

Daniel's Vision of Chapter 11

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

Written By: Pastor John T. Anderson

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Truth is truth and facts are facts. Last week I mentioned to you a story about some people who, desiring to visit our church, came on a certain Friday and talked with a “distinguished white-haired man” who encouraged them to come. I thought I had checked with everyone I could think of who might have been the one who talked with them, and not identifying anyone, mentioned to the visitors that they might have spoken with an angel.

After the sermon last week, one of our deacons came up to me privately and said, “It was me.” Why I didn’t think of him as a possibility, I don’t know, but it’s proper to set the record straight. But the fact that our good deacon was the one who spoke with them doesn’t detract from the point at all. He was God’s “angel” that day, there on a Friday at that particular time to answer the questions that were posed.

Today we take a look at the eleventh chapter of Daniel. I say take a “look” because it is our intention to touch on the “highlights” of this chapter, a chapter on which many books have been written. While there may be some individual verses that are difficult to understand and might be interpreted in more than one way, the broad picture of the prophecy is clear and the scope of the vision is familiar to us. It is the same message as was given through the vision of the statue in chapter 2, the wild animals in chapter 7, the sanctuary animals in chapter 8 and its explanation in chapter 9. The message is that there is a wonderful and powerful God Who stands for us and Whose kingdom ultimately will triumph.

In this complex and often confusing world, He is there, working for our salvation. He has a plan to get us through this and has taken all measures necessary for our redemption. He sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins. Jesus is now ministering in the temple above, ready to help any sinner find his or her way, ready to give assistance to any struggling sinner to overcome. And He will triumph. The conclusion of the drama is certain. Christ will win. He has already won at the cross, and soon He’ll win in the clouds. He’s coming back to this earth to take us to that place where He’s prepared a home for us. From the signs and timelines He’s given to us, we believe that that time is near.

Maybe you’ve had this happen: I went to an outdoor nursery to purchase some trees. They were in gallon buckets sitting on the ground and I selected the ones I wanted. But when I tried to lift them onto my cart, do you know what I discovered? I found that they had put down roots through

the openings in the bottom of the plastic bucket and could only be removed with some effort! The nursery was the “growing place,” but not intended to be the final “home” for the trees. This earth is our “nursery,” not our final home. Don’t let your roots sink into the soil of this world; soon you’ll find yourself being raised to meet Him in the air. What a great day that will be!

As we begin our study, I remind you of an illustration we discussed some time ago. This Book tells us of the “great conflict” (Daniel 10:1, margin) which began in heaven between Lucifer/Satan and Christ. The battlefield of this conflict was transferred to this earth when the devil and his angels were expelled, where he deceived Eve into believing that she would be better off if she disobeyed God’s commandment and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By flattery and falsehood, the devil gained her attention and her allegiance.

Then what did he do? Satan used Eve, the woman, to be his agent of temptation toward Adam. Nowhere do I read that the devil tempted Adam; he didn’t have to. He used Eve, which was much more effective for him. Eve didn’t know that she was working for the devil, but she was. However God still loved Eve; that’s important to remember. Now, it would be a huge mistake to deny that Eve was acting as Satan’s agent even though that’s not a very flattering thing to say. But the Bible clearly reveals that to be so. You can’t read Genesis 3 without seeing that. She did it misguidedly, but God still loved and pitied her. But that doesn’t in any way change what truth is. The truth is, of course, that she and Adam should have obeyed God’s Word, instead of the falsehoods presented by Satan. Then they would have been safe. Now they were obliged to acknowledge their error, repent of their sin and return to obedience immediately, which they did.

The Bible reveals to us that Satan has been most successful through the centuries when he has been able to use those who claim to be God’s children to do his work for him. Under the guise of religion he has waged his war against God. Two thousand years ago it was the Church, the priests and Levites who put Jesus on the cross. Rome never would have done it without the insistence of the Jewish religious leaders. Pilate wanted to “wash his hands” of the matter.

But God has always looked with pity and love, and not with condemnation on the “Eves” who have thus been misled. Peter said that the leaders of his day “didn’t know” that they had killed the Lord of glory. But they could have known. They had ignored the plain testimony of God’s Word, both the written and the living Word. And when you ignore God’s truth, that leads to ignorance, which is the state of ignoring truth.

But God still loves. His love never ends; it can’t. He is love, and just as Deity can’t die, His love can’t die either. It never will. But He wants us to know and walk in the light of His truth. Truth is His agent for our salvation. All this is important to remember because in our study we will encounter again startling and sensitive material.

It may be that some of you come from different religious backgrounds. Some of you may come from a different Protestant faith than the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some of you may come from a Catholic background. What we discuss today we present in love, the same love that God

has for all His children. But we also need to heed the truth that this Book bears, because the enemy has done everything in his power to distort or bury God's truth through the ages, oftentimes employing as his agent the Church.

If I chose to ignore the information that our good deacon gave me, wanting stubbornly to "stick to the story" as I had understood it before, that would be dishonest, wouldn't it? Truth is truth and needs to be cherished and shared. When we learn the truth it is time to embrace it because by so doing, we're embracing the One Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, Jesus Christ.

The 11th and 12th chapters of Daniel covers the history of the "great conflict" between the time of the Persian Empire down to the coming of Jesus and the triumph of His kingdom. The first verses of chapter 11 focus on the kings of Persia and the first king of Greece.

"Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him. And now I will tell you the truth: Behold three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece." Daniel 11:1, 2.

Here the angel Gabriel refers to something that happened when Darius the Mede (not to be confused with Darius the Great, a Persian king), first took the throne at the time of the fall of Babylon. Doubtless this concerns the victory over Babylon as well as the favorable treatment given to the Jews at that time. Following Darius the Mede there were the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses his son, a usurper called False Smerdis and then Xerxes (also called Ahasuerus), the king during the time of Esther. Evidently what Gabriel said about his wealth came true, for in that story we are told of the king's vast riches. Gabriel points to the conflicts between these two empires and the wars between the Greeks and Persians can be studied in any history book.

"Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these." Daniel 11:3, 4.

Who is this "mighty king" who would arise? It is Alexander the Great. At an early age he passed away, probably as a result of his excessive alcoholism combined with malaria and for a short time his half-brother and posthumous son, both under regents, attempted to hold the kingdom together. Ultimately four generals, as we saw in chapter 7's vision of the wild animals, took control of the empire and it was divided into four parts, later consolidated to three parts. Cassander controlled the west including Greece, Lysimachus held parts of Asia Minor, Seleucus ruled over Syria and the territory to the east and Ptolemy reigned over Egypt.

The Greek influence survived in the middle east and in Egypt, and was well represented during the time of Jesus. The New Testament was written in Greek (not Latin, the language of the occupying

Romans) and Alexandria in Egypt (named after Alexander, of course) was established as a center of Greek culture and learning, boasting a vast library.

During this period Palestine, including Judea, became a political “football” which was punted back and forth between the realms of Seleucus (Syria) and Ptolemy (Egypt). The names of these two found their way into the language and culture of the Jews. There were about ten cities known as “Seleucia,” one of them being the city of Antioch, another name that takes its name from the rulers of this time period. It was from this Seleucia that Paul, Barnabas and John Mark sailed on their first missionary journey, recounted in Acts 13. One of the disciples of Jesus was Bartholomew (“son of Ptolemai”).

The next verses highlight the struggles that continued for centuries between the Seleucids and Ptolemies, between Syria called the “king of the North”) and Egypt (called the “king of the South”). The prophecy focuses on these two because they would be the ones having direct contact with God’s people, the Jews. The spotlight of prophecy falls on a certain scandalous affair of intrigue.

“Then the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion. And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times.” Daniel 11:5, 6.

For a short time, Seleucus served beneath Ptolemy, but afterward he exceeded him in power and territory and when he died in 280 B.C., his realm extended from the borders of Macedonia to the Indus river in the east. The forces of Ptolemy and Seleucus were often in conflict.

After many long wars, a settlement was attempted between the two realms by the marriage of the grandson of Seleucus, Antiochus II Theos, to Berenice, daughter of the Egyptian king Ptolemy II Philadelphus. In order for this to happen, Antiochus II deposed his wife (who was also his sister) Laodice. However, after a son was born within the new marriage, Antiochus reconciled with his former wife Laodice. Shortly thereafter, Antiochus died suddenly of poisoning. Popular opinion had it that this was done by the first wife, who also had Berenice, her son and her maids (“those who brought her”) killed. Such an act of violence would not be left without revenge.

“But from a branch of her roots one shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail. And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes and their precious articles of silver and gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the North.” Daniel 11:7, 8.

In retaliation, Ptolemy III (the brother of Berenice) succeeded his father and mounted an attack against Syria and was very successful. Later, Seleucus II, the “king of the North,” went to Egypt and tried to regain what had been lost, but he was soundly defeated.

The next verses of Daniel 11 recount further conflicts between the two kingdoms which took place during the period between the Testaments. One of the rulers of Syria, Antiochus IV (called Epiphanies), tried to wipe out Jewish religion and culture, confiscating the Scriptures and sacrificing pigs on the altar in the temple of Jerusalem. His efforts were finally put down by the Jews in the Maccabean revolt.

Although there are different interpretations concerning the next few verses, we see in them the transfer of power from Greek to Roman influence. Many see in verse 17's phrase "the daughter of women" a reference to Cleopatra, who was placed under Roman guardianship in B.C. 51 and three years later became the mistress of Julius Caesar. Following his death, she gave her affections to Mark Antony, the rival to Octavian, the heir of Julius. Octavian, later known as Caesar Augustus defeated the forces of Cleopatra at Actium in B.C. 31 and from that point on the period of the Ptolemy's in Egypt was effectively finished. Augustus Caesar is the "raiser of taxes" in verse 20, referring to the occasion which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem at Jesus' birth. Octavian's successor Tiberius Caesar is the subject of verses 21 and 22, under whose reign Jesus, the "Prince of the covenant" died on the cross.

In verses 30 and onward we see this "great conflict" as it was waged during the middle ages, with the attempts of the Church to suppress the Scriptures under pain of death. Those who opposed her policies and stood valiantly for righteousness were persecuted and martyred by the millions. The "many days" is the 1260 year time period which is addressed in chapter 7 of Daniel and chapters 11, 12 and 13 of Revelation. It is the same as the "great tribulation" of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24:21. During this time Luther, Calvin, Knox and others courageously raised their voices encouraging people to return to the simple worship of God and to the teachings of His Word.

It is to these reformation heroes that the prophecy points when it says, "The people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering." Daniel 11:32, 33.

Remember the illustration we discussed at the beginning of our study? Satan used Eve, the woman, to be his agent of deception and temptation. Satan used the Church of Jesus' day to do his work against Jesus. Satan used the Church of the middle ages to counteract the authority of the Scriptures, the "black Book" God has given us for our guidance. What was the huge mistake Eve made in Garden? She listened to another rather than heeding the Word of God. If she had just believed God's Word!

Lucifer will coat his temptations with honey to deceive, but our only hope is in believing God and putting into practice His commands. Today the issue is clear and the path unmistakable. It is the same as it was in the Garden of Eden: will we trust God implicitly and follow His Word, at whatever cost?

Yet, how does God look upon those deceived? With pity and love. He yearns deeply for all to walk in His light. But truth is truth! We must study the Bible as our Sourcebook. It must be the ultimate authority in our lives, for it is the Word of God.

During this period of the middle ages many of the truths of the Bible were replaced by tradition, and false teachings crept into the Church, including the worship of Mary, the practice of confessing ones sins to a human priesthood, infant baptism and the replacement of God's Sabbath by the worship of Sunday. All these things are freely acknowledged by the Church of Rome and she claims the authority through her tradition to make such changes.

When the safety of God's Word is set aside, the door to error is opened. Now we learn the shocking news that the Vatican finds no conflict between Darwinian evolution and their religion. It is believed that the Genesis account of Creation and evolution are "perfectly compatible."

"Vatican officials joined biologists, paleontologists, molecular geneticists and philosophers for the conference at the Pontifical Gregorian University (located in Rome), which ends tomorrow. Rafael Martinez, professor of the Philosophy of Science at the Santa Croce Pontifical University in Rome, said although the reaction of Catholic theologians, intellectuals and priests to Darwinian theory had been 'generally negative' in the 19th century, 'recent declarations by Popes have asserted the *full accordance of Catholic doctrine and evolutionary biology*'." (Italics mine)

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article5859797.ece>

"Professor Marc Leclerc, who teaches natural philosophy at the Gregorian University, said the 'time has come for a rigorous and objective valuation' of Darwin by the Church as the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth approaches. He argues that too many of Darwin's opponents, primarily Creationists, mistakenly claim his theories are 'totally incompatible with a religious vision of reality'." <http://www.theromanforum.com/?p=348>

Are you shocked to hear these words coming from a source that claims to be the representative of Christ (the Creator) on this earth? You should be. The line of demarcation between truth and error is defined by the teachings of God's Holy Word, the Scriptures. Darwinian evolution (that is, "macro-evolution," to be distinguished from *micro*-evolution which describes changes and adaptations within the species) and the Genesis account of the origin of life are **not at all compatible!**

Verse 36 is in parallel with many other prophetic portraits of this system found in the writings of Paul (II Thessalonians 2) and John (Revelation 13), describing the boastful titles popes and prelates have ascribed to themselves, of which we have spoken before. "He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god and shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished." Daniel 11:36.

This is a repeat of the idea presented in the vision of chapter 7. "Then I wished to know the truth about...the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until

the Ancient of Days came and judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.” Daniel 7:19-22.

The point of the vision in chapter 11 is unmistakable. God will conquer. Though it looks like Satan has the upper hand and is able to do whatever he wishes, God will intervene and bring an end to the “great conflict.” The enemy of God “will come to his end, and no one will help him.” Daniel 11:45.

A granddaughter of one of our members recently took a nasty fall and broke her leg. She went to the doctor and the bone was set, but didn’t seem to heal properly. Later it was found that more bones were broken than what was first discovered. When you go to the doctor you want to learn what’s wrong and how to make it right. If a physician intentionally or negligently fails to render a thorough and competent diagnosis, it might be that you’ll look for another doctor. You might even pursue a legal remedy. Truth is truth, and facts are facts.

In the spiritual realm, that is especially true. If I, as your pastor, “held back” what you needed to know, I would be grossly negligent. If I caused someone to lose out because I didn’t declare the truth, on *that* day you’d have something to say to me!

God has given us all we need to be saved. The Book provides the essentials for our redemption. That’s what the Man dressed in white told the Philippine chief: “All who obey the commands of this Book will be My people.” But Satan is doing all he can to mislead, deceive and falsify the way home. He hates the Bible and wants to elevate human opinion above God’s Word! That’s why we need to study the Book ourselves and learn not just what God requires, but become personally acquainted with Him as our Friend and Savior.

Thursday night before He was crucified, Jesus said, “With fervent desire” I have desired to eat this Passover supper with you. I believe that He saying something like that now, regarding the marriage supper of the Lamb. “With fervent desire” I long to sit at that table in the Kingdom.” May that day be soon! Even so, come Lord Jesus.