

Rome Establishes the Vision - Number Six

The Prophetic Controversies in Adventist History: Understanding the Conflict Between Uriah Smith and James White on Daniel 11:36

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2024-08-14

We are addressing six lines of prophetic controversy that have occurred within the history of Adventism from 1798 until the present day.

“In history and prophecy the Word of God portrays the long continued conflict between truth and error. That conflict is yet in progress. Those things which have been, will be repeated. Old controversies will be revived, and new theories will be continually arising. But God’s people, who in their belief and fulfillment of prophecy have acted a part in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages, know where they stand. They have an experience that is more precious than fine gold. They are to stand firm as a rock, holding the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end.” Selected Messages, book 2, 109.

The previous article addressed the first and last controversy about the Roman power, and we will now take up the controversy that occurred between Uriah Smith and James White. Uriah Smith inserted his own “private interpretation” into verse thirty-six.

“VERSE 36. And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined shall be done.

“The king here introduced cannot denote the same power which was last noticed; namely, the papal power; for the specifications will not hold good if applied to that power.” Uriah Smith, Daniel and the Revelation, 292.

Smith acknowledged that the power in the previous verse was “papal Rome,” but claims the characteristics of verse thirty-six are not prophetic characteristics that identify papal Rome. That claim is false. It should be remembered that in the rebellion of 1863, the seven times of Leviticus chapter twenty-six was set aside, and therefore the representation of the seven times of both tables of Habakkuk was rejected. Both the 1843 and the 1850 charts illustrate the seven times in the very center of the charts, and both illustrations place the cross in the center of the line of the seven times. When the new light of the seven times arrived in 1856 and was thereafter rejected, it marked a rejection of Habakkuk’s two tables, and also the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy, which so clearly identifies that both charts were directed by God.

According to Sister White the last deception of Satan is to make of none effect the testimony of God’s Spirit, and here the first deception was to make of none effect the testimony of God’s Spirit, and it also represented a simultaneous rejection of the foundational truths upon the two charts, and more specifically the seven times.

At the rebellion of 1863, it was none other than Uriah Smith that produced the 1863 counterfeit chart, which removed the line of the seven times. By 1863 Uriah Smith had closed his eyes to the light of the seven times, and was unable to see that there are two “indignations” which Daniel identifies. The two indignations represent the seven times against the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah. The first against the ten northern tribes began in 723 BC and ended in 1798, and the second began in 677 BC and ended in 1844.

Gabriel came to Daniel in chapter eight to explain the marah vision, and in connection with his work, he provided a second witness to 1844. The twenty-three hundred years of Daniel chapter eight ended in 1844, but so too did the last of the two indignations against the northern and southern kingdoms.

And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. Daniel 8:19.

The last end presupposes a first end. The last of the two indignations, which is simply another expression of the seven times, ended in 1844, and the first indignation ended in 1798. The verse Smith claimed possessed no specifications of the papal power identified the year when the papacy would receive its deadly wound.

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined shall be done. Daniel 11:36.

“The king” in verse thirty-six would “prosper till the indignation be accomplished.” Notice what Smith writes about Daniel chapter eight, verses twenty-three and twenty-four in the same book where he claims the papal power does not possess the correct attributes to fulfill verse thirty-six.

“VERSE 23. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand: and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.

“This power succeeds to the four divisions of the goat kingdom in the latter time of their kingdom, that is, toward the termination of their career. It is, of course, the same as the little horn of verse 9 and onward. Apply it to Rome, as set forth in remarks on verse 9, and all is harmonious and clear.

“‘A king of fierce countenance.’ Moses, in predicting punishment to come upon the Jews from this same power, calls it ‘a nation of fierce countenance.’ Deut. 28:49, 50. No people made a more formidable appearance in warlike array than the Romans. ‘Understanding dark sentences.’ Moses, in the scripture just referred to, says, ‘Whose tongue thou shalt not understand.’ This could not be said of the Babylonians, Persians, or Greeks, in reference to the Jews; for the Chaldean and Greek languages were used to a greater or less extent in Palestine.

This was not the case, however, with the Latin.

“When the transgressors are come to the full.’ All along, the connection between God’s people and their oppressors is kept in view. It was on account of the transgressions of his people that they were sold into captivity. And their continuance in sin brought more severe punishment. At no time were the Jews more corrupt morally, as a nation, than at the time they came under the jurisdiction of the Romans.

“‘Mighty, but not by his own power.’ The success of the Romans was owing largely to the aid of their allies, and divisions among their enemies, of which they were ever ready to take advantage. Papal Rome also was mighty by means of the secular powers over which she exercised spiritual control.

“‘He shall destroy wonderfully.’ The Lord told the Jews by the prophet Ezekiel that he would deliver them to men who were ‘skilful to destroy;’ and the slaughter of eleven hundred thousand Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army, was a terrible confirmation of the prophet’s words. And Rome in its second, or papal, phase was responsible for the death of fifty millions of martyrs.

“‘And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand.’ Rome has been distinguished above all other powers for a policy of craft, by means of which it brought the nations under its control. This is true of both pagan and papal Rome. And thus by peace it destroyed many.

“And Rome, finally, in the person of one of its governors, stood up against the Prince of princes, by giving sentence of death against Jesus Christ. ‘But he shall be broken without hand,’ an expression which identifies the destruction of this power with the smiting of the image of chapter 2.” Uriah Smith Daniel and the Revelation, 202–204.

Smith, twice in the passage, identifies that the prophetic characteristics of pagan and papal Rome are interchangeable, for they are simply the manifestation of Rome in its two phases, such as the mixture of iron and clay in Daniel chapter two, which Sister White identifies as symbols of churchcraft and statecraft. When Daniel identifies in the verses Smith is addressing—that Rome “shall prosper, and practice,” and that Rome “shall cause craft to prosper in his hand,”—Smith claims that in verse thirty-six that the “king” who “shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished,” identifies a prophetic characteristic of both pagan and papal Rome. Then he claims that none of the characteristics of Rome in verse thirty-six refer to the papal power.

We have referred to Smith in supporting the identification of Rome being the robbers who establish the vision, and one of the four prophetic characteristics in verse fourteen is that Rome exalts themselves.

And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. Daniel 11:14.

Smith claims that the specifications of the king in verse thirty-six do not align with the papal power, though he earlier defended that it was Rome in verse fourteen that exalts itself. Yet the king

in verse thirty-six “shall exalt himself.” That very same king in verse thirty-six would “speak marvelous things against the God of gods.” In Daniel the papal power “shall speak great words against the Most High,” and in the book of Revelation the papal power blasphemes against the Most High.

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.
Revelation 13:5, 6.

Every prophetic specification of the papal power is identified in verse thirty-six.

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined shall be done. Daniel 11:36.

Human commentators are many times unreliable, but many Adventist commentators give witness to the obvious truth that it was verse thirty-six which the apostle Paul was paraphrasing in Second Thessalonians, when he addressed the man of sin.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 3.

Verse thirty-six states that “he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god,” and Paul says “that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.” Clearly Smith had no prophetic authority to claim that the king of verse thirty-six was different from the king under discussion in the verses leading to verse thirty-six. Grammatically he had no justification for making his flawed application, and his claim that he did so because verse thirty-six possesses no characteristics of the papal power was a wresting of the Scripture in an attempt to establish a private interpretation.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Peter 1:19–21.

Through the years of Laodicean Adventism there have been many Adventist theologians, pastors and authors who have addressed whether they think Smith’s application is correct or incorrect. An Australian pastor, Louis Were, who is long deceased, spent the majority of his ministry in opposing Smith’s false prophetic model. The reason for his opposition was not simply that Smith ultimately identified the king that comes to his end in verse forty-five as Turkey, but Smith’s platform also produced an incorrect application of Armageddon. In the 1980’s or thereabout an Adventist author penned a book titled, *Adventists and Armageddon, Have we Misunderstood Prophecy?* The

author's name is Donald Mansell, and the book is still available.

Mansell tracks the history leading up to World War One and World War Two showing that when both those wars were seen to be approaching the Adventist evangelists began to employ Smith's false application of Turkey marching to literal Jerusalem as a sign of Armageddon and the end of the world. He demonstrates by church membership roles that as each of the wars approached many souls were brought into the membership of the Adventist church, based upon the evangelist's prophetic emphasis drawn from Smith's flawed view of Armageddon.

When either war ended, and the flawed predictions were not fulfilled, the church lost more members than they had gained from the prophetic model that was constructed by Smith.

Through Smith's rejection of the foundational message of the Millerites, and his willingness to promote his private interpretation of verse thirty-six to forty-five of Daniel, Smith's logic produced a prophetic model based upon current events.

In the argument between Smith and James White over the king who comes to his end in the last verse of Daniel eleven, James White presented a logic that succinctly represented Smith's sandy prophetic foundation. White taught that "prophecy produces history, but history does not produce prophecy."

The evangelists of Adventism that worked before both wars employed the developing history to present Smith's flawed prophetic model of Armageddon, and their work, which seemed so blessed leading up to the wars, produced a net loss when the prophetic model was demonstrated to be based upon a private interpretation.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Matthew 7:15–20.

Smith's willingness to promote a private prophetic model of the king in verse thirty-six bore the fruit of also creating an incorrect application of the Sixth Plague and Armageddon.

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. Revelation 16:12–16.

As we have previously pointed out, the sixth plague comes after the close of human probation, so the warning contained to keep your garments, must refer to a testing issue that occurs before

Michael stands up and human probation closes and the first plague begins. The sixth plague identifies the activities of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, who are the threefold union that comes together at the soon-coming Sunday law. That threefold union is Modern Rome, and the symbol that identifies and establishes the threefold union of Modern Rome, are the “robbers of thy people,” who “exalt themselves to establish the vision” and “fall.”

The warning of the sixth plague, when understood, allows a soul to keep his garments, but if it is rejected it leaves a soul naked, which is one of the five attributes of a Laodicean. The symbol that establishes that warning is the robbers of thy people, who exalt themselves and ultimately fall. Solomon said if God’s people do not have that vision, they perish.

Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he. Proverbs 29:18.

The Hebrew word “perish” means “to make naked”, and John recorded, “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” Smith was wrong on the King of the North, and that false prophetic foundation allowed him to develop a prophetic application that, if accepted, produces nakedness, which is a symbol of the Laodiceans, who are spewed out of the mouth of the Lord.

Smith had no problem arguing his new false identification of the King of the North against the prophetess’ husband James White. Adventist historians, and Sister White, address their famous disagreement. Ellen White rebuked both her husband and Smith for allowing their difference of opinion on who was represented by the king of the north in Daniel eleven, to be put into the public domain. In the very first Adventist publication after the Great Disappointment of 1844, James White wrote:

“That Jesus rose up, and shut the door, and came to the Ancient of days, to receive his kingdom, at the 7th month, 1844, I fully believe. See Luke 13:25; Matthew 25:10; Daniel 7:13,14. But the standing up of Michael, Daniel 12:1, appears to be another event, for another purpose. His rising up in 1844, was to shut the door, and come to his Father, to receive his kingdom, and power to reign; but Michael’s standing up, is to manifest his kingly power, which he already has, in the destruction of the wicked, and in the deliverance of his people. Michael is to stand up at the time that the last power in chapter 11, comes to his end, and none to help him. This power is the last that treads down the true church of God: and as the true church is still trodden down, and cast out by all christendom, it follows that the last oppressive power has not ‘come to his end;’ and Michael has not stood up. This last power that treads down the saints is brought to view in Revelation 13:11-18. His number is 666.” James White, A Word to the Little Flock, 8.

When Smith introduced his so-called “new light” on the subject of “the last power in Daniel chapter eleven,” James White saw Smith’s application, not as new light, but as an attack upon the foundations. The controversy of Rome as the king of the north in Daniel eleven that took place between Uriah Smith and James White possesses specific attributes, that as students of prophecy, we are to bring together with the other controversies of Adventist history concerning the symbol of

Rome.

One of those attributes is the introduction of a private interpretation. Another attribute is that the application of the private interpretation requires a wresting of simple grammar, for Smith not only disregarded that every prophetic attribute in verse thirty-six addresses Rome, but he disregarded that the grammatical structure demands that the king of verse thirty-six must be the same king as represented in the previous passage.

Another is that the private interpretation was a rejection of foundational truths. Another is that it represents a rejection of the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy. Another characteristic is that the first flawed idea concerning Rome will lead to a prophetic model that disallows a person from keeping his garments as they approach the close of human probation. Another was the willingness to promote his private interpretation publicly. Another is that the private interpretation is invariably identified as new light. All of these attributes are represented within the current discussion of the “robbers of thy people.”

When the last controversy of Rome, which was typified by the first controversy of Rome identifying the “robbers of thy people,” is brought together with the prophetic line of Uriah Smith’s and James White’s controversy we will see that one class will be building their prophetic model upon a private interpretation, which rejects foundational truth.

The rejection of the foundational truths automatically represents a rejection of the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy, which so soundly defends those foundational truths. That class will also be willing to present their view publicly, regardless of any concerns that may be raised about the impact the teaching might have upon God’s people around the globe.

Immediately after 1844, in the first generation of Adventism, another controversy about Rome was introduced. That controversy continued to be agitated, until the false view was accepted in the third generation of Adventism. We will consider the controversy of the “daily” as the fourth of six lines we are now considering in the model of line upon line.

But before we take up the fourth line of the controversies of Rome, it needs to be remembered that in the previous article, when we were addressing verse ten of Daniel chapter eleven, we stated “Verse ten also directly connects the “seven times” of Leviticus twenty-six to the hidden history, but that line of truth is outside what we are here setting forth.”

Uriah Smith was the leader in rejecting the seven times in 1863. He had rejected the increase of knowledge upon that subject that was presented in the articles on the subject, penned by Hiram Edson and published in the Review in 1856. The implications of Smith being associated with a movement that presented the seven times, but who thereafter rejected an increase of knowledge upon that very subject is also outside of the subject of the characteristics of Smith’s introduction of what he claimed was new light on the subject of the king of the north, but when we conclude our overview of the line of the Adventist controversies of Rome, we will return to both the significance of verse ten of chapter eleven of Daniel, and also what is represented by Smith’s rejection of the Laodicean message that arrived in 1856 with the increase of knowledge on the seven times.

“Our faith in reference to the messages of the first, second, and third angels was correct. The great waymarks we have passed are immovable. Although the hosts of hell may try to tear them from their foundation, and triumph in the thought that they have succeeded, yet they do not succeed. These pillars of truth stand firm as the eternal hills, unmoved by all the efforts of men combined with those of Satan and his host. We can learn much, and should be constantly searching the Scriptures to see if these things are so.” Evangelism, 223.

“The great waymarks of truth, showing us our bearings in prophetic history, are to be carefully guarded, lest they be torn down, and replaced with theories that would bring confusion rather than genuine light.” Selected Messages, book 2, 101, 102.

“At this time many efforts will be made to unsettle our faith in the sanctuary question; but we must not waver. Not a pin is to be moved from the foundations of our faith. Truth is still truth. Those who become uncertain will drift into erroneous theories, and will finally find themselves infidel in regard to the past evidence we have had of what is truth. The old waymarks must be preserved, that we lose not our bearings.” Manuscript Releases, volume 1, 55