

Evaluation of "The Sign of the End of the World"

by Samuel Nunez

This manuscript introduces a new interpretation of Daniel 12 which, if published, will give support to those church members who interpret the time prophecies in Daniel 12 as literal times in the future. It is a closely argued paper, at times fairly technical, which will impress the reader with the author=s detailed knowledge of the text. The following points will be discussed in the evaluation: Literary structure, linguistic matters, and hermeneutical issues.

Literary Structure

1. A main pillar of Nunez=s argument that the 1290 and 1335 days in Daniel 12:11-12 are literal time periods in the future is the literary structure of Daniel 10-12. While literary structures are helpful in analyzing biblical passages, the interpreter needs to be aware of the subjective component in establishing a literary structure. In regard to Daniel 10 -12, Nunez, in harmony with most Daniel scholars, divides the text into three sections (pp. 3-4):

Daniel 10:1-21	Two supernatural beings and Daniel=s dialogue with Gabriel
Daniel 11:1-12:4	Gabriel=s predictive discourse
Daniel 12:5-13	Two supernatural beings and Daniel=s dialogue with Michael

What is puzzling in this paper is the fact that when Nunez discusses the text he ignores this literary structure and begins his analysis with Daniel 12:1, i.e., he takes the last part of Gabriel=s discourse and combines it with the final section to form a new literary unit (the present chapter 12) which he then analyzes.

We need to remember that chapter and verse divisions are not part of the original text. The division into chapters, for example, was only established in the thirteenth century AD. Since Nunez=s focus is the time of the end, why did he not begin his analysis in 11:40 where, in the text, the time of the end begins? If he had started there, the main pillar of his argument would not exist.

has the meaning Aat the appointed time@ or Ait refers to the appointed time,@ and in 11:35 *l^emoed* can be translated as Afor a time appointed@ or Auntil the time appointed.@ Thus, not once does *l^emoed* mean Aafter.@ Of course, this does not mean that it cannot have this meaning in 12:7. However, in Daniel 7:25 we have the exact Aramaic equivalent to Aa time, times, and half a time;@ and there the context clearly indicates that the saints shall be persecuted by the little horn for a time, times, and half a time in the past. Since the shattering of the power of the holy people in 12:7 which lasts for 3 2 times seems to be thematically the same as the persecution of the saints in 7:25 which also lasts for 3 2 times, it is difficult to see why the preposition *l^e* in Daniel 12:7 should be translated Aafter@ rather than Afor.@

2. Nunez claims that Awonders@ in Daniel 12:6 cannot refer to the blasphemous words of the AKing of the North@in 11:36 or to the incredible destruction of the little horn in 8:24 because the latter two texts use the verb *pala=* whereas 12:6 uses the noun *p^ela=ot* (p. 16). This is an invalid argument. As Hamilton, who is quoted by Nunez, has pointed out,there is no difference in meaning between the noun and the verb, Aboth refer to God=s wonders, either in a general sense, or in a specific historical antecedent.@¹ While the noun *pele=* generally refers to God=s acts or words, in Lamentations 1:9 it refers to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, as Hamilton has pointed out.² Thus, the statement that *pele=* Ais always used in the context of the acts or words of God@ (p.16), and therefore cannot apply to Daniel 8:24 or 11:36, is also invalid. If it is argued that God used the Babylonians to punish Jerusalem, we have to respond that whatever God allows he does (Isa 45:7).

To my knowledge, every Daniel commentator, whether liberal or conservative, applies *pele=* in Daniel 12:6 to the activities of the little horn in 8:24 and the activities of the King of the North in 11:36.

¹ V. P. Hamilton, TWOT, 2:723.

² Ibid.

3. Nunez claims that the 1290 and 1335 days in Daniel 12 are literal days because the word *yom* in the Old Testament when accompanied by a numeral always means literal days; he refers to Ezekiel 4:5, 6 to prove his point. Now, while it is true that for Ezekiel the numbers referred to were literal days (lying 390 days on the left side and 40 days on the right side), it is precisely this passage that shows that the 390 and 40 literal days symbolized 390 and 40 years, AI have laid on you a day for each year@ (Ezek 4:6). Daniel and Revelation are apocalyptic books and the days in these apocalyptic prophecies are symbolic and not literal as Revelation 12:6 and 14 show.

Hermeneutical Issues

1. A fundamental principles of biblical hermeneutics is that Ascripture interprets scripture, one passage being the key to other passages.@³ If this principle is discarded, prophecy becomes a wax nose which can be bent in any direction the interpreter wants it to go.

The prophecies of Daniel are given according to the principle of repetition and enlargement. This can be clearly seen by looking at the four major prophecies in the book (Dan 2, 7, 8-9, 10-12) which all begin in the time of the author and end with the Second Advent. Each prophecy emphasizes different aspects of this time period. Daniel 7 adds details concerning the little horn to the vision in Daniel 2, and Daniel 8 enlarges the picture of the little horn in Daniel 7. Below is a comparison of key phrases in Daniel 8, 11 and 12:

Daniel 8:11 He even exalted *himself* as high as the Prince of the host; and by him **the daily sacrifice was taken away**, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.

Daniel 11:31 "And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then **they shall take away the daily sacrifice**, and place there the abomination of desolation.

Daniel 12:11 "And from the time *that the daily sacrifice is taken away*, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Nunez agrees that in Daniel 8:11 and 11:31 the taking away of the daily sacrifice and the

³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 581.

setting up of the abomination of desolation refer to events during the 3 2 times of Daniel 7:25 which are in the past (p. 29). In Daniel 12:11, however, he sees the taking away of the daily and the setting up of the abomination of desolation as events in the future. He does this on the basis of the structure of Daniel 12 which he established at the beginning of the paper, but as we have seen the structure he finds in Daniel 12 is not as solid as he would like it to be

On pages 33, 34 and 37 Nunez identifies the *Adaily@ (tamid)* as the *Acontinual service@* or Christ=s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, which has been the Adventist position for a long time. However, the *Adaily@* that is taken away in Daniel 12:11, according to Nunez, is primarily the Sabbath. He writes: *AThe Acontinual service@* will be put aside when the *Aking of the North@* casts away the law of God and Jesus= ministry, by imposing in a universal and obligatory way a religious day of observance which will be contrary to the Ten Commandments of God@ (p. 37). Consequently, on page 39 he identifies the *Aabomination of desolation@* as Sunday. This is a curious mixture of different concepts. The Sabbath/Sunday issue is an important element in Adventist eschatology, but to my knowledge never before has anyone identified the Sabbath with the *tamid*, i.e., with the intercessory ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary.

This raises the question, how does Nunez see the taking away of the daily sacrifice and the setting up of the abomination of desolation in Daniel 8:11 and 11:31? Since he accepts 1798 as the end of the 3 2 times in Daniel 7:25, what happened in 538? Did Sunday replace the Sabbath at that time?

2. Nunez claims that Ellen White *Aapplies the expression >abomination which causes desolation= of Matthew 24:15 to the idolatrous standards of the Roman army and the future imposition of a false day of rest.@* (p. 38). This is not quite correct. What she says is this: *AA*s the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation, in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath, will

be a warning to us.⁴ She compares two signs; as the siege of Jerusalem was a sign for the Christians then, so Sunday laws will be a sign for the faithful at the time of the end to leave the cities. Nowhere in the context does she even refer to the expression >abomination of desolation.@ Though she does identify it as the Roman standards in other places.

3. The basic structure of Daniel=s visions indicates that the visions are always followed by explanations:

- a. Daniel 2 B vision (31-35), explanation (36-46).
- b. Daniel 7 B vision (1-14), explanation (15-27).
- c. Daniel 8-9 B vision (1-12), explanation (13-26; 9:24-27)
- d. Daniel 10-12 B vision (11:2-12:4), explanation (12:5-13)

Daniel 12:5-13 provides explanations for the whole vision of 11:2-12:4 not just for the last few verses. The fact that the Aman dressed in linen@ says to Daniel, AGo Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end@ doe not imply, as Nunez claims, that Daniel wanted to know more about the events of the time of the end (p. 44). The phrase

=*acharit elleh* Athe end of these *things*@ is not asking what will happen at the end of time, but what is the conclusion of all these wonderful things. One of the meanings of >*acharit* is the Aend@ or Aconclusion@ of a transaction or event, e.g., Prov. 25:8; Isa 41:22.⁵ Daniel wanted to know what the end, the outcome, the result of all the wonderful things he had heard would be.

Conclusion

Nunez=s strongest pillar for this new interpretation is the literary structure of Daniel 12. However, the literary structure that he sees in Daniel 12 is really not valid. It is an artificial structure that is not inherent in the text. While Nunez is to be commended for the detailed and

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465. (ChS 161).

⁵ Andrew E. Hill, *NIDOTE*, 1:362.

close study of the text, not all his conclusions and deductions are supported by a grammatical-historical exegesis. The weakest point in his paper is his identification of the removal of the *tamid* with the substitution of Sunday for Sabbath in the time of the end. This is pure speculation and contradict his own interpretation of the *tamid* as the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

Probably without intending it, with this paper Nunez is undermining the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation. His introduction of futurism into the interpretation of Daniel 12 will add fuel to the fire of those lay people who have advocated this view for years. It is hoped that as a well known Adventist theologian Nunez will refrain from supporting their cause.

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