that could be collected in that part of the State. **But of this number there were hardly two agreed. Some were holding serious errors, and each strenuously urged his own views, declaring that they were according to the Scriptures.**" {*Life Sketches*, p. 110}.

* "Hardly two agreed". Sound familiar?

If it was not for God's intervention back then, I doubt that there would have ever been unity. But God promised in His Word that He would intervene. By what means? Listen to what Ellen White stated:

* "I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. **God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the 'last days'**; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and **to correct those who err from Bible truth**." {*Early Writings*, p. 78}

Here is Ellen White's report on how this promised intervention worked for the brethren back in 1848:

* “Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, ‘We can do nothing more,’ the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me . . .” {*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 206}.

Ellen White also stated:

* “They knew that when not in vision I could not understand these matters, and **they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given me**. The leading points of our faith as we hold them today were firmly established. *Point after point was clearly defined, and all the brethren came into harmony.*” {*This Day With God*, p. 317}.

I believe that we could have that same harmony this afternoon.

If we will allow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Ellen White to correct our interpretation of the Bible, just as our forefathers did back in 1848, it is possible that all of us brethren assembled here today could come into harmony, just as they did.

Unless we have an inspired word from Ellen White on Daniel 11:40-45, unity of interpretation will be impossible to achieve.

I've participated in four, multi-day North Pacific Union Conference Prophecy Symposiums on Daniel 11, and not a micro-step towards a united view was ever realized.

However, at this conference here in Berrien Springs it could very well be different. We have something today that we did not have at those four North Pacific Union symposiums. We have access to inspired testimony from Ellen White that we did not have back then. And if we will but believe that God has spoken through Sister White to correct our misinterpretation of Scripture, we might very well achieve unity.

Ellen White wrote:

* “Men may get up scheme after scheme, and the enemy will seek to seduce souls from the truth, but *all who believe that the Lord has spoken through Sister White*, and has given her a message, will be safe from the many delusions that will come in these last days.” {*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 83}.

The many delusions would include erroneous prophetic interpretations.

Let me emphasize this again: It was God, speaking through Sister White, who brought our church into doctrinal unity at those 22 Sabbath Conferences. When those godly, praying men, with their Bibles in hand, were at an impasse as to the correct interpretation of a biblical passage, Ellen White would be given a vision, and she would then tell the brethren just how God intended that passage to be understood. Without this prophetic gift, doctrinal unity would have been impossible to achieve.

I'm convinced that it will be God alone, once again speaking through Sister White, who will bring unity to our prophetic message today.

Over the past 8 years, it has become increasingly evident to me that without direct input from Ellen White, unity of message on Daniel 11:40-45 will be impossible to achieve. Not one of us, even with Bible in hand, has sufficient wisdom to keep from embracing erroneous theological and prophetic schemes.

As humbling as it may be to our human pride, the fact is, our *only safety* from embracing erroneous prophetic views is to believe that God has spoken through Sister White.

When I first discovered Smith's literal interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 back in 2010, there were no published statements from Ellen White clearly endorsing Smith's view. So anyone's view of these verses was as good as anyone else's view.

However, that needed endorsement from Ellen White was revealed on July 16, 2015.

On that date, all of Ellen White's unpublished writings were released. And in these writings were found three statements that provide a clear endorsement of a lecture that was being presented by many of our public speakers, a lecture known as the *Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy*.

This lecture taught the same interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 that is found in Uriah Smith's book, *Daniel and the Revelation*.

Our prophetic understanding of the *Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy* was one of Adventism's most effective entering wedge tools we had for evangelizing new territory for nearly 80 years.

Over 800 newspaper reports from that 80-year period have been located which prove just how significant our Pioneer's prophetic presentations on Daniel 11:40-45 were to the establishment of Seventh-day Adventist congregations across North America and overseas.

For those who are willing to allow the divine inspiration of Ellen White to function as God intended, the three statements she makes on the *Eastern Question* should bring all of us into unity on Daniel 11:40-45.

Here are the three recently-released statements by Ellen White that positively endorse our prophetic teaching on the *Eastern Question* that taught that the *king of the south* in Daniel 11:40 was the ruler of Egypt and the *king of the north* in Daniel 11:45 was the ruler of Turkey:

* 1. "Elder Daniells speaks this evening upon the *Eastern Question*. May the Lord give His Holy Spirit to inspire the hearts to ***make the truth plain***." {Manuscript, 189-Dec. 25, 1898}.

Ellen White knew that Elder Daniells' *Eastern Question* lecture was about Daniel 11:40-45. She knew that this lecture taught that verses 40-43 had been fulfilled by the Napoleonic Egyptian Campaign of 1798 and that verse 44 had been fulfilled by the Crimean War of 1853-56.

And her prayer was that the Holy Spirit would inspire the hearts of the listeners to make plain to them the truth that Elder Daniells was about to present. From Ellen White's statement, it is evident that she knew that the *Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy* lecture presented truth that she could pray for the Holy Spirit to make plain to the people.

* Because Ellen White had heard this lecture many times during those occasions when she was preaching in conjunction with these men who were presenting the *Eastern Question*, and would have been able to read of it in *Bible Readings for the Home Circle* and in Uriah Smith's book, *Daniel and the Revelation*, she knew what the people would be hearing that evening. And she categorized it as truth. I don't think that there is any way to understand Ellen White's statement other than to believe that she knew that the lecture on the *Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy* was biblical truth.

No, she does not make direct comments regarding the specifics of the application of verse 45. We all know that those specifics as taught back then by Elder Daniells and Uriah Smith did not take place, because the prophecy was not allowed to be fulfilled at that point in time. But because it wasn't fulfilled at that time in the exact manner they had suggested, doesn't make the *Eastern Question* lecture an erroneous teaching. It is still truth which we can pray that the Holy Spirit will make plain to the listeners when we present it to the public.

When we present the *Eastern Question* lecture today, it will be recognizable as being just what was taught by Elder Daniells and Uriah Smith. Some of the specific applications for verse 45 which is yet to be fulfilled will be different because conditions in the world are different; but it will still be the same message—the leader of Turkey will be planting the tabernacles of his palace in Jerusalem.

Here's the second statement of endorsement from the pen of Ellen White:

* 2. "The evening meeting was largely attended. Elder Smith **spoke with great clearness**, and many listened *with open eyes, ears, and mouths*. *The outsiders seemed to be intensely interested in the Eastern question*. He closed with a very solemn address to those who had not been preparing for **these great events in the near future**." {Letter 55, Aug. 24, 1884}.

The great events that would have been prominent in Elder Smith's lecture, events of which outsiders would have been intensely interested, would have been about the leader of Turkey planting the tabernacles of his palace in Jerusalem—signaling the close of probation.

Ellen White, in associating "these great events in the near future" with the *Eastern Question*, makes it clear that Smith's *Eastern Question* presentation was indeed biblical truth.

Here's the third statement where we find Ellen White once again associating the *Eastern Question* with truth:

* 3. "Sunday forenoon **Elder Smith spoke upon the Eastern Question**, just the subject the people wished to hear. . . . Elder Smith improved the hour at five o'clock in addressing the large crowd upon the mark of the beast. Brother Haskell spoke in the evening to a large and attentive audience, **and the great day of the meeting was over**. **Many had listened to the truth**, and the day of final reckoning will reveal the results of that day's meeting. We hope and pray that the **good seed sown** may spring up and bear fruit to the glory of God." {Letter 10a, 1877}.

* In two of these three quoted statements from Ellen White, God inspired His messenger to connect the word "truth" directly with the *Eastern Question*. For us to call it error, would that not place us in opposition to divine inspiration, and thus in opposition to God Himself?

If the *Eastern Question* was not biblical truth, God would never have allowed His messenger to pen those three statements over a 22 year period of time—one each in 1877, 1884, and in 1898.

If the *Eastern Question* lecture was error, if it was a Jesuit-inspired interpretation of Daniel 11:45 as Louis Were claimed, it would have been heretical for Ellen White to pen those three statements.

Ellen White wrote:

* “I am now looking over my **diaries and copies of letters written** for several years back.... I have the most precious matter to reproduce and place before the people in testimony form. While I am able to do this work, the people must have things to revive past history, that they may see that there is **one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written**. This, I am instructed, is to be a living letter to all in regard to my faith.” {*Manuscript Release*, vol. 8, p. 18}.

If we believe that there is not one heretical sentence in all of her writings, including what she wrote in her correspondence letters, and if we believe that the Lord has spoken through Sister White, we will be safe from embracing the many false prophetic interpretations that will come in these last days. And if we take the plain reading of these three recently-released statements, accepting all inspired writings as God’s standard, we will certainly be brought into unity on Daniel 11:40-45.

* “If the professed followers of Christ would *accept God’s standard, it would bring them into unity*. . .” {*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 124}.

I believe that God has allowed these three unpublished statements from the pen of Ellen White to come to light at this point in time to help God’s people come into unity on this important prophecy of Daniel 11:45. Why is unity important? Because the interpretation of this prophecy needs to be publically proclaimed with a united voice. God always alerts the world just before an important prophecy is to be fulfilled. Current events seem to be pointing to the fact that this prophecy is about to be fulfilled. If time permits, I will provide some video and news clip evidence for this.

* The choice is ours. If we are willing to surrender human wisdom which is reflected in our own private interpretations of Daniel 11:40-45 and give the three statements from the inspired messenger the authority “**to correct those who err from Bible truth**”, the potential exists that we can leave this conference united on the *Eastern Question*, and thus united on our identification of the *kings of the north and south* in Daniel 11:40-45.

End.

If time permits:

Back in the late 1800s, the *Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy* lecture taught that the *king of the north*, the leader of Turkey, would be planting his headquarters, the Islamic Caliphate, in Jerusalem.

Would this be a relevant lecture to present in 2018? Notice what is being said in these short video clips:

* (Video clip) “To liberate Jerusalem and to restore Islamic rule. Jerusalem will be the capital of the caliphate, Allah willing.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDYUkV9kUGo&feature=youtu.be>

That was spoken by a Palestinian Authority Chief Islamic Judge. Here is a statement by a Jordanian Salafi cleric:

* (Video clip) “I bring glad tidings to the Islamic Nation
The days of the establishment of the caliphate are near
The caliphate that will reside in Jerusalem
And the caliph who will conquer Palestine.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rtj4ZzeD1W0&feature=youtu.be>

The caliph would be the religio/political leader of the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims. From 632 AD until 1924 (1292 years) Islam had a caliph who was the head of the Islamic caliphate. For the past 94 years Islam has been without a leader. But, in my view, that is all about to change if Erdogan, the president of Turkey gets his way.

The Greek Observer stated:

* “Recep Tayyip Erdogan is trying to make Jerusalem his own city and for that he will spare no money nor hardship.”

<http://thegreekobserver.com/world/article/16188/recep-tayyip-erdogan-trying-make-jerusalem-city-will-spare-no-money-hardship/>

* (Video clip) “Say: “Allah Akbar”
Our capital shall not be Cairo, Mecca or Median.
It shall be Jerusalem, Allah willing.
Our cry shall be: Millions of martyrs march toward Jerusalem.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkyYU14_WmU&feature=youtu.be

* Fox News: Turkey and Erdogan: Here comes the (real) caliphate

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/07/21/turkey-and-erdogan-here-comes-real-caliphate.html>

* The Washington Post: “Erdogan wins in Turkey, gets ready to assume sweeping powers”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/erdogan-proclaimed-winner-of-turkeys-presidential-election/2018/06/24/6bdb44a6-7811-11e8-ac4e-421ef7165923_story.html?utm_term=.927b82313b39

* World Israel News: “Saudi Arabia and Jordan reportedly appealed to Israel to remain vigilant against Turkish President Recep Erdogan’s plan to establish a foothold in Jerusalem.”

<https://worldisraelnews.com/arab-nations-urge-israel-to-rein-in-turkish-encroachment-in-jerusalem/>

* From the perspective of the *Eastern Question*’s interpretation of Daniel 11:45, it would appear that the actors are all in place. The President of Turkey is focusing his attention on Jerusalem. As noted in the video clips, there are vocal spokesmen of the Islamic faith who want to see the Caliphate planted in Jerusalem

Will the Caliphate be restored? Will it be headquartered in Jerusalem? No one can know the answers to these questions at this point in time.

What we do know, following a consistent literal hermeneutic, is that the king of the north (a ruler from the northern portion of Alexander’s former empire) will plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain (Jerusalem).

Now, just *what* does planting the tabernacles of his palace mean? No one can know for sure until it takes place. But those who have the *who* and the *where* correct will most likely recognize the *what* of this prophecy when it occurs.

A modern-day suggested interpretation of verse 45 that envisions the president of Turkey setting up the capital of Islam in Jerusalem is similar to what Uriah Smith provided for his day. He proposed a reasonable scenario that could have taken place at that time that would have met the requirements for a fulfillment of the prophecy.

Will it happen as I have suggested? Maybe and maybe not. “Time will soon determine this matter” as Uriah Smith so wisely stated. The scenario presented is consistent with how the rest of the chapter met its fulfillment. The identical hermeneutic that is used for the previous 44 verses is being followed for verse 45. Now, if someone can come up with a better scenario without changing the hermeneutic, I would gladly present that better scenario. But so far, no one (who is staying with an *Eastern Question*-based interpretation) has suggested anything better.