

AN INTERPRETATION OF DANIEL 11:36-45

GEORGE M. HARTON

Dan 11:36-45 reveals the path to power of the Antichrist at the mid-point of the Tribulation period, when he initiates a new policy of aggression (11:36-39). Once he defeats the Arab and Soviet armies which attempt to stop him (11:40-45), he will inaugurate the eschatological climax of persecution against Israel which has been Israel's lot throughout the times of the Gentiles (12:1).

* * *

RECENT events in the Middle East are attracting great interest. Christians especially are challenged to correlate these events with their understanding of biblical prophecy and to seize upon opportunities to witness for Christ while conversing about the Middle East.

One significant passage predicting events "at the end time" in "the Beautiful Land" and at "the beautiful Holy Mountain"¹ is Dan 11:36-45. Who is this "King of the North" (11:40)? Who is this king who "will do as he pleases" (11:36)? A Christian's witness for Christ concerning prophetic matters could backfire if his positions are based on anything but careful exegesis of the pertinent passages. Daniel 11 must be examined with special care in light of its difficulty.²

This study will first examine the context of this passage, then will address four crucial questions which determine the interpretive framework, and finally will provide a condensed commentary relating the particulars of the passage to the framework established.

CONTEXT OF DAN 11:36-45

Context of the book

Daniel had been carried away captive with other Hebrews into pagan Babylon. Was Nebuchadnezzar more powerful than YHWH?

¹Dan 11:40, 41, 45. All quotations are from the NASB unless otherwise noted.

²"Daniel 11 is no doubt the most difficult chapter of Daniel's prophecy." Donald Campbell, *Daniel: Decoder of Dreams* (Wheaton: Victor, 1977) 32.

Could YHWH provide for their needs outside of the land of promise? God's purpose in giving this revelation through Daniel appears to have been to reassure all that he was totally in control of the affairs of his chosen people Israel and of the affairs of the whole world as well.

Dan 11:36–45 traces the efforts of several Gentile kings to establish themselves as world rulers. Israel appears to be caught in the middle of these conflicts as the pre-eminent battleground, and all of this leads to “a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time” (12:1). Thus, this section describes the climax of the persecution at the hands of a Gentile power like what Israel was experiencing in Daniel's day. The issue at stake involves a demonstration that God rules in spite of appearances, and the second half of the book was given in Hebrew to communicate especially to the nation of Israel God's plan and protection for them.

Context of the Section (10:1–12:13)

The message of God's rule over Israel (chaps. 8–12, written in Hebrew) consists of the vision of the ram and the he-goat received by Daniel in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar (chap. 8), the prayer of Daniel and the angelic revelation of the seventy weeks in the first year of Darius (chap. 9), and the vision received in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia (chaps. 10–12). This last chronological identification (10:1) helps to indicate clearly that the final three chapters comprise a single unit. The point of this final vision is to project, for Israel, the future history of the nations as they move toward the consummation of history. The vision was given to Daniel toward the beginning of the Persian empire. Thus, Israel's problem of being under Gentile dominion did not stop with the fall of Babylon. Instead, the vision reveals that Israel would be under the dominion of Persia, Greece, and then Rome, until her ultimate deliverance through Messiah. This section may be outlined as follows:

CONSUMMATION OF HISTORY

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| I. The Prologue | 10:1–21 |
| II. The Vision | 11:1–12:3 |
| A. Introduction (1) | |
| B. Persian Rule (2) | |
| C. Greek Rule (3–35) | |
| 1. Alexander the Great (3–4) | |
| 2. Seleucids and the Ptolemies (5–20) | |
| 3. Antiochus Epiphanes (21–35) | |

- D. Roman Rule (11:36-12:1a)
 - 1. The Power of the final Roman King (11:36-45)
 - 2. The Persecution of the Saints (12:1a)
- E. Messianic Rule (12:1b-3)
 - 1. The Rescue of Israel (12:1b)
 - 2. The Resurrections (12:2)
 - 3. The Reward of the Righteous (12:3)
- III. The Epilogue 12:4-13

Most agree that the chapter division, which isolates 12:1-3 from the rest of chap. 11 with which it structurally belongs, is poorly placed. The vision, running from 11:1 through 12:3, forms the heart of the section, and it reveals once more the same progression of world rulers as had been previously revealed in chap. 2 in Nebuchadnezzar's dream and in chap. 7 in the vision of the four beasts followed by the Son of Man. Persia (11:2) and Greece (11:2) are explicitly named. The consummative nature of resurrection and final judgment (12:2) imply the arrival of the smiting stone. If Daniel is to be consistent with his previous revelation on the progression of world rulers, one would expect the Roman Empire to appear between the Greek Empire and the Messianic reign.

The focus, in fact, in the section is upon the *climax* of the "times of the Gentiles." Such a large proportion of material was devoted to the career of Antiochus Epiphanes (11:21-35) because he was recognized to be a type of the final "man of sin" and persecutor of the Jews, Antichrist. Then in v 36, the focus shifts from the type to the antitype himself. Dan 11:36-45 reveals the power of this "wilful king" and 12:1a the climactic persecution that he unleashes against God's "people." But in this final hour, when the worst pressure possible is put upon Israel by Antichrist himself, Israel is rescued (12:1b)! God rules indeed! Thus, the final verses of Daniel 11 reveal the final enemy of Israel immediately preceding her final deliverance by the Messiah.

Conclusion

Climactic power and persecution is concentrated in Antichrist and prepares the way for Israel's climactic deliverance and Messianic rule.

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT DAN 11:36-45

Many of the descriptive phrases in this passage are general or ambiguous enough to be adaptable to different people at different times. For example, Otto Zöckler adapts these phrases to a description

of Antiochus Epiphanes.³ Thomas Robinson, by contrast, applies the phrases to a continuing description of the Papacy of Rome.⁴

First, the crucial questions that establish the framework of the interpretation will be addressed before a verse by verse analysis of the entire passage will be attempted. The four crucial questions that establish the framework of Dan 11:36–45 are: (1) What is the temporal setting of the passage? (2) What is the identity of the “wilful king”? (3) What is the identity of the King of the North? and (4) What is the identity of the “attacker” in 11:40–45?

The Temporal Setting of 11:36–45.

1. Proposal: The events described here will take place during the Great Tribulation. The temporal setting is eschatological.

2. Proofs:

a. Dan 12:1 “Now at that time.” The end of chap. 11 is tied to the eschatological events presented in 12:1–3 by the chronological description “at that time.” Robert Culver clearly sets forth the determinative nature of this textual identification:

There is small doubt in the minds of any except a very few that the first portion of chapter 12 is prophecy concerning “last things”—in the theological nomenclature, “eschatology.” Events connected with the resurrection of the dead and final rewards and punishments can hardly be otherwise.

If there were a clean break in thought between chapters 11 and 12 it might be possible to say that all of the previous section of the prophecy relates to events of now past history. But such a break does not exist. Rather, a chronological connection is clearly provided between the last of chapter 11 and the first of chapter 12 by the opening words of chapter 12. Referring to the destruction of a certain king whose career is predicted in the last part of chapter 11, chapter 12 opens thus: “And at that time shall Michael stand up,” etc. Thus a clear connection with the eschatological prediction of chapter 12 is established for the last portion, at least, of chapter 11.⁵

b. Dan 11:35, 36 “until the end time.” The transition to the eschatological period is marked at v 35 when it is indicated that the “people who know their God” (cf. v 32) will continue to undergo suffering and persecution “until the end time; because it is still to

³Otto Zöckler, “The Book of the Prophet Daniel,” in *Lange’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, ed. John Peter Lange (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960) 254ff.

⁴Thomas Robinson, “Homiletical Commentary on the Book of Daniel,” *The Preacher’s Homiletic Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974) 246ff.

⁵Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days* (Chicago: Moody, 1954) 163.

come at the appointed time." V 36 then opens with the phrase, "Then the king will do as he pleases." In other words, v 35 appears to summarize the continuation of the established pattern of the suffering of Israel during the "times of the Gentiles" "until the end time." Then in v 36 Daniel records the first revelation in this vision concerning this appointed end time. Gaebelein summarizes this conclusion: "Between verse 35 and 36 we must put a long, unreckoned period of time."⁶

c. *Dan 10:14 "in the latter days."* The angel giving the vision to Daniel explained that he had come to give Daniel "An understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future" (10:14). This introduces a breadth of scope for the vision that may be expected to include something of the Messianic age and the final events of human history. But if 11:36-12:3 is not viewed as being eschatological, then the angel was misinformed, for nowhere else in the vision are the latter days in view.⁷

3. Supporting Arguments:

a. *The events of 11:36-45 do not fit Antiochus Epiphanes.* The leading alternative to the view that the temporal setting of this passage is eschatological is that it is a continued description of the career of Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. 11:21-35). The pagan historian Porphyry is usually cited in order to justify this proposal historically, but E. J. Young, Robert Dick Wilson, H. C. Leupold, and John F. Walvoord have all given scholarly and convincing refutations of this attempt.⁸

b. *There is a natural break in the text after 11:35.* A number of the versions recognize the break in subject by making 11:36 begin a new paragraph or section (e.g., NASB).

4. Conclusion:

There is strong and clear chronological evidence in the text for identifying the temporal setting of the events of 11:36-45 as the eschatological time of Jacob's trouble falling within Daniel's 70th

⁶Arno Gaebelein, *Daniel* (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1968) 179.

⁷Some do place the shift to the eschatological earlier than v 36. For example, Jerome identified the eschatological as beginning at 11:22, while G. H. Lang placed its beginning at 11:5. A consideration of such views lies outside the scope of this study. All that is being established now is that 11:36-45 is eschatological and not historical.

⁸E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) 250-51; Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel* (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972) 266; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949) 510; and John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971) 271.

week. This conclusion will narrow the number of potential candidates for the role of the "wilful king."

The Identity of the "wilful king" of 11:36

1. Historical ruler or eschatological Antichrist?

If the argumentation regarding the temporal setting as presented above is accepted, then the answer to this question is also solved. However, not everyone has seen it this way. Mauro identified this king as Herod the Great, rabbinic interpreters such as Ibn Ezra identified him as Constantine the Great, Calvin saw in this "king" the Roman Empire, and Antiochus has remained a favorite candidate among liberal critics.⁹ The papal view as cited before (Robinson) is common among amillennial interpreters, and at least one recent commentator saw in Napoleon Bonaparte the "wilful king" of Dan 11:36-39.¹⁰

Jerome and Luther are among earlier men who also saw this figure as the Antichrist of the last days.¹¹ While other kings may match some of the descriptive phrases in 11:36-39, none but the Antichrist can measure up to the temporal qualifications of living "at that time" in the "time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time" (12:1).

2. "Beast of the sea" or the "false prophet?"

But complete agreement does not exist among those who agree that this wilful king is eschatological. Most are comfortable using the term "Antichrist," but are also comfortable with applying that designation to anyone they choose. For example, Herod, Constantine, the Pope, and Napoleon have all been viewed as "Antichrist." Once an eschatological identification is agreed upon, one must determine to which eschatological figure this "wilful king" corresponds.

J. N. Darby and Arno Gaebelein identified this king with the second beast of Revelation 13 (vv 11-17), or the "false prophet."¹² However, I am in agreement with most premillennial interpreters who identify the wilful king with the first beast of Revelation 13 (vv 1-10).

⁹C. F. Keil, "Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel," *Commentaries on the Old Testament* (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 461-62; and Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 246 for a listing of these and other interpretations.

¹⁰Roy Allan Anderson, "The Time of the End," *Signs of the Times* (November, 1970: 22, 23).

¹¹Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, transl. by Gleason L. Archer, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958) 136.

¹²Darby is cited by Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, 272; cf. Gaebelein, *Daniel*, 180.

The function of the false prophet is to exalt the first beast, and the wilful king is said to "exalt and magnify himself" (11:36). The identification with the "beast of the sea" is preferable on the basis of the wilful king's preeminence and self-exaltation.

3. Jew or Gentile?

Perhaps the majority of premillennial interpreters have identified this man as a Jew. Since this "prince" (9:26) makes a covenant with the Jews (9:27) in order to bring about a substitute ("anti") peace, and since the Jews would accept only a Jew as "Messiah," it is felt that Antichrist must be a Jew.¹³

However, an increasing number of commentators are allowing for a gentile Antichrist. Walvoord points out that 11:37 does not use the Jewish expression "Jehovah of his fathers," but rather the non-covenant name "Elohim," which was used by the Gentiles.¹⁴ To the counter argument that Elohim is an equally acceptable designation for YHWH, Wood replies that since the singular לֵאֱלֹהִים is used in this very context (11:36) for the singular referent "god," the plural לֵאֱלֹהִים must be translated "gods."¹⁵ This would identify the wilful king as a gentile.

The answer to this question may influence the interpretation of a few phrases in the passage (such as "he will show no regard . . . for the desire of women") but is otherwise not a major matter. I am inclined to agree with Walvoord and Wood that the Antichrist will probably be of gentile extraction. One need not be a Jew in order to sign a treaty with Israel. In fact, the treaty of 9:27, being with "many," will probably involve many nations in addition to Israel. Perhaps it is more likely that the nations of the world will sign a peace treaty with a gentile than with a Jew. Furthermore, since the type of Antichrist, Antiochus, was not a Jew, the antitype need not be a Jew either.

4. Conclusion:

The wilful king of Dan 11:36-45 may be identified as an eschatological personage who will appear in the Tribulation period. His career and characteristics are elsewhere described in Daniel 7 (the "little horn"), in Daniel 9 ("prince that shall come"), in 2 Thessalonians 2 ("man of sin"), and in Revelation 13 ("beast . . . of the sea"). With these defining traits in view, he may be called the Antichrist.

¹³Lehman Strauss, *The Prophecies of Daniel* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1969) 343; J. Allen Blair, *Living Courageously* (Chicago: Moody, 1971) 225; and John C. Whitcomb, "The Book of Daniel," *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 36.

¹⁴Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, 273.

¹⁵Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973) 306.

The identity of the King of the North in 11:40

1. Problem of identifying the King of the North.

Dan 11:40 introduces two new kings who attack the wilful king of 11:36–39. Little problem exists in identifying the King of the South; most identify him as the king of Egypt or a coalition of southern kingdoms in which Egypt is prominent. This harmonizes well with the entire pattern of Daniel 11, in which the Ptolemies are referred to with this same designation. The Ptolemies ruled from Egypt during the fractured period of the Hellenistic Empire. This identification is sealed by the specific reference to Egypt in 11:42 and 11:43.

However, similar unanimity does not exist with regard to identifying the King of the North. The reason for this ambivalence may be traced in part to the absence of any further specific geographical names as is true in the verses dealing with the King of the South. Nevertheless, several guidelines do exist in seeking to determine an identity for this king: his association with the Seleucids through the title “King of the North” as used throughout Daniel 11 and his activities as described in 11:40.

2. Proposals for identifying the King of the North.

Robinson and Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (following Newton) propose that Turkey best fits this King of the North.¹⁶ Ray Baughman and Merrill Unger anticipate that Syria will fill this role.¹⁷ A large number, including Herman Hoyt, J. Dwight Pentecost, Lehman Strauss, and Leon Wood, feel that this King of the North will be Russia.¹⁸

3. Preferred identity of the King of the North.

a. Not Turkey. Those proposing Turkey as the origin of the King of the North do so in order to find a historical fulfillment for the King of the North. However, the eschatological setting of the passage forbids a historical fulfillment. Inasmuch as the Seleucids ruled over part of Turkey, it might be possible that Turkey would expand in terms of geographical extent and international power so as

¹⁶Robinson, “Homiletical Commentary on the Book of Daniel,” 256; and Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, David Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Reprint: Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961) 798.

¹⁷Ray E. Baughman, *The Kingdom of God Visualized* (Chicago: Moody, 1972) 177, and Merrill Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody, 1966) 798.

¹⁸Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times* (Chicago: Moody, 1969) 152; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958) 344; Strauss, *The Prophecies of Daniel*, 345; Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 308.

to qualify as the eschatological King of the North. This appears to be very unlikely at the present time.

b. Not Syria. There is a *hermeneutical problem* related to the association of Syria with the Seleucids. One basis of determining a possible identification is found in the use of the title "King of the North," which is used earlier in Daniel 11 to refer to the Seleucid branch of the Greek Empire. At that time

the dominion of the Seleucids . . . reached from Phrygia in the west to the Indus on the east. For the sources, see DS 19:58, 59; Appian 55; Arrian *Anabasis* 7:22.¹⁹

A map of the Seleucid Empire shows its wide geographical range,²⁰ and history has recorded the dominant international influence exerted. Consequently, since the Seleucid Empire dominated a wide geographical area and was a world political power, the single fact that Syria is located north of Israel is insufficient evidence to relate it to the King of the North.

Syria is extremely unlikely as a candidate for the role of the land of the King of the North inasmuch as it possesses neither the wide geographical range nor the world power that characterized the Seleucid kings. On this basis, Turkey is more likely than Syria. Turkey has a wider geographical scope, and the royal capital of the Seleucids, Antioch,²¹ lies in modern-day Turkey, not Syria. Wood summarizes the problem of political correspondence:

The designation "king of the North" is not so easily adapted, for the present Syrian government hardly qualifies as a world contender of the stature of the Seleucids.²²

There is also an *exegetical problem*—the activities of this king in 11:40. "And the king of the North will storm against him [the wilful king of 36-39] with chariots, with horsemen, and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them, and pass through." Then v 41 continues the narrative with the statement: "He will also enter the Beautiful Land." If it can be demonstrated (I will attempt to do this in the next section) that the "he" of v 41 does not represent a change of antecedent, but is continuing the description of the King of

¹⁹Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 234; cf. Charles Pfeiffer, Howard Vos, *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody, 1967) 268.

²⁰See map xii of the Seleucid Empire in Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) vol. 5.

²¹E. M. Blaiklock, "Seleucia," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5.331.

²²Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 308.

the North's attack against Antichrist, then the King of the North does not enter Palestine ("the Beautiful Land") until the events described in 11:41. This means that the attack on Antichrist involves the King of the North's entering, overflowing, and passing through other countries en route to Palestine.

But even if this understanding of the attacker in v 41 as the King of the North is not accepted, Keil does not believe that Syria matches the requirements of the activities described in 11:40:

The plural *בְּאַרְצוֹתָא* (*into the countries*) does not at all agree with the expedition of a *Syrian* king against Egypt, since between Syria and Egypt there lay *one* land, Palestine . . . but it is to be explained from this, that the north, from which the angry king comes in his fury against the king of the south, reached far beyond Syria. The king of the North is thought of as the ruler of the distant north.²³

Inasmuch as Syria and Palestine are adjoining neighbors, it is difficult to see how the King of the North can enter countries (plural) en route to attacking the Antichrist in Israel. The exegesis of 11:40 appears to require that the country of the King of the North be geographically removed from Israel by two or more other countries in the national boundaries of "the end time."

c. Probably Russia. Probably the majority of premillennial interpreters of this passage do identify the King of the North as the modern U.S.S.R. on the basis of a correlation with Ezekiel 38–39.

However, stronger supports for this view may be recognized in the hermeneutical and exegetical requirements discussed in connection with Syria. Russia meets the hermeneutical requirements involved in the title "King of the North" associated with the Seleucid empire. It has a corresponding northern location, a corresponding vast geographical scope, and a corresponding world political preeminence.

Consideration of Russia's history sheds further light on this question and makes its association with the Seleucid kings of the north even stronger. For example, Barabas states that "Magog was probably located between Cappadocia and Media; Josephus says it refers to the Scythians (Jos. *Antiq.* I. vi. 1)."²⁴ In other words, before the Scythians migrated further north they occupied the area between Cappadocia and Media which was part of the Seleucid empire.²⁵ A similar picture of Russia's roots is given in the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*:

²³Keil, "Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel," 470.

²⁴S. Barabas, "Gog and Magog," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* 2.770.

²⁵Cf. map xii, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5.

A stricter geographical location would place Magog's dwelling between Armenia and Media, perhaps on the shores of the Araxes. But the people seem to have extended farther north across the Caucasus, filling there the extreme northern horizon of the Hebrews (Ezek. xxxviii. 15, xxxix. 2). This is the way Meshech and Tubal are often mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions (Mushku and Tabal, Gk. Moschoi and Tibarenoi).²⁶

Finally, Russia also fits the exegetical requirements of 11:40 inasmuch as they would have to "enter countries, overflow them, and pass through" in order to attack Antichrist in Israel. Since the association with the Seleucids and the activities described in 11:40 provide the only objective basis for identifying this King of the North, and since Russia best fits these associations, Russia is the most probable identification of the origin of this king.

d. Prudence in identifying the King of the North. One should not stress the name of a current country, because the geographical and political boundaries of countries are in a state of flux. Wood points out the proper posture:

Because the political situation in the world could well be different when the Antichrist rules, however, it stands to reason that the terms should be adapted to whatever that difference may prove to be.²⁷

While the names and fortunes of individual countries may change, the criteria for identifying the King of the North will not change: his country will be north of Israel and separated from Palestine by at least two borders, and his country will occupy a large geographical area and exert world power and influence.

The identity of the "attacker" in 11:40-45

Vv 41-45 trace the significant activities of a king designated only by the pronoun "he." Is the antecedent of these pronouns the attacker of v 40 (the King of the North) or the person being attacked (the wilful king)? Since it is not revealed who wins the battle between Antichrist and the kings of the north and of the south, ambiguity about the identity of the "he," "his," and "him" referred to throughout vv 41-45 remains. Is this a continued attack of the King of the North that began in v 40b, or is this the counterattack by the wilful king?

²⁶Vol. 5, p. 14 as cited by Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 328. For similar arguments, cf. Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 309.

²⁷Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 308.

I. Antichrist as the counterattacker in vv 41-45

a. *Position.* J. Dwight Pentecost states this position as follows:

From this passage several features concerning the movement of this invasion are to be seen. (1) The movement of the campaign begins when the King of the South moves against the Beast-False Prophet coalition (11:40), which takes place "at the time of the end." (2) The King of the South is joined by the northern confederacy, who attacks the Wilful King by a great force over land and sea (11:40). Jerusalem is destroyed as a result of this attack (Zech. 12:2), and, in turn, the armies of the northern confederacy are destroyed (Ezek. 39; Zech. 12:4). (3) The full armies of the Beast move into Palestine (11:41) and shall conquer all that territory (11:41-42). Edom, Moab, and Ammon alone escape. It is evidently at the time that the coalition of Revelation 17:13 is formed. (4) While he is extending his dominion into Egypt, a report that causes alarm is brought to the Beast (11:44). It may be the report of the approach of the Kings of the East (Rev. 16:12) who have assembled because of the destruction of the northern confederacy to challenge the authority of the beast. (5) The Beast moves his headquarters into the land of Palestine and assembles his armies there (11:45). (6) It is there that his destruction will come (11:45).²⁸

In this scenario, the initial aggression is seen to come from the King of the South and then from the King of the North. Then Antichrist is seen to seize this opportunity to counterattack and pursue his own policy of military aggression as described in vv 41-45 until he meets his end at Armageddon. Vv 40 and 41 are usually taken as referring to the middle of the Seventieth Week of Daniel 9, involving the breaking of the covenant, and vv 44 and 45 are usually taken as referring to the end of the Seventieth Week and the battle of Armageddon. Thus, this passage is viewed as summarizing a whole series of military campaigns spanning the entire 42 months of the end of Daniel's seventieth week.

Probably the majority of premillennial interpreters subscribe to this view. It is especially prominent among "popular" writers such as Oliver Greene, Charles Ryrie, and C. I. Scofield, and has been published in such magazines as *Moody Monthly* and *Good News Broadcaster*.²⁹

²⁸Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 356.

²⁹Oliver Greene, *Daniel* (Greenville: The Gospel Hour, 1954) 439; Charles C. Ryrie, ed., *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1978) 1242; C. I. Scofield, ed., *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University, 1967) 917; Alfred Martin, "Daniel: Key to Prophecy," *Moody Monthly* (July-August, 1972) 64; and Theodore Epp, "Events in the End Time," *Good News Broadcaster* (October 1969) 7-9; "Four Confederations of Nations," *Good News Broadcaster* (November 1969) 22-25.

b. Proofs. Usually this position is assumed to be correct rather than having to be proven to be correct. Two lines of support do seem to be used: a contextual argument and a chronological argument.

The prominence of Antichrist in the immediately preceding context (11:36-40), along with the prominence of Antichrist in prophetic literature, argues for a continued emphasis upon Antichrist in vv 41-45. Accordingly, the "he" of v 41 would refer back to the "him" of v 40, which does refer to the wilful king of vv 36-39.

It appears that the single biggest support for this position is the mention of "rumors from the East and from the North" (v 44) which lead to Antichrist's return to Palestine, "the beautiful Holy Mountain" (v 45), where he comes to his end. The rumors from the east are associated with Rev 9:13-21 and with Rev 16:12-16, and the end of this man is associated with Armageddon, which follows immediately. Wood explains it this way:

While in this section of Africa, the Antichrist will hear of trouble from the east and north, which will give him cause for alarm. The nature of the rumors or whom they concern is not indicated. Some expositors believe they concern the invasion of a vast horde of 200,000,000 warriors from the far east (Rev. 9:16) under the leadership of "kings of the east" (Rev. 16:12), who will have heard of the Antichrist's victory over the earlier north-south confederacy and will then wish to challenge him for world leadership.³⁰

Because Antichrist is defeated and thrown alive into the lake of fire at this point (Rev 19:19, 20), it is inferred that Antichrist is the subject of all of vv 41-45.

2. The king of the North as the attacker in vv 40-45

a. Position. John C. Whitcomb states the essence of this position in the *New Bible Dictionary*:

Verse 35b is regarded as providing the transition to eschatological times. First the antichrist comes into view (xi. 36-39); and then the final king of the north, who, according to some premillennial scholars, will crush temporarily both the antichrist and the king of the south before being destroyed supernaturally on the mountains of Israel (xi. 40-45; cf Joel ii. 20; Ezek. xxxix. 4,17). In the meantime, antichrist will have recovered from his fatal blow to begin his period of world dominion (Dn. xi. 44; cf. Rev. xiii. 3, xvii. 8).³¹

Vv 40-45, then, are descriptive of the respective defeats of the kings of the south and of the north. The King of the South is defeated by

³⁰Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 313.

³¹John C. Whitcomb, "The Book of Daniel," 293.

the King of the North, and the King of the North is then brought to his end by an unnamed adversary (Antichrist?) in v 45. The result of the elimination of Antichrist's most powerful adversaries is to establish firmly his absolute worldwide dominion shortly after the middle of the seventieth week. This in turn leads to his abuse of his tremendous powers, in part by persecuting the Jews (12:1a) throughout the rest of the seventieth week.

William Foster, Thomas Robinson, Paul Tan, John Whitcomb, and J. Allen Blair are among those holding this identification.³²

b. Proofs. Grammatical, exegetical, and several contextual arguments may be used to support this position.

William Foster argues that the antecedent for the pronoun "he" in v 41 is the King of the North in v 40 who "will storm against him with chariots . . .":

The nature of this problem is not the same as that of the ambiguous pronoun which precedes it, since, in the former sense, the person referred to by the pronoun was regarded as the passive object of the action, whereas in the present instance the pronoun represents the active source of the action. Since it is the king of the north who is the active contender, the natural reading would probably indicate that he also should be the one represented as entering into the countries.³³

Without any textual indication to reverse the subject (King of the North) and the object (Antichrist) of the action in v 40, the "he" which is the subject of v 41 most naturally refers back to the subject of v 40.

Furthermore, this identification of the antecedent of "he" in 11:40b as the King of the North is supported by the fact that the King of the North is the nearest possible antecedent. Most English translations are misleading at this point because they invert the word order. For example, the NASB reads ". . . and the king of the North will storm against him . . . and he will enter countries . . ." (11:40). The pronoun "him" (Antichrist) appears to be the nearest possible antecedent of the pronoun "he" in the English translation. However, in the Hebrew text, the object "against him" (עָלָיו) precedes the subject "the King of the North" (מֶלֶךְ הַצָּפוֹן). This word order makes the King of the North, and not Antichrist, the nearest possible antecedent for the pronoun "he." Without any textual indication for doing so, it is unwarranted to jump over the nearest antecedent, the King of the North. This identification is critical because this initial pronoun is

³²William Foster, "The Eschatological Significance of the Assyrian," Th.D. dissertation, Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1956.

³³Ibid., 152.

followed by an entire series of pronouns in 11:41-45 which continue the same reference.

Foster goes on to argue that the geographical progression in the text between v 40 and v 43 also identifies the attacking king of 11:41-45 as the King of the North:

... the direction of his conquest is a positive proof that this description is of the King of the North—"he shall enter also into the glorious land . . . the land of Egypt shall not escape . . . and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps" (Dan. 11:41-42). In the prophecy of Daniel the phrase "the glorious land" is used three times as a designation for the land of the Jews into which an invader proceeds (Dan. 8:9; 11:16; 11:40). In each case, the invader is one who comes from the north, and in each case one who comes from the Seleucidaean Kingdom. . . . Therefore, the direction of conquest, entering first into Palestine, then Egypt, then Lybia and Ethiopia, would indicate that the invading army proceeded from the north.³⁴

While not all who hold this view feel that this proof is as conclusive as Foster makes it sound, the movement against Antichrist begun from the north (v 40) may be seen to flow most naturally into Palestine (v 41) and then on south past Edom, Moab, and Ammon into Egypt (v 42) and finally into Libya and Ethiopia. While this is not the only way to visualize the geographical progression, it is the smoothest and most unified movement. It is reasonable to expect that vv 41-45 do continue the movement begun in v 40 unless there is some textual clue to indicate another movement.

Three contextual arguments also support this conclusion. First, throughout Daniel 11 the King of the South and the King of the North are depicted as natural enemies who are continually warring against one another. This identification fits the pattern and also provides a fitting climax to this struggle in the end time.

Second, the phrase "Now at that time" of 12:1 immediately follows the conclusion of this section in 11:45. Inasmuch as 12:1 goes on to say that at that time "there *will* be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time," the very middle of the seventieth week is in view. If the time of Jacob's trouble is just about to begin at the time of the demise of the king in 11:45, then this king *cannot* be Antichrist, but must be the King of the North. This temporal designation at 12:1 dare not be treated too loosely, for it is the cornerstone in the argument in favor of an eschatological interpretation of this passage.

³⁴Ibid., 152-53.

Third, this identification is in keeping with the whole argument and development of the Book of Daniel and of the last half of the book in particular. Daniel is demonstrating that God is still the ruler over all in spite of Israel's captivity. Their persecutions will not soon end, but when they do reach their climax at the hand of the wilful king, Antichrist himself, during the time of Jacob's trouble, then Messiah will rescue Israel (cf. 12:1b) and institute his kingdom. If it is indeed Antichrist rather than the King of the North who is destroyed in 11:45, then 12:1 is both anticlimactic and out of sequence temporally. Preserving the argument and development of this section involves identifying the attacker in vv 40–45 as the King of the North.

3. Conclusion: the King of the North is the attacker in vv 40–45

That I prefer this explanation is evident by now. Not only does this position rest on good, solid exegesis of the text, but it also avoids the weaknesses in the alternate view. Following is a brief consideration of three of these weaknesses.

a. 11:40. There is a complete lack of exegetical indicators for switching from the kings of the south and north to Antichrist as the attacker in v 41. George N. H. Peters, who held the Antichrist view himself, admitted this weakness:

“And he shall enter into the countries”—this is perhaps the clause which has caused the greatest difficulty to critics, owing to *the sudden transition* from one person to another. If we were to confine ourselves to this prophecy, it would be impossible from the language to decide *what king* this was that is to enter into the countries; whether the King of the North, or of the South, or of the Roman Empire. . . .³⁵

Peters then goes on to justify an abrupt shift in 11:40 to the Antichrist on the basis of other passages, such as Daniel 2 and 7 and Revelation 17. He openly admits that there is nothing in the language of the text itself to justify this sudden transition from the description of the activity of the King of the North in the phrase immediately preceding “he shall enter into the countries.”

b. 11:41. Those favoring the Antichrist view picture the kings of the south and of the north as coming against Israel in 11:40. Then Antichrist is seen responding to this aggression in 11:41 by entering the “beautiful land” for the first time himself and instituting a counter-attack of his own. There is a serious problem with this interpretation, however, for the text does not say that the kings of the south and north attacked *Israel*. Instead, it twice indicates that these two kings attacked *him* (Antichrist; 11:40). Consequently, Antichrist

³⁵George Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom* (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1952) 2.654. The italics are those of Peters.

cannot subsequently enter the scene at the end of v 40 or at v 41. The attack against him puts him in the middle of the action right from the beginning of v 40. This fact is also pointed out by Ray Baughman: ". . . the king of the north (and the king of the south) comes against the Antichrist, not against Israel (Daniel 11:40)."³⁶

c. 11:44, 45. A third weakness is the association of the "rumors from the East and from the North" with the kings of the east of Revelation 9 and 16. Almost all commentators will admit that the King of the North hears these rumors while conducting his Libyan and Ethiopian campaigns to the south and west of the "Beautiful Land" that he had passed through on his way down to Egypt. V 45 records his trip back to the east and the north to the "beautiful Holy Mountain" (Jerusalem). This is textual evidence that the rumors emanated from or concerned something going on in Palestine. There is no textual basis whatsoever for seeing kings of the east here. Not a word is mentioned about *kings* of the east. And this conjecture is made on the basis of identifying this king as Antichrist and of changing the temporal setting from the middle of the seventieth week to the end of the week at Armageddon. That it would require Antichrist 42 months to subdue this coalition of southern kings is hard to reconcile with Rev 13:4: "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"

Summary

It has been stated that the interpretation of Dan 11:36-45 rests upon one's answers to four crucial questions. Each of these questions, therefore, has been considered in depth. The temporal setting of the text was found to be an eschatological one, specifically that of the middle of the seventieth week of Dan 9:27. The wilful king was found to be the Antichrist of the Tribulation period, the beast of Revelation 13. Most premillennial interpreters would agree with these identifications.

However, premillennialists are divided on the answers to the last two crucial questions. It was determined that modern Russia is the most likely identification of the place of origin of the King of the North in this passage, and that it is this same King of the North (and not Antichrist) whose final exploits are traced in vv 41-45, ending in his demise. Thus, in vv 40-45 both the King of the South and the King of the North are defeated, leaving Antichrist as sole world ruler at the middle of the seventieth week.

This establishes the basic framework of this interpretation. It now remains only to do a brief phrase-by-phrase commentary on the entire passage to determine how the details fit into this framework.

³⁶Baughman, *The Kingdom of God Visualized*, 179.

CONDENSED COMMENTARY

"Roman Rule: Israel's Final Enemy"
(Daniel 11:36-12:1a)

Having retraced prophetically the Persian rule (11:2) and the Greek rule (11:3-35), the angel revealed that the climax of Israel's suffering under Gentile dominion would be the final Roman ruler (11:36-12:1a) and that it would last until Messiah comes to rescue Israel (12:1b) and establish his everlasting kingdom (12:2, 3). So this is the final stage of the fourth kingdom that will be crushed by the stone cut without hands (cf. 2:44, 45). This constitutes further revelation about the fourth beast and the little horn (7:7, 8) that will immediately precede the Son of Man's establishment of his everlasting dominion (7:9-14).

ISRAEL'S FINAL ENEMY

- I. The Power of the Roman King 11:36-45
 - A. Arrogance and Aggression of the Roman King (36-39)

(Power Asserted)

 1. Arrogance of the Roman King (36-38)
 2. Aggression of the Roman King (39)
 - B. Attackers of the Roman King Defeated (40-45)

(Power Attested)

 1. The Roman King Attacked (40)
 2. The King of the South Defeated (41-43)
 3. The King of the North Defeated (44-45)
- II. The Persecution of the Saints by the Roman King 12:1a

(Power Abused)

Power of the final Roman King: 11:36-45

Vv 36-39 record the assertion of the Roman king's power through his arrogance (vv 36-38) and his acts of aggression (v 39). This power is then attested (vv 40-45) when the Roman king is attacked (v 40) by world powers from the south and from the north. First the southern coalition is defeated (vv 41-43) and then the northern armies are defeated (vv 44-45), leaving the Roman king with absolute, worldwide, unchallenged power.

I. Arrogance and aggression of the Roman king (vv 36-39)

a. Arrogance of the Roman king (vv 36-38)

"Then the king will do as he pleases." This introduces a ruler who has absolute authority and can act in an arbitrary manner without having to answer to anyone.

"And he will exalt and magnify himself above every god." This absolute ruler will be arrogant and given to self-exaltation. Paul, in

2 Thess 2:4 quotes this phrase ("who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object or worship") thus identifying this Roman king with the "man of lawlessness, the son of destruction" in 2 Thessalonians 2. Likewise, the Roman king is associated with the little horn of Dan 7:8 who also is characterized by self-exaltation: "and behold, this horn possessed . . . a mouth uttering great boasts."

"And will speak monstrous things against the God of gods."

This Roman king will blaspheme the living God. This is the first hint that the Roman king has now broken the covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27) and has defiled the temple "in the middle of the week" (Dan 9:27). This corresponds to other pictures given of Antichrist. "And he will speak out against the Most High" (Dan 7:25); "And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle" (Rev 13:6).

"And he will prosper until the indignation is finished." Such terrible blasphemy does not mean that God has lost control. To the contrary, God foreordained such persecutions against Israel for the purpose of chastening his chosen people and for preparing them for repentance. The concept of indignation runs through the entire book. For example, 8:19 reveals "the final period of indignation; for it pertains to the appointed time of the end." Dan 7:25 follows the description of the little horn's blasphemy with an account of his persecution of the Jews for the final 3½ years of the Tribulation period: "And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time."

"For that which is decreed will be done." Dan 11:36 concludes this awful description of arrogant blasphemy with a reminder that God is in control. Dan 9:26 had revealed that "desolations are determined" and 9:27 had spoken of destruction "that is decreed." This is the main point of the entire Book of Daniel. "God is supremely in charge of history, even when the Antichrist rules."³⁷

"And he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women." This Roman king will not blaspheme YHWH out of allegiance to a rival religious deity; this monarch will be an atheist who also rejects his own religious heritage. The phrase "desire of women" is ambiguous, and this ambiguity has opened the door to many fanciful interpretations.³⁸ The only textual control is that the

³⁷Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 306.

³⁸Cf. Keil, "Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel," 464; Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 516; George Williams, *The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1960) 629; Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 249, for various proposals of pagan goddesses. See M. R. DeHaan, *Daniel The*

phrase occurs in a context of Antichrist's religion and his rejection of his religious heritage. There is good reason to believe that this religion is probably non-Jewish (see p. 211).

"Nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all." This description continues to be consistent with the fulfillment of the "Abomination of Desolations" in which Antichrist causes the sacrifices to cease (cf. Dan 12:11) and he demands worship of himself. Antichrist "exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2 Thess 2:4).

"But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures." In one sense, no one is a complete atheist; everyone "worships" something. The Roman king's value system will center in power and force and in materialism (gold, silver, etc.). Might will make right for this man. Strauss makes an interesting association of this description of Antichrist's "religion" with that of the first beast in Revelation 13:

It is possible that the god mentioned here is the image of Antichrist, the first beast in Revelation 13, whose design and construction were ordered by the second beast (Revelation 13:11-15). If we are correct in this, then that image will be made from gold, silver, and precious stones, as mentioned in Daniel 11:38.³⁹

Summary: Everything in vv 36-38 points to the arrogance of this self-centered Roman king who is answerable to no man or to no god but himself. The ultimate expression of this arrogance may well be his breaking of the covenant with Israel and his desolation of the temple while demanding worship of himself. Such an act would provide an appropriate background for the aggressive acts recorded in 11:39.

b. Aggression of the Roman king (v 39)

"And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god." Antichrist now puts his faith in power and might into practice by attacking "the strongest of fortresses." Such military aggression seems out of place during the first half of the seventieth week when the covenant of peace is in force. Consequently, the mid-point of the week has just been passed and the abomination of desolation has just taken place.

Prophet (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1947) 299; Gaebelin, *Daniel*, 188; Strauss, *The Prophecies of Daniel*, 343; Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, 274, for arguments in favor of seeing this as a reference to a Messianic hope.

³⁹Strauss, *The Prophecies of Daniel*, 344.

"He will give great honor to those who acknowledge him, and he will cause them to rule over the many." This also could indicate that the covenant has been broken. Under the covenant, this Roman king enjoyed significant peace-keeping powers.⁴⁰ However, he did not enjoy corresponding absolute power. At the mid-point of the seventieth week, Antichrist chooses to pursue personal power. This immediately causes factions and choosing of sides. Antichrist will devise a reward system to delegate some of his ruling authority to those who choose to follow him.

"And will parcel out land for a price." Once more Antichrist is viewed as having engaged in territorial expansion. In his attack upon "the strongest of fortresses," he appears to have been successful so that he is now in a position to parcel out this newly acquired land. Exactly what land is in view is ambiguous, but it is intriguing to consider that this land may be in Israel. This would place Antichrist in Palestine on one of his military expeditions of expansion, so that the kings of the south and of the north attack him while he is in the "beautiful land" (11:40-41). In any case, this action characterizes an aggressive expansionist and not a global peacemaker.

c. Summary.

The picture of world conditions under Antichrist's rule at the close of vv 36-39 is hardly one of tranquility and peace. Fortresses are being attacked, puppets are being installed as rulers, and land is being redistributed. The world is witnessing military aggression instituted by the one who was to have been the peacemaker to end all peacemakers. That Antichrist entered upon this campaign of raw aggression presupposes his having broken his covenant with Israel and the nations.

This aggression provokes an attack against the Roman king by two of the world power blocks headed by the King of the South and the King of the North (11:40). However, the defeat of these two powers (11:40-45) will only serve to demonstrate the power of the Roman king.

2. Attackers of the final Roman king defeated (vv 40-45)

a. Attack upon the final Roman king (v 40).

"And at the end time the king of the South will collide with him." When Antichrist manifests his true character in the middle of

⁴⁰Thus, the Roman king has already overcome his western opposition (cf. Dan 7:20, 24) by the outset of the seventieth week of Daniel, and the firm covenant "with the many" (Dan 9:27) must be a peace treaty involving most, if not all, of the major nations of the world, including Israel.

the seventieth week, a coalition of southern (Arab) nations move to block his new policy of aggression.

"And the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen, and with many ships." Simultaneous with, or just subsequent to, the attack by the King of the South comes a second attack upon the Roman king from the north. This distinguishes three kings: the King of the North, the King of the South, and the "him" (עָלְיוֹ; עִמּוֹ), the Roman king. This prevents identifying the King of the North as the same person as the Roman king.⁴¹ The "him" also does not permit the interpretation that this attack is against Israel; it is against the Roman king and his forces. Since the Roman king is consistently characterized as warring against the saints (cf. Rev 13:7; Dan 7:24–25; Dan 12:1), it is incomprehensible that the Jews should now be allied with him. However, it is possible that the attack upon the Roman king takes place within the confines of Palestine. "The variety of the resources that are to be employed against the Antichrist indicate how great his power must be at the latter end—'chariots, horsemen, and many ships.'"⁴²

"And he will enter countries, overflow them, and pass through." If the Roman king is situated in Palestine, then the King of the North will come from some distance and sweep through several other countries en route to the major attack. The normal sense of the language is to see this as a continued description of the activities of the King of the North. There is no textual evidence of a change in subject.

b. Defeat of the King of the South (vv 41–43).

"He will also enter the Beautiful Land." The movement of the King of the North now carries him as far south as Palestine, which is the orientation point of "north" and "south" in the first place. Once more there is a lack of any textual evidence for changing the subject of this action from the King of the North. The 3 m.s. pronoun cannot even be considered ambiguous in the context. The only ambiguous element is the location of the Roman king. Is he located in the land of Palestine, or is he located in one of the countries entered into and overflowed by the King of the North in 11:40? Or is he located in one of the other countries mentioned in this verse?

"And many countries will fall." Wherever Antichrist may be, it is implied that he is among the fallen as a result of this attack.

⁴¹Some do hold that the King of the North and the wilful king are the same here. See for example, Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, 164. Since very few commentators hold this position, little effort is made here to refute it. See Foster, "The Eschatological Significance of the Assyrian," 135–37, for arguments that three persons are involved.

⁴²Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 521.

Whitcomb proposes that this temporary defeat of Antichrist at the hand of these two opposing kings may shed some light on the "deadly wound" of the Roman king emphasized in the Book of Revelation (cf. 13:3, 12, 14; 17:8, 11).⁴³ As Antichrist simply drops out of sight (and is left for dead?), the King of the North seizes this opportunity to further his own ambitions for world power. His main enemy having been eliminated, the King of the North now attacks his rivals, including former allies.

"But these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab, and the foremost of the sons of Ammon." On his way south in attacking the King of the South, the King of the North evidently bypasses the area of Edom, Moab, and Ammon to the east of the Jordan (occupied by modern-day Jordan). While there may be some additional prophetic significance to the bypassing of these nations at this time,⁴⁴ the most simple explanation for "why countries to the southeast of Palestine will escape destruction is that the path taken . . . will lead southwest."⁴⁵

"Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries and the land of Egypt will not escape." Now the primary target of this march to the south is revealed. The King of the North has turned against his former ally, the King of the South, who is now a chief rival for world leadership. This battle has truly become a "world war" because of the repeated summary mention of "countries" being involved (vv 40, 41, 42). Furthermore, the most probable identity of the King of the South is herein revealed to be the sovereign of Egypt.

"But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels." Egypt evidently will have been amassing gold and silver in exchange for her natural resources, and these precious things are stripped from her as part of the booty. Having conquered Egypt, the King of the North then appears to divide his forces. One part of his army campaigns in Libya to the west of Egypt, and another part of the army campaigns in Ethiopia to the southeast. The King of the North has defeated the King of the South and is engaged in follow-through campaigns to establish himself firmly as ruler of the world. His dreams appear to be within reach of realization when something totally unexpected happens.

c. Defeat of the King of the North (vv 44-45).

"But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate

⁴³Cf. Whitcomb, "The Book of Daniel," 293.

⁴⁴Strauss, *The Prophecies of Daniel*, 346.

⁴⁵Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, 312.

many." In light of the sudden return of the King of the North to Palestine (11:45), these rumors from the east and from the north must have emanated from, or have concerned, Palestine. The frame of reference for "east" and "north" is no longer Palestine, but the actual location of the King of the North in Libya and Ethiopia. Palestine is "east" of Libya and "north" of Ethiopia. Or if one wishes to de-emphasize these split campaigns and view the entire operation as one united campaign against Egypt and her allies, Palestine is northeast of Egypt.

Perhaps 11:44-45 is intended to reveal nothing more than the change in direction of the King of the North back to the northeast, back to Palestine. It is interesting, however, to try to integrate prophetic truth. The similarity of "rumors from the east" to "the kings of the east" of Revelation 9 and 16 has led many commentators to associate them. For at least two reasons these passages probably are not describing the same events. First, the geographical reference point differs. In Revelation, east is reckoned from Palestine, whereas east and north in Dan 11:44 is reckoned from Africa. Second, the temporal reference points differ. Revelation 16 clearly takes place at the end of the seventieth week as it climaxes at the battle of Armageddon, whereas Dan 12:1 clearly fixes the time of 11:44, 45 as the middle of the seventieth week and the start of Jacob's trouble.

More likely is the correspondence between Dan 11:44-45 and the Roman king's deadly wound as recorded in Revelation 13. The Roman king is here described as a beast out of the sea (13:1), but his correspondence with the tenfold symbolism of the Roman empire in Daniel 2 and 7 is striking. V 3 cites a primary cause of the Roman king's following:

And I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast.

Newell observes, "here then is Satan's permitted imitation of the death and resurrection of Christ!"⁴⁶ This imitation may either be a deceptive appearance of death and resurrection, or it may be an actual death and miraculous resuscitation from the dead. Pentecost argues that the resurrection of Christ is unique and that the Roman king could not have really risen from the dead.⁴⁷ Certainly, Antichrist will be unable to reproduce Christ's unique resurrection in a glorified body, but he may be able to be resuscitated to life following his mortal wound. Whether he was merely left for dead and then

⁴⁶William R. Newell, *The Book of Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1935) 186.

⁴⁷Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 335-36.

“miraculously” recovered, or actually died and was restored to mortal life by supernatural power, the false prophet will use this event as a sign and proof of Antichrist’s right to be worshipped:

And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those that dwell in it *to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed* (Rev. 13:11-12; italics added).

Some try to explain this fatal wound as an experience of a nation and not of a man, but the false prophet’s message appears to relate only to a person and not to a national entity. Newell agrees: “It is a *man* that is before our eyes in Revelation 13, all through. God *says* he is a *Man* in 13:18.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, Rev 13:14 implies that this fatal wound will be received in battle:

And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast *who had the wound of the sword and has come to life*.

Here it is revealed that the Roman king receives his wound from a sword (i.e., during war).

This explanation of the relationship of Dan 11:36-45 to Revelation 13 appears to have real merit. Both involve a military context. Both have the same temporal setting, the middle of the seventieth week, and both events serve to launch the worldwide career of Antichrist. No wonder the world is thereafter awed by the beast, asking, “who is able to wage war with him?” (Rev 13:4). This correspondence helps to visualize the possible content of rumors that would be powerful enough to cause the King of the North to drop his African ventures and return immediately to Palestine. It would also provide for the Roman king’s continuing into Dan 12:1 and leading the way during the tremendous persecution of the Jews during the second half of the seventieth week.

“*And he will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain.*” This verse clearly indicates the King of the North’s return northeast to Palestine. He bivouacs between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea in the vicinity of Jerusalem (“Holy Mountain”).

“*Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.*” Little is said here apart from the revelation of the King of the North’s demise. In view of the Antichrist’s subsequent prominence in the

⁴⁸Newell, *The Book of Revelation*, 187.

second half of the Tribulation period, one might assume that the northern king is either destroyed by Antichrist or that Antichrist will take credit for his defeat. This defeat of the King of the North following that of the King of the South serves to prove the Roman king's power and to leave him in absolute control of the world.

d. Summary.

Paul Tan captures the essence of this attestation of Antichrist's power: "The beast is first defeated (Rev. 13:3), but the northern confederacy is supernaturally annihilated (Dan. 11:45), and the beast becomes the world ruler (Rev. 13:7)."⁴⁹ Walvoord also sees the defeat of the northern confederacy as a significant link in Antichrist's path to world rule:

With the northern kingdom destroyed there is no major political force standing in the way of the Roman Empire, and the world empire is achieved by proclamation. The apparent invincibility of the Roman ruler, supported as he is by Satanic power, is intimated in the question of Revelation 13:4, "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"⁵⁰

Persecution of the saints: 12:1a

"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time." At that time, the time of the demise of the King of the North, the worst persecution of all time against the Jews will break out. It will be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer 30:7) and two-thirds of the Jews will perish (Zech 13:8-9). The Lord Jesus warned that when they saw the abomination of desolations spoken of by Daniel, they should flee from Judea to the mountains (Matt 24:15, 16), "for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall" (Matt 24:21).

It must be granted that 12:1 does not say that the Roman king takes the lead in this climactic persecution of Israel. But Scripture does say this explicitly elsewhere. Revelation fills in some of the details not provided by Daniel at this point:

And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in

⁴⁹Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Winona Lake: BMH, 1974) 347.

⁵⁰John F. Walvoord, *The Nations in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967) 94.

heaven. And it was given to him *to make war with the saints and to overcome them*; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him (Rev. 13:5-7; italics added).

In light of later revelation, one can now say that this final persecution begins at the mid-point of the seventieth week, and thus the events of 11:36-45 also must be viewed as taking place "at that time."

Thus, the stage is set for the arrival of Messiah to put down the pagan Gentile powers and to establish his kingdom. While 12:1b-3 does not *say* that this is the work of Messiah, later revelation also makes it plain that it will be Christ who rescues Israel (12:1), who will resurrect the dead (12:2), and who will reward the righteous (12:3). Consequently, this brings the argument of the book to a climax. The Gentile nations dominating Israel, beginning with Babylon, would not soon end. Persia, Greece, and Roman would follow. But at the appointed time in history's darkest hour, Messiah will come and reign forever. God rules.

CONCLUSION

This study has not been concerned with proving every detail of interpretation concerning Dan 11:36-45. A number of the phrases are sufficiently ambiguous to allow various "possible" interpretations. The core of the study has been examining and seeking to answer four crucial questions.

What is the temporal setting of this passage? It is eschatological, and more specifically, the mid-point of the seventieth week of Daniel. What is the identity of the "wilful king?" He is the Antichrist of the end time, the "man of sin" spoken of by Paul, and the "beast out of the sea" of John. Who is the King of the North? He is the head of a great power north of Israel which has wide geographical range and of world political stature, probably the USSR. Who is the "attacker" in 11:40-45? It is the King of the North and not the Antichrist.

The commentary then dealt with the particulars of this passage and demonstrated that they may be best understood in the interpretive framework established by the answers to the four crucial questions. Not only does this view account for a smooth interpretation of the passage itself, but it augments the argument of the book of Daniel and integrates it with other prophetic truth.