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“...God’s people will prevail in the final kingdom to be established which will last forever.”

TRANSITION TO APOCALYPTIC SECTION

Chapter 7 marks the transition from the historical narrative (chapters 1-6) to the apocalyptic section (chapters 7-12). The former covered the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar to Darius the Mede. The theme emphasized the ultimate power of God over potentates, empires, and idols. As the voice from heaven told Nebuchadnezzar “...the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes” (4:32). To Belshazzar, Daniel declared, “...God...holds in his hand your life and all your ways” (5:23). Darius was also moved to proclaim that the God of Daniel was “...the living God...his kingdom...will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth...” (6:26-27).

Now, in the apocalyptic section, Daniel moves from illustrating how God intervenes in the affairs of state, even controlling the present rule of pagan kings for his chosen people’s sake, to how God will manipulate the future to prepare the world for his chosen Savior. Once again the theme of the entire book of Daniel is summarized in 4:17 and 5:21: “...the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men...”.

DANIEL’S VISION OF FOUR BEASTS – DANIEL 7:1-14

Daniel’s vision takes place during the first year reign of Belshazzar (v.1) who was co-regent with his father, Nabonidus (about 553-552 B.C.). Daniel sees four beasts arise out of the sea, meaning from distant lands and out of the turmoil of people and nations. The first beast is a lion with eagle’s wings, which are then torn away leaving it standing on two feet with a human mind. The second beast is a bear with the remains of prey in its mouth. It is told to eat its fill. The third beast is a leopard with four wings and four heads and authority to rule. The fourth beast is somewhat enigmatic, in that Daniel only describes it as “different” than the other beasts, but more ferocious, with iron teeth and ten horns. While Daniel is watching and thinking about it, another horn emerges and roots out the first three horns. This horn had human eyes and a mouth “that spoke boastfully” (v. 8).

Suddenly there appears what Daniel describes as the “Ancient of Days” attended by thousands, seated on a throne ready to judge with court books open. The final horn is judged and destroyed. Then a third figure, who is called the “son of man,” enters and is led into the presence of the Ancient of Days. He is given power, glory and authority that will last forever (v. 14).

“...‘you will see the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven’ (cf. Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27), a direct allusion to Daniel 7:13...”

INTERPRETATION

Since Daniel is troubled by this vision he asks an attendant what it means. He is told that the four beasts are four kings that will eventually disappear (v. 12), but God’s people will prevail in the final kingdom to be established which will last forever (v. 18).

The angel does not elaborate on the first three kings, but as we established in the Introduction and in the Narrative commentary on chapter two, the first kingdom is easily associated with Babylonia under Nebuchadnezzar. The lion imagery is unmistakable as Babylonia and it has consistently been the unquestioned interpretation. The second and third beasts are more controversial, but traditional scholars have associated them with the subsequent empires of Medo-Persia, followed by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. Liberal scholars in an effort to maintain a late date (Maccabean Period) for the book of Daniel attempt to argue that the second and third kingdoms are Media and Persia separately followed by the fourth beast being Antiochus Epiphanes during the Seleucid control of the Greek period (the ten horns being Seleucid rulers from Alexander to Antiochus). In contrast, conservative scholars see the fourth beast as Rome and the ten horns as succeeding emperors, specifically, Julius Caesar to Vespasian. Titus was the 11th, or “little horn,” who destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. To grasp the connection with Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2 and Daniel’s vision in chapter 7, the following simple chart should illustrate the differences in viewpoints. We are indebted to Darbarlines Commentary for this graphic.

CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 7	MACCABEAN	TRADITIONAL
Head of Gold	Lion	Babylon	Babylon
Chest of Silver	Bear	Media	Medo-Persia
Belly of Bronze	Leopard	Persia	Greek
Legs of Iron	Terrible Beast	Greece	Rome

Those advocating a Maccabean dating are left with explaining how the Medo-Persian empire was separated because there is no historical evidence for it, nor were there ten Seleucid kings (8 at most by any reckoning). However, the most significant difficulty is assigning the title of “son of man” to Antiochus when, in fact, Jesus makes that claim for himself, “you will see the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven” (cf. Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27), a direct allusion to Daniel 7:13, which is clear and specific. It militates against the view that the “one like a son of man” in Daniel refers to any Maccabean ruler.

SON OF MAN

The title “Son of Man” is found approximately 80 times in the four Gospels, and 4 times in the rest of the NT (Acts 7:56; Hebrews 2:6; Revelation 1:13, 14:14). The phrase, to which Jesus alludes so frequently, is in the earliest (Dead Sea Scrolls) text of Daniel 7:13, *bar enash*, as opposed to the more usual phrase *bar ‘adam*. *Bar enash* carries the connotation of a foremost heir to a throne. Therefore, it can be seen as a strong claim to divinity. The term in the OT sometimes is meant simply as human being or an individual, and at other times as mankind in general. But because of its unusual use in Daniel, it became a term for the expected messiah. Certainly, Jesus used it in both senses. For example as a man he said: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20)

However, as a messianic reference his use of the term as the anointed Christ is unmistakable:

1. “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Matthew 18:11),
2. “But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins...arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” (Mark 2:10-11),
3. “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath...so that the Son of man is Lord

even of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27-28),

4. *“...He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man...the Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire...” (Matthew 13:37-42),*

5. *“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38),*

6. *“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.” (John 5:25-27),*

7. *“...When you see the Son of Man lifted up, then you shall know I am he... ‘Very truly I tell you,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’” (John 8:28, 58).*

ANCIENT OF DAYS

In much the same way the term Ancient of Days has been variously applied, but the general meaning in Scripture is Almighty God. The term appears three times in chapter seven of the book of Daniel (7:9, 13, 22), and is used in the sense of God being eternal. We also have allusions to Ezekiel’s vision of the “wheels of God” (Ezekiel 1:15, 10:2) to illustrate the majesty and mystery of this eternal being.

For Christians the Trinitarian aspect of the Godhead is also apparent since the risen and ascended Jesus is described in similar language. In John’s vision we read (Revelation 1:12-18):

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing

in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!”

LITTLE HORN

Daniel was not so concerned about every element of the vision, but was particularly interested in the fourth beast, the ten horns, and especially the little horn that destroyed the three proceeding ones (vv. 19-22). As was mentioned earlier, conservative scholars tend to identify the fourth beast as the Roman Empire, the ten horns as the emperors from Julius Caesar to Vespasian with Titus being the 11th or “little horn” that crushed the rest. What makes the interpretation difficult is the timeline. The angel in Daniel says: *“He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.”* The expression “a time, times and half a time” is often taken to mean three and a half years, based on similar references in the Apocalypse of John (i.e. 11:2-3; 12:6; 13:5). This can refer either to the period of the Jewish Wars, during which Titus desolated Jerusalem and the second temple, or the period of Roman imperial persecutions against Christians generally. In fact, some scholars are reluctant to assign specific dates but interpret the ten kings to be a spiritual number since “ten” often meant the “whole time” or the “completion of time.”

In the modern era, the matter has been further confused by the dispensationalists who want to see the ten kings (or ten toes from chapter 2) as modern fulfillments in the manifestation of the likes of Hitler, the USSR, China, Islamic rulers, or a host of events and rulers leading to an imminent Armageddon. These dispensational theories will be discussed in later chapters in the Narrative of Daniel. Suffice to say, we should be careful about being too absolute in our interpretations. As Daniel himself concluded: *“I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”*

PERSONAL APPLICATION – DANIEL 8

Heavenly Father, the sweep of history and the ever-changing political landscapes over the centuries remind us we cannot count on governments and institutions for everlasting stability. Help us to trust in Christ, who is our steadfast Rock and eternal Hope. In Jesus' name. Amen.

ADDENDUM TO CHAPTER 8 APPLICATION

Much of the history associated with Daniel 8 is intertestamental, that is, it occurred during the time between the Old and New Testaments, roughly 420 BC (end of Malachi) to ca. 4 BC (Jesus' birth). In order to read critical information to answer application questions on Chapter 8, an addendum from the Apocrypha is offered on pages 3 and 4. The Apocrypha are non-canonical books accepted by Roman Catholics but not by most Protestants. Although non-canonical, Martin Luther said that some books were very valuable for studying. Of those recommended by him, First Maccabees gives a relatively reliable history of the period. Portions of Chapters 1 and 4 of First Maccabees are reproduced below for those who do not have internet access or copies of the Apocrypha.

1. Daniel's second apocalyptic vision occurred in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar. How long was this after the first vision (compare 7:1 to 8:1)?

What does this say about the frequency of visions (1 Samuel 3:1)?

How do we know if a vision is from God (1 Samuel 3:19-21, Jeremiah 28:8-9)?

In what city did Daniel find (or see) himself in the vision? (v. 2)

What other events can you associate with this city according to these passages?

Esther 4:6-8, 8:1-17

Nehemiah 1:1-11

3. Briefly describe the "ram" as depicted in verses 3-4.

What kingdom does the angel say the ram represents? (v. 20)

Who is the shorter horn? (v. 3, 5:31)

Who is the longer, stronger horn? (vv. 1:21, 6:28)

What did the longer horn do for the Jews? (2 Chronicles 36:21-23, Ezra 1:1-3)

4. Briefly describe the “goat” and its action. (v. 5-7)
-

What kingdom does the goat represent according to the angel? (v. 21)

Who would be the first king? (**See attachment pg. 45**, 1 Maccabees 1:1-4)

Who were the four rulers from Daniel 8:8, 22 that succeeded him? (1 Maccabees 1:5-9)

5. Two of the four kingdoms became the Seleucid empire of Syria and the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt. Over what special place did they vie, and what country is meant? (Daniel 8:9)
-

At the end of the Seleucid dynasty what king would arise? (1 Maccabees 1:10)

What four horrible things would he do according to the vision? (Daniel 8:11-12)

What atrocities were predicted by the angel? (Daniel 8:23-25)

List at least 5 specific abominations this king would inflict that were later recorded. (1 Maccabees 1:54-64)

6. What cryptic number would the angel reveal that would determine how long these atrocities would last? (v. 13-14, 26)
-

Scholars have had difficulty in interpreting the meaning of this number and what date to start calculating. What BC dates and what events occurred according to these references?

1 Maccabees 1:20-25

1 Maccabees 1:54-64

1 Maccabees 4:52-55

-
7. Which of the interpretations below concerning “2300” resonates with you?
- ☐ Literally 2,300 days?
 - ☐ 2,300 years? (See precedents in Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34)
 - ☐ 1,150 days? (Evening and morning sacrifices = 2 per day)
 - ☐ Six and a half years? (2,300 days equal 6 1/2 years just short of seven, a number indicating completeness).
 - ☐ Not sure?
8. Even more enigmatic is determining the time between the desecration and the reconsecration of the temple (Daniel 8:14).

Who was the rescuer of Jerusalem and the restorer of temple worship? (1 Maccabees 4:36)

When did it occur? (1 Maccabees 4:52)

What is the approximate duration of time between the desecration and the reconsecration as recorded in 1 Maccabees 1:20 and 4:52? Or between 1:54 and 4:52?

Which period of time comes closest to 3 1/2 years?

The Jews continue to celebrate this event every year (read 1 Maccabees 4:56-59).

Following the Festival of Shelters in the Fall, what is this Festival of Lights called today? (Hint: think December and dreidels)

-
9. How did Daniel feel about this vision and the angel's explanation? (8:27)
-
10. Considering the many different interpretations for these esoteric numbers, what conclusions have you reached about them?
-
11. Of what facts can you be assured? (John 2:18-22, 5:39-40, 20:30-31)
-

1 Maccabees 1:1-25, 54-64

(*GNT - Good News Translation*)

¹ This history begins when Alexander the Great, son of Philip of Macedonia, marched from Macedonia and attacked Darius, king of Persia and Media. Alexander enlarged the Greek Empire by defeating Darius and seizing his throne. ² He fought many battles, captured fortified cities, and put the kings of the region to death. ³ As he advanced to the ends of the earth, he plundered many nations; and when he had conquered the world, he became proud and arrogant. ⁴ By building up a strong army, he dominated whole nations and their rulers, and forced everyone to pay him taxes.

⁵⁻⁷ When Alexander had been emperor for twelve years, he fell ill and realized that he was about to die. He called together his generals, noblemen who had been brought up with him since his early childhood, and he divided his empire, giving a part to each of them. ⁸ After his death, the generals took control, ⁹ and each had himself crowned king of his own territory. The descendants of these kings ruled for many generations and brought a great deal of misery on the world.

¹⁰ The wicked ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus the Third of Syria, was a descendant of one of Alexander's generals. Antiochus Epiphanes had been a hostage in Rome before he became king of Syria in the year 137 [175 BC].

¹¹ At that time there appeared in the land of Israel a group of traitorous Jews who had no regard for the Law and who had a bad influence on many of our people. They said, Let's come to terms with the Gentiles, for our refusal to associate with them has brought us nothing but trouble.

¹² This proposal appealed to many people, ¹³ and some of them became so enthusiastic about it that they went to the king and received from him permission to follow Gentile customs. ¹⁴ They built in Jerusalem a stadium like those in the Greek cities. ¹⁵ They had surgery performed to hide their circumcision, abandoned the holy covenant, started associating with Gentiles, and did all sorts of other evil things.

ANTIOCHUS ATTACKS EGYPT

¹⁶ When Antiochus had firmly established himself as king, he decided to conquer Egypt and rule that country as well as Syria. ¹⁷ He invaded Egypt with a large fleet of ships and a powerful army, including chariots, elephants, and cavalry. ¹⁸ When the attack came, King Ptolemy of Egypt turned and fled, and many of his soldiers were killed.

¹⁹ Antiochus was able to capture the fortified cities of Egypt and plunder the whole land

ANTIOCHUS PERSECUTES THE JEWS

²⁰ In the year 143 [169 BC], after the conquest of Egypt, Antiochus marched with a great army against the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. ²¹ In his arrogance, he entered the Temple and took away the gold altar, the lampstand with all its equipment, ²² the table for the bread offered to the Lord, the cups and bowls, the gold fire pans, the curtain, and the crowns. He also stripped all the gold from the front of the Temple ²³ and carried off the silver and gold and everything else of value, including all the treasures that he could find stored there. ²⁴ Then he took it all to his own country. He had also murdered many people and boasted arrogantly about it. ²⁵ There was great mourning everywhere in the land of Israel.

... ⁵⁴ On the fifteenth day of the month of Kislev in the [Syrian] year 145 [167 BC] King Antiochus set up The Awful Horror [Desolating Sacrilege] on the altar of the Temple, and pagan altars were built in the towns throughout Judea. ⁵⁵ Pagan sacrifices were offered in front of houses and in the streets. ⁵⁶ Any books of the Law which were found were torn up and burned, ⁵⁷ and anyone who was caught with a copy of the sacred books or who obeyed the Law was put to death by order of the king. ⁵⁸ Month after month these wicked people used their power against the Israelites caught in the towns.

⁵⁹ On the twenty-fifth of the month, these same evil people offered sacrifices on the pagan altar erected on top of the altar in the Temple. ⁶⁰ Mothers who had allowed their babies to be circumcised were put to death in accordance

with the king's decree. ⁶¹ Their babies were hung around their necks, and their families and those who had circumcised them were put to death. ⁶² But many people in Israel firmly resisted the king's decree and refused to eat food that was ritually unclean. ⁶³ They preferred to die rather than break the holy covenant and eat unclean food—and many did die. ⁶⁴ In his anger God made Israel suffer terribly.

I Maccabees 4:36-61

THE PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE

³⁶ Judas [Maccabeus] and his brothers said, "Now that our enemies have been defeated, let's go to Jerusalem to purify the Temple and rededicate it." ³⁷ So the whole army was assembled and went up to Mount Zion. ³⁸ There they found the Temple abandoned, the altar profaned, the gates burned down, the courtyards grown up in a forest of weeds, and the priests' rooms torn down. ³⁹ In their sorrow, they tore their clothes, cried loudly, threw ashes on their heads, ⁴⁰ and fell face down on the ground. When the signal was given on the trumpets, everyone cried out to the Lord.

⁴¹ Then Judas ordered some of his soldiers to attack the men in the fort, while he purified the Temple. ⁴² He chose some priests who were qualified and who were devoted to the Law. ⁴³ They purified the Temple and took the stones that had been defiled and put them in an unclean place. ⁴⁴ They discussed what should be done with the altar of burnt offerings, which had been desecrated ⁴⁵ by the Gentiles, and decided to tear it down, so that it would not stand there as a monument to their shame. So they tore down the altar ⁴⁶ and put the stones in a suitable place on the Temple hill, where they were to be kept until a prophet should appear and decide what to do with them. ⁴⁷ Then they took uncut stones, as the Law of Moses required, and built a new altar like the old one. ⁴⁸ They repaired the Temple, inside and out, and dedicated its courtyards. ⁴⁹ They made new utensils for worship and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table for the bread into the Temple. ⁵⁰ They burned incense on the altar and lit the lamps on the lampstand, and there was light in the Temple! ⁵¹ They placed the loaves of bread on the table, hung the curtains, and completed all the work.

⁵²⁻⁵⁴ The twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, the month of Kislev, in the year 148 [164 BC] was the anniversary of the day the Gentiles had desecrated the altar. On that day a sacrifice was offered on the new altar in accordance with the Law of Moses. The new altar was dedicated and hymns were sung to the accompaniment of harps, lutes, and cymbals. ⁵⁵ All the people bowed down with their faces to the ground and worshiped and praised the Lord for giving them victory.

⁵⁶ For eight days they celebrated the rededication of the altar. With great joy they brought burnt offerings and offered fellowship offerings and thank offerings. ⁵⁷ They decorated the front of the Temple with gold crowns and shields, rebuilt the gates and the priests' rooms and put doors on them. ⁵⁸ Now that the Jews had removed the shame which the Gentiles had brought, they held a great celebration. ⁵⁹ Then Judas, his brothers, and the entire community of Israel decreed that the rededication of the altar should be celebrated with a festival of joy and gladness at the same time each year, beginning on the twenty-fifth of the month of Kislev and lasting for eight days.

⁶⁰ Then they built high walls and strong towers around Mount Zion, so that the Gentiles could not come in and trample and defile it again. ⁶¹ Judas placed a detachment of soldiers there to guard the Temple. He also fortified the town of Bethzur, so that the people of Israel would have a fortress facing Idumea.