

Speculations on North and South

by Ken LeBrun & John Witcombe

Commenting on the terms *north* and *south* in Daniel 11, Uriah Smith, in his book, *Daniel and the Revelation*, makes this statement:

“The king of the north and the king of the south are many times referred to in the remaining portion of this chapter. It therefore becomes essential to an understanding of the prophecy clearly to identify these powers. When Alexander's empire was divided, the different portions lay toward the four winds of heaven, west, north, east, and south; **these divisions of course to be reckoned from the standpoint of Palestine**, the native land of the prophet. That division of the empire lying west of Palestine would thus constitute the kingdom of the west; that lying north, the kingdom of the north; that lying east, the kingdom of the east; and that lying south the kingdom of the south.” 1897 UrS, DAR 249

The problem with this statement is that Daniel 11 does not say that the compass directions are to be reckoned from the standpoint of Palestine. This is an assumption on the part of Uriah Smith that does not come from the text. Some believe that the terms *north* and *south* relate to God's people who lived in Palestine before 34 AD. However, this too is only an assumption. The text does not tell us this. There are others that say that the terms *north* and *south* relate to the direction of attack. Again this is only an assumption. The text does not tell us that the terms *north* and *south* are derived from which direction these civil powers attack their enemies.

Is it true that Egypt is south of Palestine? Is it true that Egypt attacked the *king of the north* from the south? The answer is yes to both questions. But just because these statements are true doesn't necessarily mean that either one of these facts define the terms *north* and *south* as they relate to the kings of Daniel 11. The terms must be defined only by what the text actually says.

There is a general assumption that Lysimachus was the first Hellenistic *king of the north*, and that Seleucus was originally the *king of the east*. But the book of Daniel nowhere talks about a *king of the east*. Lysimachus is never called the *king of the north*. What we know from the text and from history is that there is no mention of *north* as in *king of the north* until at least 20 years after Lysimachus' death. Neither was Seleucus ever called the *king of the north*. He is mentioned in the chapter (one of his princes), but never called the *king of the north*. If our history is correct, Gabriel doesn't call anybody the *king of the north* until the reign of Antiochus II Theos. By then there was an established capital in Antioch which was located in modern-day Turkey.

The term *south* as in *king of the south* refers to Egypt (see Daniel 11:5-8). The text does not tell us *south* of what. All we can tell from the text itself is that *north* is simply *north* of *south* and *south* is simply *south* of *north*. *North* and *south* are related in some way to Alexander's former empire—“...and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven...” Daniel 11:4.

If we desire to understand Daniel 11 it will be essential that we bring no assumptions or speculations to the text. Those who are seeking to find unity of belief must all agree to only deal with what the text actually says along with the relevant history that can be found as the fulfillment to what the text says. If we do not agree to adhere to these basic ground rules of interpretation, unity will be impossible to achieve.