

**Statement No. 3**  
**The Accuracy of the Pioneers' View**  
**Statement Sponsor**  
**Ken LeBrun**

**Statement: The pioneers' literal approach to the text of Daniel 11:40-45 has not failed. Its details have so far been exactly fulfilled.**

The comment has often been made that the pioneers were obviously wrong in their approach to Daniel 11:40-45 because their interpretation failed. But in reality, their expectations have not failed any more on this subject than they have in regard to the national Sunday law. Let's test their literal approach to these verses.

If the terms in verses 40-45 are to be taken literally, we should expect to see a literal fulfillment of each specification of the text. If the events don't happen like the verses describe, we know we have an incorrect application. But as William Miller said in his Rule #4, "Let every word have its proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error." So let's examine each point.

Verse 40 calls for the king of the South, in the time of the end, to push at the ruler who represents the power described in the immediately preceding verses. The classical Adventist position held that that power was France. So to test the theory, we must ask the question, Did the king of the South push against France in the time of the end? The answer is, Yes.

Egypt in 1798 was autonomously governed by two Mamluk chieftains, Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey, who had revolted against Ottoman control. On July 1 of that year, French troops under the control of General Bonaparte, landed near Alexandria and soon had possession of the city. On July 7 they headed south toward Cairo. On July 21, near the town of Embabeh, the French encountered the Mamluk forces in the so-called Battle of the Pyramids.

We are not concerned with developments in the story that are not called for in the text. But we do want to see if what the passage predicted did in fact happen. So the question is, Did the king of the South push at the French? Absolutely.

Bonaparte's reaction to the Mameluk offensive at each encounter was to form his troops into hollow rectangles, with six ranks of armed soldiers facing outward in each direction. Each of these divisional squares could move as a unit as necessary, but for the most part all they needed to do was to stand stationary. Murad Bey commanded a cavalry 6,000 strong, each rider armed with a rifle, several pistols, a javelin, and a short, curved sword. At Murad's order, wave after wave of mounted Mamluks charged at full gallop against the impenetrable French defense. The onslaught was steadily repulsed; each wave of cavalry being cut down by the French until the Mamluks finally abandoned the field. After that, Murad Bey engaged in ongoing guerilla attacks against the French for over a year until he finally allied himself with them against the

approaching Turkish army. He died of the plague on April 7, 1801, and the king of the South is never again mentioned in Bible prophecy.

The second specification of our text calls for the king of the North to come against the French leader with horses and wheeled vehicles and many ships. On September 2, 1798, in fulfillment of the prophecy, the Ottoman Sultan declared war on France. Bonaparte had come to Egypt as a professed ally of the Sultan. But obviously the Sultan did not see things that way. He mobilized two armies to attack Napoleon from different directions. The first army was a land force of 12,000 soldiers who would later be reinforced with 18,000 additional recruits. The second army, with 50,000 soldiers commanded by Mustafa Pasha, began to assemble in Rhodes for an attack by sea.

Knowing he could not fight off both Ottoman armies at once, Bonaparte decided that his best hope would be to first meet the land army in Syria before the second army arrived by sea. Marching north, he fared well until he encountered the Ottoman troops at the heavily-fortified coastal city of Acre. British battleships and Turkish gunboats patrolling the harbor provided essential support to Jezzar Pasha who commanded the army within the city. During the two-month standoff at Acre, tens of thousands of Turkish relief troops stormed in from Damascus and elsewhere, whom the French encountered at Mount Tabor and throughout Galilee.<sup>1</sup> Ottoman reinforcements continued to arrive by sea. Finally, Bonaparte ordered a withdrawal under the cover of night, and, with what was left of his army, he retreated to Egypt. He hadn't been in Cairo very long when, on a mission to Giza, he received report of a hundred British and Ottoman ships off Abukir, threatening his position in Egypt. That immense naval invasion was soon thwarted by Bonaparte's swift response.

When Bonaparte retreated from Acre, he abandoned all his conquests in Judea, permitting the Turks to "enter also into the glorious land" (verse 41). But the vicinity of Edom and Moab and Ammon were out of the way and untouched. The prediction in verse 42 was that "the land of Egypt shall not escape." In 1801 the French occupation of Egypt was overthrown, and Egypt was formally awarded to the Ottoman Empire at the Treaty of Paris on June 25, 1802. Egypt was placed under tribute to the Porte (verse 43), to which the Libyans and the Ethiopians also gave their blessing. There is no specification in verses 40-43 that did not meet an exact fulfillment.

We are now ready to examine verse 44.

"But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many."

According to the text, the power last spoken of must at this point be troubled by tidings out of the east and out of the north. To understand this verse, we need to consider the world developments that confronted the Ottoman Empire as the nineteenth century progressed.

The Industrial Revolution in the West, and the conquest and rapid growth of the New World,

---

<sup>1</sup> Herb Feinberg, "North to Palestine: Napoleon Marches Against the Turks." *Napoleonic Scholarship: The Journal of the International Napoleonic Society*. Vol. 1, Number 2, December 1998. [http://www.napoleonicsociety.com/english/scholarship98/c\\_palestine.html](http://www.napoleonicsociety.com/english/scholarship98/c_palestine.html) (Accessed April 12, 2018).

shifted power away from the Ottoman-controlled East. At the same time, a new rival to the Turks was gaining strength in the East. Russia was creating a land empire that was threatening to swallow up Asia. Ted Danforth illustrates it this way:

“Imagine Russia as a great bear with its tongue lapping the waters of the Black Sea, while its right paw reaches for the Mediterranean over the dying Ottoman Empire and its left paw reaches south toward the mountain passes of Afghanistan.”<sup>2</sup>

“The right paw of the bear represents Potemkin’s project to push south into the former Greek empire of the Byzantines. This ‘Greek Project,’ as it was called, represents an eastern *Reconquista*. The ostensible goal was to regain lost Christian territory in the Balkans. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this project was repackaged as Pan-Slavism, which, according to Engels, was ‘nothing more’ than a pretext for taking Constantinople and opening the Straits for Russia’s Black Sea Fleet. The left paw, or ‘Eastern Project,’ represents the push south into the weakening emirates of the old Silk Road, what are today collectively called the ‘stans.’ ”<sup>3</sup>

While Russia’s aspirations for control of the Black Sea and the Straits formed the crisis directly from the North (the right paw of the bear in Danforth’s illustration), tidings out of the East (the left paw) also troubled the Sultan. As for that, we will let the Foreign Office of the Russian government explain the rumors coming out of Central Asia:

“Public report connected with it the false rumor of an expedition undertaken by us against the Khivans; and English opinion, ever ready to suspect our ambitious views in Asia, was confirming itself in the conviction that the object of our policy was to disturb the whole Eastern world in order to bring about the downfall of the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>4</sup>

The Sultan had good reason to be troubled. In spite of any downplaying by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, this rumor turned out to be accurate. Russia did in fact move into Central Asia. But so did Britain, whose primary objective was to protect their access to India. As the Russians advanced farther and farther south, the buffer between them and British India narrowed, producing the historic struggle known as the Great Game. The expansion of these ascendant states meant a corresponding diminishing of Ottoman power and influence.

With the Russian occupation of the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in May of 1853, the pressure on Turkey had become intense. This brings us to the second half of Daniel 11:44. On October 4, 1853, Sultan Abdülmecid I declared war on Russia and proceeded to ferociously attack the Russian forces on the north bank of the Danube. Taking town after town, the Turkish troops had, by July of 1854, completely driven the Russians from the Principalities.

In the Caucasus, the Turks attacked and captured the border fort of Saint Nicholas on October 27, 1853, pouring 20,000 troops across the border and pushing the Russians back. The prophecy of Daniel 11:44 was accurately fulfilled.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ted Danforth, *The Eastern Question: A Geopolitical History* (Townshend, VT: Anekdotia, 2015), 150.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Russian Official Publication, *Diplomatic Study on the Crimean War (1852-1856)* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1882), 90.

So far we have seen an exact fulfillment of the text as applied by our Adventist pioneers. Only one verse remained to be fulfilled—verse 45. And since it is directly tied to the close of human probation in Daniel 12:1, that verse cannot happen until the work of the gospel is wrapping up. We know from Ellen White’s statements that Jesus could have come in the 1800s. Had that happened, verse 45 would have been fulfilled in that century. But because of the insubordination of the church, Christ’s coming had to be delayed. This required the fulfillment of verse 45 to be held off.

This delay, however, does not disprove the pioneers’ method of interpretation. Nor does it prove them wrong in what they predicted to be the fulfillment of verse 45. Their prediction for the actual fulfillment of the text was that the Turkish leader would establish a headquarters in Jerusalem. Although they expected it to take place at any moment, they never specified exactly when this would happen. And although they saw international developments by which the predicted event could take place in their day, the fulfillment of verse 45 does not require those details. The only thing required by the text is the establishment of Turkish headquarters in Jerusalem. Therefore no particular trigger to that event could be a fulfillment of prophecy. Only the event itself could fulfill prophecy. The prophecy does not address the trigger event. Therefore the pioneers’ expectations in regard to a potential trigger event (Russia taking over Constantinople) lay outside the scope of prophetic application. Considering that fact, no point in the actual fulfillment of what verse 45 specifically calls for, as understood by our pioneers, has proven incorrect.