

with a summary statement is a common practice in the Bible (cf. Gen. 1:1).

"The Ancient of Days." *Jhe* title *'attiqyomin*, "Ancient of Days," is used indefinitely here, but it has the definite article in verses 13 and 22 of this chapter. The title describes One who is eternal and whose longevity and experience instill a trust that his decisions are wise and just. In ancient Canaanite texts, the supreme god El is called "father of years."

"Took his seat." *in* biblical times, this was the position of authority (Ps. 110:1; Matt. 5:1; Mark 16:19).

"As white as snow... white like pure wool." Figurative language is used here to say "extremely white." In the Bible, whiteness often symbolizes purity and righteousness. Isaiah 1:18b says,

"Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool."

The word "snow" can describe whiteness in a negative sense (Exod. 4:6; Num. 12:10) and also a positive sense (Isa. 1:18; Matt. 28:3; Rev. 1:14).

"The hair of his head." Based on this passage, the Talmudic sages concluded that God's hair is black as that of a young man when he goes to war, but it is white as snow when he sits in judgment (cf. Rev. 1:14).³²

"His throne." The second occurrence of this noun in this verse clearly refers to God's throne. Here, it is definite and is used in the singular.³³

"Fire." The word *riur*, "fire," that is used in this and the following verse differs from the

word used in verse 11. This word is related to the concept of "light" and "brightness" in the Bible. The symbol of fire is frequently used in the Bible for God's presence and his holiness (Gen. 15:7; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Deut. 4:11, 33; Ps. 97:1-4; Heb. 12:29; Rev. 1:14).

"Its wheels." *In* the ancient Near East, thrones were movable—the judgment seats had wheels. (Hebrew *merkaba*, Ezek. 1:15, 26; 10:2). This wheeled throne probably is related to the concept of a divine chariot that was widespread in the ancient Near East (Ps. 68:17).

7:10 **"A river of fire."** While Psalm 46:4 mentions "a river whose streams make glad the coast of God," the book of Revelation speaks of "the lake of fire" in which the wicked will die the eternal death (19:20; 20:14; cf. Ps. 50:3).

"Before him." *Jhe* word *q°damdhi* could also be translated "before it," meaning from before the throne. If it is referring to God in a reverent way, then the whole expression could be rendered as "coming out from him" that is, from the Ancient of Days (cf. Lev. 9:24).

"Thousands times thousands... ten thousand times ten thousand." A literary figure known as "numerical progression" is used here to describe the totality of God's army, which is without number (Num. 10:36; Deut. 33:2). Other biblical terms describing God's ministering angels in the Bible are "armies" or "hosts" or "myriads of holy ones" (Deut. 33:2). In Old Testament times, when the people went to war, they were described as the "thousands of Israel." In a number of places in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *'elep* is used to denote a group of a thousand either in a military or a tribal sense. Roland de Vaux said, "When the people take up arms

they are referred to as the 'thousands of Israel' (Nb 31:5; Jos 22:21,30; Jg 5:8). These units were commanded by a 'leader of a thousand', *sar 'el-eph* (1 S 17:18; 18:13)."³⁴

"Attended him." The word *fsamm'sunneh* can also be translated as "served him." In the Bible, serving God is synonymous with worshiping him (Dan. 3:12).

"Stood before him." In Bible times, standing before someone expressed readiness to serve that person (1 Kings 10:8). The parallel statement "attended him" that is found in the previous line reinforces this concept. Daniel 1:5 says that the four young Hebrews were to be educated in Babylon for three years and then, literally, "they were to stand before the king," which means they were "to enter the king's service."

"Satin judgment." See the *Notes* on Daniel 7:9. This statement means that the court proceedings began.

"The books." In the original text, this plural noun, *siprm*, "scrolls, books," is indefinite. Modern translations add the definite article to this word based on the understanding of the people of antiquity that all the deeds of human beings were carefully recorded in books kept in heaven. The same books are said to contain the destinies of all people (Exod. 32:32; Pss. 56:8; 69:28; Jer. 17:1; Mai. 3:16; Rev. 20:12).

7:11 **"The great words."** See the *Notes* on Daniel 7:8.

"The horn." That is, the little horn.

"The (fourth) beast." The last—or fourth—beast is the first one to be destroyed. In the vision of chapter 2, the stone strikes the statue on its iron and clay feet.

"Body." In Daniel 3:27, 28, the noun *g^esem*,

"body," is also used in the context of a punishment by burning in fire. Since the author is emphasizing the destruction of the fourth beast by order of the court, he does not specify how and by whom it was slain.

"Fire." Biblical prophetic passages speak about God's end-time punishment of the sea monsters that represent the earthly powers hostile toward God and his people (Isa. 27:1; 51:9,10). In this text, after a general statement on the destruction of the fourth beast, a further statement specifies the means by which the punishment was carried out. The word *'essa'*, "fire," is not the same word as the one used in the description of God's throne in verses 9 and 10. Psalm 97:3 says that fire coming out from God's throne consumes his foes. For another case of punishment by burning with fire, see Daniel 3:11. In the end, Revelation's beast is destroyed in fire (19:20; 20:15).

7:12 **"The other (three) beasts."** Called "a flashback to the past,"³⁵ this verse intends to say that the first three beasts seen in the vision were defeated but not destroyed right away.

"An appointed period of time." Two different words for "time" are used in the original, *fman*, "a fixed point in time," and *'iddan*, "a period of time." Combined, they express the idea of a period of time that ends at an appointed time (hendiadys). In other words, the destruction of the first three beasts is only delayed, not foregone. The author is making the point that the beasts stand for rulers who "are creatures of time; transient, doomed to undergo the death they inflict on others."³⁶

7:13 **"In my vision.."** See the *Notes* on Daniel 7:2. This is the third and last occurrence of this

long introductory phrase in this chapter. It is also found in verse 2, where it introduces the whole vision, and in verse 7, where the fourth beast is introduced. The scene described in this and the following verse is considered to be the climax of the entire vision.

"One like a human being." The Aramaic phrase *bar ʿenas*, "a son of man," has been the subject of numerous studies. Together with its Hebrew and Greek equivalents, it appears about two hundred times in the original texts of the Bible, with almost half of the occurrences found in the Gospels. The expression here is the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew *ben-'addm*, "a son of man," a title that is used in parallelism with the noun *'adam*, "a human." Psalm 8:4 says, "What is man that you are mindful of him, / the son of man that you care for him?" (cf. Num. 23:19; Isa. 56:2). In the next chapter, Daniel is called *ben-'addm*, "son of man" by an angel (8:17). The same Hebrew expression is found in the book of Ezekiel at least ninety-two times. There it always refers to Ezekiel himself.

Technically, the first noun in this expression, *bar*, "son," is functioning as a noun of relationship (*nomen relationis*). As such, it should not be translated literally ("son of man" is "a literalistic Semitism"³⁷), but rather as identifying an individual who belongs to a group. Thus, a better translation would be "a member of the human family" (cf. Jer. 49:18), "a humanlike being," or simply the "Human One."³⁸ Other gender-inclusive translations of this title include "Child of Humanity" or simply "Human Being."

The comparative particle *lf*, "as, like," is important here, since the person introduced is only likened to a human being but should not

be limited to that category. In contrast to the earthly kingdoms that are beastlike, this being is humanlike. His coming corresponds to the stone that was cut from the mountain in chapter 2. Most Jewish interpreters from the past understood this figure to be the Messiah. Other identifications of this being that have been proposed include the angel Gabriel, the high priest Onias III, Judas Maccabaeus, Daniel, and the people of Israel collectively. In the Synoptic Gospels, "Son of Man" is Jesus Christ's favorite title for himself. In Matthew 25:31, he is quoted as saying, "When the Son of Man comes in glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory" (cf. Matt. 16:27-26:64).

"Coming." The original verb that is used here is *'ateh*, "he was coming." It may be of interest to students of the Bible to know that the root of this verb is found in the word "Maranatha" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:22 (cf. Rev. 22:20).

"The clouds of the sky." In the Bible, a cloud is a symbol of the divine presence (Deut. 33:26; Ps. 104:3; Isa. 19:1). The metaphorical language describes here a supernatural being. When the Israelites left Egypt and traveled toward Canaan—"by day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night" (Exod. 13:21; cf. Ps. 105:39). At Sinai, God made his presence manifest to the people through a cloud (Exod. 19:9). In contrast to this, ancient Canaanite texts refer to the god Baal by the title "the rider of the clouds."

"Led into his presence." The words describe a formal introduction in a palace setting. In a

similar way, Genesis 47:2 describes how Joseph's brothers appeared before the Pharaoh.

7:14 "He was given dominion." Identical words are used to say that dominion or authority to rule was given to the third beast (Dan. 7:6).

"All... every." These two short words express the concept of universality and remind the reader that the vision was given in the context of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, which claimed universal rule on earth (Dan. 3:4; 4:1; 5:19). The use of the Aramaic language in the chapter reinforces this notion.

"Should worship him." This same verbal root, *plh*, is used in chapter 3 in King Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship the statue of gold and in chapter 6 to speak of Daniel's worship of the true God.

"Dominion." The Aramaic word *soltan*, "dominion," or "authority to rule," is used eight times in this chapter. It is a key word in this vision, where the primary issue is, Who has the dominion? The vision ends with the assurance that ultimately the eternal dominion will be given to the One to whom it truly belongs.

"Never be destroyed." Whether intentionally or not, this verse reminds the reader of King Nebuchadnezzar's description of God's eternal kingdom (Dan. 2:44; 4:34).

Exposition (7:9-14)

7:9 This verse marks a rather abrupt transition. Daniel's attention suddenly shifts from the little horn to a scene taking place in God's court in heaven. While Daniel describes the chaos on earth in prose narrative, he describes the court in heaven poetically, through four

sets of two parallel lines. Visions of God sitting on the throne are described in several places in the Bible. Some of those reports focus on God's interaction with the beings that surround the throne (1 Kings 22:15-22; Isa. 6; Rev. 5), while others dwell on a detailed description of what the throne looked like or the beings that are around it (Ezek. 1 and 10; Rev. 4). The text says that God's throne is movable and has **wheels**—a picture that combines the concept of a throne with that of a chariot. God's movable throne communicates "the dynamic nature of divine presence"³⁹ (Ezek. 1 and 10). Psalm 68:17 says,

"The chariots of God are tens of
thousands
and thousands of thousands;
the Lord (has come) from Sinai
into his sanctuary."

The vision of God's **throne** focuses on the divine judgment. The word **throne** is used twice in this verse. The first time it comes in the plural. This has been explained either as "the plural of emphasis," saying that God's throne is a "superthrone,"⁴⁰ or as indicating that the vindicated saints are given the privilege to sit in judgment on God's side. "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" asked the apostle Paul of the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 6:2). Referring to the royal palace in Jerusalem, Psalm 122:5 says, "There the

thrones for judgment stand, / the thrones of the house of David." An alternative explanation that merits further exploration is that the word **thrones** found in the beginning of this verse stands for the authority of the beasts, which are overthrown following the divine judgment. The second time the word **throne** is mentioned in this verse, however, it is in the singular and with the definite article, so it clearly designates God's throne. This throne "symbolizes the absolute and sovereign authority of God who invests the Son of Man with universal kingship and entrusts Him with the everlasting kingdom."⁴¹

The title **the Ancient of Days** points to God's eternal nature as well as to his wisdom. No parallel expression is found in the Bible; the most similar statement is Psalm 74:12, which calls God the "king from of old." The white color of his hair and clothing symbolizes purity and justice. David prayed to God, saying, "wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7b). Yet, in many places in the Bible, God is described as a person filled with compassionate mercy. "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, / is God in his holy dwelling" (Ps. 68:5). The oppressed saints are vindicated by a strong, just, and merciful God. **His throne** looked like **fire**—a standard metaphor for God's holy presence throughout the Bible. "Our 'God is a consuming fire,' " wrote the author of Hebrews (12:29).

Psalm 97:1-3 brings all these concerns together:

The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad
let the distant shores rejoice.

Clouds and thick darkness surround
him;
righteousness and justice are the
foundation of his throne.

Fire goes before him
and consumes his foes on every
side.

His lightning lights up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.

7:10 The **river of fire** that comes from the throne reminds the reader of Revelation's lake of fire, the place of God's final judgment on the wicked. The ministering angels that are stationed around the throne are without a number, the literary figure known as numerals—progression is used to convey this fact. Psalm 68:17 says,

The chariots of God are tens of
thousands
and thousands of thousands;
the Lord (has come) from Sinai
into his sanctuary.

This multitude of God's servants stands in contrast to the thousand nobles who attended Belshazzar's banquet (chap. 5, although the banquet was chronologically later than this vision)

They are standing in his presence ready to do his will (cf. Dan. 1:5) and also to witness the process.

The court proceedings begin when the attendants take seats and **the books** are **opened**. In the ancient kingdoms, records were kept so that when there was a need, a crisis, the documents could be consulted (Ezra 4:15; 6:1; Esther 2:23; 6:1). Similarly, several places in the Bible mention detailed records of the deeds of human beings (Jer. 17:1; Mai. 3:16; Matt. 12:36, 37; Rev. 20:12). Since the revelation given to Daniel in this chapter deals with the oppression of the just, it is appropriate here to recall the prayerful words in Psalm 56:8:

Record my lament;
list my tears on your scroll—
are they not in your record?

The context of this vision of Daniel 7 suggests that the primary focus of God's judgment concerns "the power realities—kingdoms and rulers who 'do as they please.'" ⁴³ Here, the judgment on the beasts results in their destruction. Later, this chapter says that through this same judgment, God's people are vindicated.

Associated with the picture of the books are the concepts of answerability and accountability found on both group and individual level. Some interpreters see the investigation derived from this passage (though the word "investiga-

tion" is not used in this text) as a picture of God's judgment on individuals. The notion that "God or God's agents watch each individual and make a daily record of the good and the evil which each one does" ⁴⁴ is attested in the Bible. Ecclesiastes 12:14, for example, says,

God will bring every deed into
judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil.

7:11, 12 As Daniel's eyes turn back to earth, the boastful **great words** of the little horn still resonate in his ears. The divine judgment "passed in heaven has immediate consequences on the earthly level."¹⁵ It is executed first on the fourth beast, which is **slain and its body destroyed** in fire. Presumably the beast's horns, including the little horn, are destroyed together with this beast. Although the words for **fire** in this and the previous verses are different, it is difficult not to relate the means of judgment on this beast with the fire that characterizes God's throne as well as the Revelation's "lake of fire."

The extension of life granted to the first three beasts is another sign of God's control over the situation. All three are given a **period of time** (*'iddan*) to live, yet God has already decreed the fixed time, *zman*, of their end.

The description of the beasts and of their activities in the beginning of the

chapter implies that dominion is given to them. When that dominion is taken away, the Author of life chooses to grant them an extension of their existence. Rather than being destroyed right away, these powers are absorbed in the following kingdoms. Unlike the fourth beast, which acted destructively to the utmost, their activities seemed to have been somewhat restrained. "The fourth beast was *different* from the others and so was dealt with differently, as its greater offences deserved."⁴⁶ The "measure for measure" principle is carried out in the judgment on the four. Thus, "in Daniel 7, God's judgment condemns evil power that oppresses God's people and brings about their deliverance from oppression."⁴⁷

7:13 For a second time, Daniel's eyes are directed toward heaven, where a second phase of judgment is taking place. This scene pictures the executive phase of the judgment. The introductory words, *In my vision at night I looked, / and there before me was*, are found three times in the chapter. They introduce the whole vision in verse 2, the fourth beast in verse 7, and finally, the humanlike person in verse 13.

The Aramaic phrase *lf bar 'ends, like a human being*, comprises three elements: First, the comparative particle hf, "as, like," that in this chapter is also used in the description of some of the beasts. It clearly shows that the being described here only looks *like a human* but in re-

ality is not a human being. The word *bar*, which literally means "son," functions here as a noun of relation and should not be translated literally but rather as denoting a member of the human family. In Hebrew, the title "son of man" is often used in parallelism with the common noun "man," as in Numbers 23:19: " 'God is not a man, that he should lie, / nor a son of man, that he should change his mind' " (cf. Ps. 8:4; Isa. 56:2).

"The Semitic expression 'son of man' means simply *a human being*. A humanlike figure is brought before the divine throne. However, the author does not say that the figure *is* a man."⁴⁸ The meaning of this whole expression is therefore *one like a human being*, a description that stands in contrast to the appearances of the beastlike creatures that have preceded it. The visible signs of his divine nature are evidenced in the presence of *the clouds of the sky*, the standard metaphor for God's abiding and guiding presence throughout Israel's journey in the wilderness (Exod. 13:21; cf. Ps. 105:39). Psalm 104:3b, 4 speaks of God in the following way:

He makes the clouds his chariot
and rides on the wings of the wind
He makes winds his messengers,
flames of fire his servants.

Like the Ancient of Days to whom he is introduced, this person is also di-

vine (see the *Notes* on Dan. 7:13). His coming reminds the reader of the stone that struck the statue in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Within the setting of chapter 7, the one who looked *like a human being* is "an individual, eschatological, celestial being with messianic traits."⁴⁹ Biblical passages identify the archangel Michael⁵⁰ as the one who fought on behalf of the people of Israel (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1). As the commander of the armies of the Lord, he is the one who was able to defeat Satan and his angels (Rev. 12:7-9). In the Gospels, "Son of Man" was Jesus' favorite title for himself and one that he often associated with the concept of judgment: " 'The Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done' " (Matt. 16:27). Thus, it is safe to say that this Being is Jesus Christ.

7:14 This humanlike Being receives from the Ancient of Days *dominion, glory, and kingdom*. These qualities contrast with the dominion received by Belshazzar, the beasts, and the little horn because they will last for eternity. In addition, this Divine Person becomes the object of the worship of all beings on earth. The key issue in this chapter is this: Who has the dominion, or the authority to rule the earth? The beasts and the little horn hold this dominion for a while, but after the pronouncement by the heavenly court, it is transferred to

the Divine Being who looks like a human and whose dominion is eternal and worthy of universal worship. "All peoples, nations and languages, instead of worshipping a lifeless statue (Dan. 3:4, 5), will serve this man."⁵¹

When Jesus Christ was on earth, he often referred to himself as "the suffering Son of Man." The origin of the concept of a suffering son of Adam goes back to the story of Abel (Gen. 4), the first martyr, whose correct way of worship cost him his life. In Abel's destiny, Jesus saw his own martyrdom (Matt. 23:32-36). Yet, in Daniel 7, the humanlike Person is not martyred but glorified instead. When the Sanhedrin questioned Jesus, he responded by applying the words of Daniel 7:13, 14 directly to himself. He said, " 'In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven' " (Matt. 26:64). In the end, "the realization of God's creation ideal comes not through the world's becoming more human but through God's gift of this humanlike person."³

The action in this vision takes place on two levels. "The beasts appear, act, and are destroyed on earth. The court is a heavenly one, and it is there that the one like a son of man is exalted."⁵³ The event described here in Daniel 7 closely resembles what Revelation 5 presents as the inauguration of Jesus Christ as King of the universe.⁵⁴ Both chapters end with

the universal worship of the Divine Person. Ephesians 1:19b-22 seems to allude to this same event in salvation history: "That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church."

Daniel's Reaction (7:15-22)

Daniel's reaction to the vision is negative. In a state of despair, he asks for help. Verses 17,18 summarize the meaning of the vision.

¹⁵"I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit and in body, and the visions that passed through my mind alarmed me. ¹⁶I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the explanation of these things: ¹⁷These four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. ¹⁸But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.

¹⁹Then I desired to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most dreadful, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured (its victims) and the rest trampled underfoot.²⁰ I also desired to know about the ten

horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that was greater in appearance than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things.²¹ As I watched, this horn waged war against the saints and prevailed over them ²²until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High and the set time came when they possessed the kingdom."

Notes

7:15 "I, Daniel." The first-person reporting; a recurring feature in the prophetic section of the book (7:2,28; 8:1,15,27; 9:2; 10:2,7; 12:5).

"In spirit and in body." The Aramaic word *nidneh* literally means "sheath"; that is, the leather container in which a sword is kept (cf. 1 Chr 21:27). Here it stands for Daniel's body. As such it is related to the word *ruah*, "spirit," that immediately precedes it. Similarly, Daniel 2:1 says the: Nebuchadnezzar's "spirit was troubled" (NRSV because of a dream).

"And the visions that passed through my mind alarmed me." The original phrase, *vītheiwi re'siyēbah lunnani* "and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me," is also found in Daniel 4:5. There it describes Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to his dream of the tree. Other biblical prophets describe the psychological impact that visions made on them—see Jeremiah 4:19; Ezekiel 3:15; Zechariah 4:1.

7:16 "One of those standing." This person is presumably one of the angels from the multitude described in verse 10—possibly Gabriel (cf. Dan. 8:16). It is clear from this verse that Daniel is still in vision. This fact should influence

the way the reader approaches the interpretation of the dream and its symbols. Interpreting angels are also known from other biblical prophetic books, such as Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Revelation.

7:17 "Four kingdoms." On the meaning of the number four, see the *Notes* on Daniel 7:3. Literally, the text says *'arbe'a malkin*, "four kings"; but in the book of Daniel, the words *melek*, "king," and *malku*, "kingdom," are interchangeable (2:36). The Application in Church History section at the end of this chapter identifies the four kingdoms by name. Symbolically, these four kingdoms represent the negative side of world kingdoms throughout earth's history.⁵⁵ "They arise, then they vanish.... Yet all are alike, superhuman and subhuman at once, in conduct intensely, virulently at odds with God and God's justice."⁵⁶

"Rise from the earth." In contrast to the statement in verse 3 that says the beasts "came up out of the sea," this verse states that the kingdoms will rise to power from the earth.

7:18 "The saints of the Most High." The two words translated as "the Most High" are in the plural and could be understood as an attribute of the saints, who are "the holy ones on high" (cf. "the holy ones" in Dan. 4:17). But consideration of the equivalent expression in Biblical Hebrew suggests that the traditional view—that the words are a title for God—is better.

Scholars have debated the identity of the group called *qaddise 'elydnin*, "the saints of the Most High." Many hold that angels are in view here, while others argue that they are most likely the group of people that constitute God's faithful children on earth (Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21). Since

verse 27 designates them as "people," they are primarily human in the context of this chapter.⁵⁷ In Daniel 8:24, the object of the little horn's attack are "the mighty people and the saints." Apocalyptic texts do not always distinguish clearly between God's people in heaven and on earth.

"The kingdom." The word *malkuta*, "the kingdom," is used twice in this verse. The kingdom that the saints receive is the same as that given to the humanlike Person by the Ancient of Days (v. 14).

"Forever." See the *Notes* on Daniel 2:20. The triple repetition of the Aramaic word *'alema*, "a long time, eternity," means the word is to be understood in its absolute, superlative sense.

7:19 "Different." See the *Notes* on Daniel 7:7.

"Bronze claws." This is a new element not mentioned previously in the text.

7:20 "Greater in appearance." This is another new element in the narrative. The original says *v^hezwah rab min-habratah*, "and its appearance (or visibility) was greater than its fellows." This is an important detail given the fact that this horn is usually referred to as "little." It is truer to say that this horn is "the last and the greatest power" of all.⁵⁸

7:21 Verses 21, 22 are an extension of Daniel's vision rather than an explanation by the angel interpreter. They contain several new pieces of information. The suggestion has been made that verse 23 answers the question posed in verse 19, while verses 21, 22 answer the question asked in verse 20. In other words, we see a chiasmic structure in these five verses.⁵⁹

"The so/nts." The same group of people is in

mind even though this time their name is abbreviated to "the saints" and "of the Most High" is omitted. Both forms are used in parallelism in verse 22.

"And prevailed over them." In several places, Daniel reports that for a limited time, the evil powers triumph over God's people (7:25; 8:24; 11:33).

7:22 "The Ancient of Days." The two titles used in this chapter, "the Ancient of Days" and "the Most High," refer to one and the same Person.

"Came." See the *Notes* on Daniel 7:13, where the humanlike person "was coming" to the court. Here, the Ancient of Days comes to take his seat in judgment—an act that ultimately translates into the deliverance of the oppressed saints. Thus, the solution to the oppression comes from heaven.

"In favor of." The basic meaning of the preposition *l*^a is "to, for," but the translation "in favor of" (a dative of advantage) is best in this context. It expresses the idea of deliverance from oppression and vindication. Thus, the saints are not the *object* but rather the beneficiaries of *this judgment* Psalm 76:8,9 says,

From heaven you pronounced judgment,
and the land feared and was quiet—
when you, O God, rose up to judge,
to save all the afflicted of the land.

"Possessed the kingdom." Some commentators suggest that here God gives to the saints "the right to judge." Thus, it is possible that the meaning implied in these words is that the saints "received the power to rule."

Exposition (7:15-11)

7:15, 16 As a direct result of the vision, Daniel is troubled both *in spirix and in body*. His experience here parallels that of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 1 because he is now in desperate need of an interpreter. The angel interpreter *is* obviously one from among the multitude who stood before God's throne. It is possible that he is the same angel, Gabriel, who interprets the vision recorded in the following chapter.

7:17, 18 These two verses contain the meaning of the whole vision in a nutshell. Oppressive powers dominate earth. In spite of the appearances, however, God is in control, and he will take the dominion away from the oppressors and give it to his saints.

Although the original text identifies the four beasts with "four kings," the context of the book helps identify the same as four kingdoms (v. 23). The interpretation that the angel gave is close; *related to the vision, and it is at least partially expressed in symbolic terms*. Moreover, the fact that Daniel is still dreaming indicates that the language used by the angel is still figurative.

The identity of the *saints of the Most High* has puzzled interpreters of Daniel for centuries. Scholars who identify them as angels point to the fact that they are called not only "saints" but more precisely *the saints of the Most High*. Those who argue that human beings compose this group point to the fact that the saints

are called "people" in verse 27 and that they are defeated by the enemy and suffer for a time before they are ultimately vindicated. Although angels are sometimes referred to as people, the saints here are primarily human beings because they do not figure prominently in the parts of the chapter that describe the events that take place in heaven (w. 9, 10, 13, 14). Daniel 8:10 contains a clearer reference to angels: It says the little horn throws "the starry host" down to the earth.

A growing number of scholars see a mixed group consisting of both angels and humans behind the term **the saints of the Most High**. They are on God's side and are therefore all affected by the conflict between good and evil. It is good to keep in mind that apocalyptic writings view heaven and earth closely linked together, and they do not always make a sharp division between the beings that populate the two. In this case a rigid "dichotomy between earthly and supernatural"⁶⁰ may violate the original intention of the author of the text.

7:19-22 Daniel's attention now focuses on the fourth beast with its horns. It is described here as having **bronze claws**. The seer asks the interpreting angel to explain the symbols involved. A new detail that was not previously mentioned in the narrative but that Daniel noticed in the vision is that the little horn succeeds in prevailing over the saints. However, direct intervention by the Most High puts an end to the little

horn's oppressive power and results in the vindication of God's saints, who are then granted the eternal kingdom. At the end, the saints are given the right to rule together with the **one [who looked] like a human being** (w. 13, 14, 27).

Interpretation (7:23-28)

The angel interpreter continues to explain the most important aspects of the vision, supplying a number of intriguing details that were not previously mentioned in the chapter.

""This is what he said:

**'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom
that will be on earth.**

**It will be different from all the other
kingdoms**

**and will devour the whole earth
trampling it down and crushing it.**

**²⁴The ten horns are ten kings who will
arise from this kingdom.**

**After them another king will arise,
different from the earlier ones;
he will put down three kings.**

**²⁵He will speak out against the Most
High**

**and will wear down the saints of
the Most High**

**and will intend to change the set
times regulated by the law.**

**The saints will be given into his hand
for a time, (two) times, and half a time.**

**²⁶But the court will sit in judgment,
and his power to destroy totally will
be taken away.**

***27*Then the kingdom, dominion, and
greatness
of the kingdoms under the whole
heaven
will be handed over to the saints,
the people of the Most High.
His kingdom is an eternal kingdom,
and all rulers will worship and obey
him.'**

***28*This is the end of the revelation. I, Daniel,
was deeply alarmed by my thoughts, and my face
turned pale, but I kept the matter in my mind."**

Notes

7:23 Verses 23-27 are considered to be poetry, even though some translations do not indent them as such.

"This is what he said." This verse answers the question found in verse 19. It repeats the facts that the fourth beast will have a worldwide dominion and very destructive power.

"The whole earth." The same words *kol-'ar'a*, "the whole earth," are used to describe the extent of the third world kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which would "rule over the whole earth" (Dan. 2:39).

7:24 "Ten horns." See the Notes on Daniel 7:7. Scholars are divided on whether the ten kings rule at the same time or in succession, one after the other. However, it is clear that the eleventh ruler comes after the first ten and uproots three of them. Revelation 17:12-14 also speaks of "ten horns" that represent "ten kings," but it specifies that they will form a confederacy often kings prior to the Second Coming. In the same book, the dragon (12:3) and the Sea Beast (13:1) both are said to have ten horns on them.

"He will put down." Whereas in the vision report in verse 8 a passive form of the verb *qal* is used to describe the removal of the three horns this verse clearly says that the little horn takes an active role in putting them down.

7:25 "He will speak out." The same verbal root *mil*, "to speak," used in verse 8 is also found here. Yet that verse did not identify the target of the horn's proud words. This verse clearly says that the object of its attack is the Most High God.

"Against." The Aramaic preposition *l'sac* "against," can also mean "at the side of," possibly implying pretentious statements made by this power (cf. Isa. 14:13,14).

"Wear down." In its intensive form, the verbal root *blh* means "to wear out" like a garment suggesting here a long, unrelenting persecutor. The same verb is used in Psalm 102:26, though in a different context: "They will perish, but you remain; / they will all wear out like a garment. (Cf. Isa. 51:6.)

"Intend." The verb *sbr* means "to think," "to plan," or "to intend."

"To change the set times regulated by the law." The Semitic noun *zmnln*, "set times," is used in the Old Testament for the important days in the Hebrew calendar (Ezra 10:14; Neh. 10:34; 13:31; Esther 9:27, 31). The second noun *dat*, "law," is in the singular and should be considered the Aramaic equivalent to the Hebrew word *Torah*. These two nouns are placed next to each other in order to express a single concept (hendiadys). Therefore, the whole expression means "the set times regulated by the law," and it includes the seventh-day Sabbath. The book of Daniel teaches that God is the only One who "changes times and seasons" (Dan. 2:21).

"His hand." The original says *bfdeh*, "into his hand." See the *Notes* on Daniel 1:2.

"For a time, (two) times, and half a time." This verse uses two Aramaic words for "time" just as does verse 12. The first word is *fman*, "a set time" or "an appointed time" that the little horn intends to change. The second word that is used here is *'iddan*, "a season" or "a period of time," with the emphasis being on the length of time. Its plural, "times," is usually understood as "two times," and here it is followed by a fraction of a time. The Hebrew equivalent of this expression occurs in Daniel 12:7, while the Greek expression is found in Revelation 12:14.

In the context of this chapter, the word "time" suggests temporality. It contrasts sharply with the word "everlasting," which occurs in verses 14 and 27. The whole expression "time, times, and half a time" can be viewed as a literary figure known as a "broken numerical progression" in which the anticipated next figure (three times) is not reached. Instead, the progression of the evil power is suddenly broken into a fraction.⁶¹

7:26 "The court." Some scholars translate the word *dina'* as "judgment" in verse 10. Both words describe the same event that takes place in heaven.

"Will sit in judgment." See the *Notes* on Daniel 7:9.

"Power." The word *soltan* is best translated as "dominion" or "the authority to rule." See the *Notes* on Daniel 7:14.

"To destroy totally." The two words in the original Aramaic are given in their infinitive verbal forms; they say, literally, "to destroy and to annihilate." If both of these words describe the power of the little horn, then the text is saying

that God's judgment takes away the oppressive dominion that intended to destroy and annihilate God's creation infinitely/eternally. The expression *'ad-sopa'* literally means "to the end," but in this context it may mean "infinitely/eternally." Daniel 7:25 states that the little horn will "wear down" (persecute) God's saints for an extended period of time.

7:27 "Then." The beginning of this verse introduces another case of the reversal of fortunes found in many places in the book of Daniel.

"The kingdom, dominion, and greatness." This list of "three" is a literary figure expressing the concept of completeness. This literary figure is often found in the eighth-century prophets, especially in Hosea (for example, "grain, new wine, and oil" in 2:22).

"Under the whole heaven." This is another expression that conveys the concept of universality.

"The people." The Aramaic word *'am*, "people," is used here to describe the saints, lending support to the view that they are human beings. Daniel 12:7 says that the "holy people" will be persecuted for "a time, times, and half a time."

"His kingdom." The possessive pronoun "his" or "its" refers either to the people, who are the saints, or to the Most High God. The verse suggests that the saints share in God's kingdom. When combined with verse 14, this verse identifies the kingdom of the humanlike Person with the kingdom possessed by the saints of the Most High. He and they belong to the same group of God's faithful. "The one is the many; the many are the one."⁶²

7:28 "The end of the revelation." The word *sopa'*, "the end" (cf. v. 26), may have been used to

mark the conclusion of the vision report, corresponding to the word *re's*, "head, beginning, sum," used in the opening of the report in verse 1. (cf. Jer. 51:64; Eccles. 12:13). Both words are immediately followed by the noun *milla*, "word, matter," which in this verse stands for the vision and its interpretation.

"I, Daniel." These two words signal the change of Daniel's state from vision to consciousness. Since the same pronoun is used at the beginning of the chapter, its two occurrences form an *inclusio*.

"My face turned pale." This expression is almost identical to the one that describes Belshazzar's reaction to the writing on the wall (Dan. 5:6).

"In my mind." The original text literally says that Daniel kept the matter *belibbi*, "in my heart." In biblical times, the heart was considered to be the seat of intelligence. Thus, the meaning here is "in my mind."

Exposition <7:23-28)

7:23, 24 Since the four beasts represent the four world kingdoms, the fourth one stands for the last world empire. At this point, Daniel's attention turns to that beast and its horns, including the little one. Just as this beast is different from the earlier ones, so the eleventh horn differs from the ten. In order to establish itself, this power resorts to destructive activities against those around it. Based on the evidence in verse 21, it is clear that the persecuting activity of this horn targets the saints. The horn overpowers them but is in the end itself

totally defeated by the **judgment** *i:* which **the Ancient of Days presides**. The **judgment** is pronounced in favor of the saints of the Most High God (v. 22) so that they may possess the kingdom forever.

7:25 Verse 25 summarizes the activities of the little horn better than does another part of this chapter. It consists of four poetic lines characterized by parallelism:

A He will speak out against the Most High (blasphemy)

B and will wear down the saints of the Most High
(persecution)

A' and will intend to change the set times.. . (blasphemy)

B' The saints will be given into his hand for a time . . .
(persecution)

This verse elaborates on the brief statements found in verse 8, where the little horn is said to have the eyes of a man and a mouth that speaks boastfully. Verse 25 says that the horn's pride eventuates in blasphemy against God and a long persecution of his saints. The original text says that the little horn "wears out [like a garment]" the faithful. The same verb is used in the sense of oppression in 1 Chronicles 17:9: "I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed.

Wicked people will not oppress them [in Hebrew "wear them down"] anymore, as they did at the beginning.' "

The set times regulated by God's **law** are also under attack. That includes the observance of the Sabbath day that is commanded in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15). Daniel 2:21 presents the ability to change "times and seasons" as a prerogative exclusively reserved for God. This text says that the little horn attempts to usurp that divine prerogative.

The timeframe given for the period of persecution as well as for the activity of this power is not stated in plain language. Rather, it is given through a literary figure known as a "broken numerical progression." Through this figure, the progress of the little horn's activity is described in the words **a [one] time** and **(two) times**, yet the anticipated goal of three times is never reached. Instead, the ongoing success of the horn is suddenly broken, presumably by divine intervention. In a similar way, several other texts in Daniel teach that God allows only limited success of the forces of evil (Dan. 5:26-28), and he promises to deal suddenly and decisively with this power. It will come to an end "and no one will help him" (11:45). Several chapters in the Bible inform us that this is the established way in which God deals with the powers that epitomize sinful pride and intend to usurp God's supreme authority (Gen. 11; Isa. 14; Ezek. 28).

In addition to this figurative (literary) meaning, the expression **time, (two) times, and half a time** can also be understood literally and applied in history. The word *'iddan*, "season," is often interpreted prophetically as a full year. That is true of this passage as well as of Daniel 4:16, which speaks of the seven "times" of Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness. Viewed in this way, the total length of this time period is three and a half years. The book of Revelation also mentions in parallel forty-two months (11:2) and 1,260 days (12:6).

7:26, 27 Toward the end of the angel's interpretation, he reminds Daniel that the end of the activities of the little horn is a direct outcome of the judgment that takes place in heaven. The saints, who are now referred to as **people**, are the recipients of the kingdom that is identical with the kingdom of the Most High. Rather than being an abstraction, this kingdom is characterized by **dominion, and greatness**. It includes the authority to rule over the whole world—the gift that the Creator gave the human race at the beginning of earth's history (Gen. 1:28). But human beings lost this right to "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), who boastfully told Christ in the wilderness, " 'I will give you all their [the kingdoms of the world] authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to' " (Luke 4:6). The saints, who are also called **the**

people of the Most High, will rule over God's kingdom. According to verse 14, the same authority to rule is also granted to the "one like a human being."

This kingdom is *an eternal kingdom* in which the Most High receives the universal worship and obedience of all beings *under the whole heaven*, including the rulers of the world. King Nebuchadnezzar's submission to and worship of God (chap. 4) prefigures this event. Revelation 3:21 quotes Jesus Christ as saying, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." "

The vision from this chapter combines horizontal and vertical dimensions, something that is typical of apocalyptic literature. Heaven and earth seem so closely connected that whatever happens on earth affects events in heaven, while the activities and decisions in heaven have a direct consequence for the earth and those who dwell on it. "The text does not say that explicitly; it demonstrates it graphically."⁶³ The cognizance of this truth inspires hope in every believer. "For Christians, to live with a constant sense of the advent of Christ is not an irresponsible disengagement from the world but a life-style *within* the world that is built on the vision of God's true kingship and dominion. It is to live as if the sentence on the beasts has already been carried out, despite the fact that

their lives appear to be 'prolonged for : season and a time.' "⁶⁴

7:28 Daniel began his report in this chapter with the word *re's*, "head" or "beginning"; he closes it with the word *sopa*, "end." This gives the vision a notion of completeness. The word "end" found at the conclusion of this vision report can also mean "goal." Thus, one can say that the goal of the vision is reached when the people of the Most High receive the kingdom and all rulers worship and obey God throughout eternity.

Daniel's overall reaction to the vision was puzzlement. A number of the vision's details left him wondering about the future realization of the events portrayed. He does not hide from the reader the fact that in spite of his extraordinary wisdom and also in spite of the explanation given through a heavenly messenger, he felt inadequate to grasp the full meaning of this revelation. Thus, he says, he kept the matter to himself.

Applications

This vision, more than any other recorded in Daniel, lacks precision regarding the identification in history of the powers involved. Whereas in chapter 2, Daniel clearly identified the Neo-Babylonian Empire, none of the powers symbolized in the vision of Daniel 7 is named as a kingdom or an individual. The interpretation given in the chapter does not even identify the Ancient of Days, although the text implies

that he is the eternal God. Needless to say, for this reason, historical applications, proposed "fulfillments," and interpretations abound.

Several scholars have pointed to the parallel sequence of symbols in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (chap. 2) and in this chapter. The most important of these may be listed as follows:

Parallel Symbols in Daniel 2 and 7

Daniel 2	Daniel 7
1. Head of pure gold	1. Winged lion
2. Chest and arms of silver	2. Bear
3. Belly and thighs of bronze	3. Leopard
4. Legs of iron	4. Dreadful beast
5. Feet of iron and clay	5. Ten horns and the little horn
6. Stone from the mountain	6. Ancient of Days and humanlike Person

These parallels have proven helpful in the interpretation and applications of the vision from Daniel 7.

As stated in the introduction to the prophetic section of the book, the exposition or interpretation of the symbols and images should in the first place be controlled by the evidence that comes from the biblical text. Only then is the interpreter safe to proceed with applications on different levels. In modern times, various schools of prophetic interpretation draw similar lessons from this prophetic passage, yet they differ on

their applications of the imagery and symbols in history. In what follows, I will present first a mainstream application to the history of the church. Then I will give a personal or devotional application.

1. *Application in Church History* (*"historicism"*). As already mentioned in

the introduction to this chapter, the historicist approach to Daniel's prophecies sees them applying to the whole span of church history with a special focus on the time of the end. Shea concludes his exposition on Daniel 7 by saying that this chapter "marks the

transition from the mostly historical first half of the book to the fully prophetic section in the second half. That is why chapter 7 contains both history and prophecy—although more prophecy than history."⁶⁵

7:2-6 According to Maxwell, the term "the great sea" should be understood as "symbolic waters" that in reality are "'peoples, multitudes, nations and languages'" (Rev. 17:15). The four beasts represent "the same series of world powers that we met first in Nebuchadnezzar's image in Daniel 2: Babylonian,

Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires, followed in due time by the kingdom of God."⁶⁶ Shea agrees with Maxwell's identification of the four kingdoms, but for him "the great sea" is the Mediterranean: "Looking back through the centuries from our vantage point in history, we can trace the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy and see how the specifications are matched evenly by the procession of kingdoms that arose and fell in the Mediterranean region."⁶⁷ The man's heart symbolizes Babylon's change of character after Nebuchadnezzar's death. The three ribs in the bear's mouth stand for Babylon, Tydia, and Egypt—the three main territories conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire. In the case of the third beast, while wings aptly connote speed, the four heads are the four kingdoms (8:22) that divided up Alexander's Hellenistic Greek Empire after his death: Cassander ruled over Macedonia and Greece; Tysimachus, over Thrace and much of Asia Minor; Ptolemy, over Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Palestine; while Seleucus ruled the rest of Asia.

7:7, 8 Through the fourth beast, a one-sided, negative picture of Rome is purposely presented in spite of the fact that the Roman Empire was responsible for a great many good things, such as roads, laws, peace, etc. In Daniel 7, says Maxwell, God purposely represented Rome as ugly to teach us how much he dislikes persecutors. The ten horns represent the tribes that originated the na-

tions of the western Europe of today—the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandal: Burgundians, Lombards, Anglo-Saxon; Franks, Alemannians, Heruls, and the Sueves. Shea remarks that it is not necessary to be adamant about precisely which tribes were involved: "There was a fluidity in the number of tribes migrating through Europe, and so likewise, there has also been a flux in the number of modern nations derivative from them. We can make the number, ten, as a representative number for the corporate whole of such tribes and nations."⁶⁸

The four beast powers of chapter 7 appear to be concerned with territorial expansion, while the little horn is "clearly a religious power and is interested in distinctly religious issues."⁶⁹ The description of the little horn fits the activities of the Christian church in apostasy as it rose to power at the time of the decline of the Roman Empire. The three horns uprooted by the little horn were the three Arian tribes: the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Heruli (or the Visigoths according to Shea). Verse 12 says that in contrast to the fourth beast, which was judged and destroyed, the lives of the first three beasts were to be prolonged for a season and time after their dominion was taken away. In a symbolic gesture, Alexander married a Bactrian princess, Roxane, and he enthusiastically endorsed the marriages of ten thousand of his Greek soldiers to Persian wives. Thus was set in motion a blending of the

Old Babylonian and Persian cultures with the Greek culture that was to stamp civilization as "Hellenistic" for centuries to come, extending some of its influence even to us in this day.

7:9-14 In agreement with a host of commentators, the Ancient of Days is identified as God, while Jesus applied the title "Son of Man" to himself. God is the Judge, but he has chosen to delegate the judging to his Son. Thus, Jesus plays a dual role in judgment, serving as both our Judge and our Advocate. The legal basis for this judgment is God's moral law, given in the form of the Ten Commandments. The book of Revelation describes God's faithful at the time of the end as those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (Rev. 14:12).

According to Shea, the reality of the judgment and the establishment of God's everlasting kingdom is just "as certain as has been the fulfillment of the earlier stages of the historic panorama of Daniel 7. The procession of human powers expressed by the beasts and the horns sets the stage for God's final and decisive action in history."⁷⁰ Doukhan adds that for Daniel, the judgment is "unique and universal even taking place in the final moments of human history."⁷¹ The ultimate result of the judgment is that the saints become fellow heirs with Christ. He receives the kingdom and immediately shares it with all the people who trust him.

7:23-27 There are, in Daniel 7, eight identifying marks of the little horn. They are as follows: (1) It rose out of the fourth beast (w. 8, 24). (2) It appeared after ten other horns (v. 24). (3) It was little when it was first seen, but in time it became greater than its fellows (w. 8, 20). (4) It "put down three kings" (w. 8, 24). (5) It had *eyes like the eyes of a human and a mouth that spoke great things*, and it spoke *out against the Most High* (w. 8, 25). (6) It was to *wear down the saints of the Most High* (v. 25). (7) It was to *intend to change the set times regulated by the law* (v. 25). (8) It was allotted special powers for *a time, (two) times, and half a time* (v. 25).

Only one entity really fits all eight of these identifying marks—the Christian church, which rose to "religio-political" prominence as the Roman Empire declined. The world of that time was in many ways blessed by the church of western Europe. Catholic universities fed the torch of learning in law, medicine, and theology. Most Catholic monasteries maintained hospitals and provided care for the orphaned and aged. The Latin language provided a lingua franca for diplomacy and commerce, while Roman Catholic missionaries Christianized large areas of western Europe. Yet, Maxwell remarks, the same church began to teach that its bishop was "another God on earth." Several New Testament passages prophesied this type of apostasy in the church.

Both Maxwell and Shea maintain that the aspect of historical Catholicism that affects Protestants the most is probably its record as persecutor. This included the use of legal torture. Yet, Maxwell reminds the student of history that Protestants also persecuted Catholics.

In regard to the attempts to change the times and the law, the church departed from the Bible as its sole rule of faith and made changes in the law of God through its own authority. The most obvious of these is the change from the Sabbath commandment to Sunday observance. As Shea says, "This prediction fits precisely with the role of the little horn in regard to God's seventh-day Sabbath."⁷² The expression "a time, times, and half a time" totals 1,260 prophetic year-days that are applied to the period between A.D. 538, the date of the crushing of the Ostrogoths, and 1798, when the French general Berthier arrested Pope Pius VI. This calculation is based on the year-day principle in prophecy also found in two biblical passages that speak of divine judgment on rebellious people: Numbers 14:31-35 and Ezekiel 4:1-8. Doukhan specifies that the same year saw "the Jesuit uprising, the rise of the Encyclopedists (philosophers of doubt), and the French Revolution with its outcry of rage against ecclesiastical authority. The French Revolution would confront the church with an atheistic society having but one god: reason."⁷³

Daniel 7's vision ends on a positive note. The kingdom that God will establish will differ from human kingdom; its both character and the time of its dominion. It will be "based upon love and justice and grace," and in contrast to the transitory earthly kingdoms, "this kingdom will be eternal; its dominion will go on forever."⁷⁴

2. *Application in Personal Life.* The essence of the vision in Daniel 7 can be described as God's perspective on the world's history. The first phase of the vision is portrayed in a rather pessimistic manner. As Baldwin says, "The writer was not encouraged to see in historical evolutionary progress, but rather the reverse."⁷⁵

One feature that is unique to this chapter is the fact that no power in the vision or in the interpretation is identified historically. It seems that for the author of the book, what the kingdom; and kings do is far more important than who they are. "Indeed, to be mainly concerned when we are studying the symbolic vision with identifying the referent of the symbol is to miss the point of the vision."⁷⁶

The message of this chapter in a nutshell is its portrayal of God's transfer of power from the oppressive beasts to the humanlike person. Maxwell is correct in saying that "the basic message of Daniel is that God is our Friend" and therefore every person "who puts his or her trust

in Jesus Christ will find salvation full and free."⁷⁷ So, it is just as important for the reader to grasp this message as it is to analyze the vision in terms of specific historical references.⁷⁸ Biblical scholars have not given their full attention to a personal application of the messages that come from the biblical apocalyptic texts such as Daniel 7.⁷⁹ It is legitimate to ask whether this vision contains a clear message for the individual believer who feels oppressed and at times even defeated by the forces of evil. Does the future transfer of power from the political and religious institutions of this world to the humanlike Person make a difference in one's daily struggle with sin? Romans 8:1 says, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." In order to overcome the world through faith and "to pass from the judgment to the kingdom we must go through him."⁸⁰

As has been the case through long centuries, individual believers as well as groups of the faithful can find comfort even today in this chapter. Daniel's book, including the vision in chapter 7, has been a source of study and inspiration to countless believers through millennia. When one feels tossed by the restless sea of life, frightened by the evil forces that arise one after another like wild beasts, it makes a great difference to know that God has not forgotten us. This was true in the past, and it is so in the present. The timeless truth is that in

our daily spiritual struggles, we often feel that every time a head of the monster is cut off, two new ones grow in its place. The conflict can at times spring out of the believer's own person. Who has not experienced the influence of evil forces within his or her own heart? Can one overcome the power that comes from "the beast in the heart of each one of us"?⁸¹ Said the prophet Jeremiah,

The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.

Who can understand it? (17:9).

Chapter 7's vision must have made a difference in Daniel's own life with God. The revelation was given to him at a time when there was a lot of ground for concern in regard to safety, prosperity, and freedom of worship. At the time Daniel saw this vision, Belshazzar's accession to power had interrupted the prophet's long career; he was ignored and almost forgotten. The vision of the transfer of power in heaven gave him reassurance that dominion belongs to God forever.

There are times that remind the reader of these words written by the apostle Paul: "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). Yet according to this chapter, God does *not* keep quiet or indifferent in those times. The persecuting power is and will be subject to God's judgment. The oppressed people of God

will become rulers seated on the thrones. "Ultimately, the battle is 'not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' (Eph. 6:12). This ultimate spiritual battle behind our earthly struggles was anticipated in the Old Testament, but the New Testament rips away the curtain so that we see the heart of the battle."⁸²

This chapter from Daniel not only comforts but also confronts the reader. It speaks of the records in heaven in which our daily deeds are recorded based on the observation of the "all-seeing eye." This fact points to concepts presently neglected in our culture, those of "answerability and accountability"⁸³ in all that we do. Sadly, religious persecution has been the worst type of oppression in the history of our world. How valid is the statement that "all Christians are to some degree responsible and [are] a part of the evil incarnated by the little horn!"⁸⁴ Obedience to God and love of one's fellow human beings is an integral part of the message of the Bible.

1. Goldingay, 159; Shea, *Daniel*, 198.
2. Pritchard, *ANET*, 313.
3. W. H. Shea, "The Neo-Babylonian Historical Setting for Daniel 7," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 no. 1 (1986): 31-36.
4. Seow, 101.
5. *Ibid.*, 99.
6. Baldwin, 140.

7. Murphy, 8.
8. Longman, 182.
9. Ford, 142.
10. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 104.
11. Murphy, 8.
12. United Bible Societies, *Fauna and Flora of Bible* (New York: United Bible Societies, 19~50).
13. Peter-Contesse and Ellington, 183.
14. United Bible Societies, 8-9.
15. Baldwin, 140.
16. Oates, 162.
17. Shea, *Daniel*, 206; cf. Smith-Christop-[^]: 103.
18. Keil, 414; see also Goldingay, 164; Milier 203; and Ford 148.
19. Collins, 299.
20. Smith-Christopher, 100.
21. Walton, Matthews, Chavalas, 740.
22. Murphy, 8.
23. Seow, 102.
24. Baldwin, 141.
25. Goldingay, 162.
26. Shea, *Daniel*, 201.
27. The Babylonian Talmud, *Kidd.* 72a.
28. Montgomery, 282.
29. Seow, 105.
30. Slotki, 58.
31. *Ibid.*
32. The Babylonian Talmud, *Hag.* 14a; Doukhan *Secrets*, 114.
33. Rosenthal, 32.
34. de Vaux, 216.
35. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 116.
36. Berrigan, 120.
37. Goldingay, 167.
38. Z. Stefanovic, "The Use of the Aramaic," 77-8
39. Seow, 107.
40. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 113.
41. Daegeuk Nam, *The "Throne of God" Motif r: the Hebrew Bible* (Seoul, Korea: Institute for Theological Research, 1994), 426.
42. Smith-Christopher, 103.
43. *Ibid.*, 117.
44. Towner, 100.
45. Nickelsburg, 84.
46. Lucas, 183.
47. Roy Gane, *Altar Call* (Berrien Springs, MI Diadem, 1999), 343.
48. Nickelsburg, 84.

49. Arthur J. Ferch, *The Son of Man in Daniel Seven* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979), 191.
50. Murphy, 9.
51. Baldwin, 143.
52. Goldingay, 190.
53. Nickelsburg, 83.
54. See Ranko Stefanovic, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1996).
55. Longman, 190.
56. Berrigan, 113.
57. See G. F. Hasel, "The Identity of 'The Saints of the Most High' in Daniel 7," *Biblica* 56 (1975): 176-185.
58. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 106.
59. Peter-Contesse and Ellington, 196.
60. Goldingay, 178.
61. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 242-245. See Z. Stefanovic, "The Presence of the Three and a Fraction: A Literary Figure in the Book of Daniel," in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Institute of Archaeology, 1997), 199-204.
62. Seow, 110.
63. Murphy, 9, 10.
64. Smith-Christopher, 108.
65. Shea, *Daniel*, 128.
66. Maxwell, 109.
67. Shea, *Daniel*, 127, cf. 113.
68. Ibid., 205-206.
69. Ibid., 117.
70. Ibid., 127.
71. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 111-112.
72. Shea, *Daniel*, 122.
73. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 109.
74. Shea, *Daniel*, 128.
75. Baldwin, 140.
76. Goldingay, 169.
77. Maxwell, 107.
78. Lucas, 199.
79. With some notable exceptions, like Longman's commentary.
80. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 118.
81. Longman, 195.
82. Ibid., 197.
83. Towner, 102.
84. Doukhan, *Secrets*, 111.

APPENDIX A

Literalist and Intertestamental Applications of Daniel 7

rhe material presented in this section is intended to inform the reader about two types of applications commonly made by interpreters of Daniel. These applications are not generally accepted by Seventh-day Adventists.

1. *Literalist Application ("Futurist").* This approach says that Daniel 7 is one of the great chapters of the Bible, giving a panoramic view of future events. In interpreting Daniel's prophecies literally, Walvoord tells the reader that his literal interpretation of Daniel's prophecies is "conservative and premillennial."¹ This vision, given to Daniel—"a godly prophet"—stands in sharp contrast to the one in chapter 2 in which "a wicked and heathen king" is used as a vehicle of divine revelation. However, Archer notes that both of these chapters "set forth the four empires, followed by the complete overthrow of all ungodly resistance, as the final (fifth) kingdom is established on earth to enforce the stan-

dards of God's righteousness."² Goitir beyond the text of chapter 2, Daniel ~ says that the Messiah will head the firm kingdom.

7:2-6 Walvoord agrees with Keil th ; the great sea is not the Mediterranean but the ocean, and the storm on it represents the "tumults of people" (Jer 46:7, 8). The frequent use of the number four in this passage points to the concept of universality.

The changes in the first beast are undoubtedly an allusion to the experience of Nebuchadnezzar. The fact that the second beast raised itself on one side indicates the one-sided union of the Persian and the Median kingdoms. Although coming up last, Persia became by far greater and more powerful, absorbing the Medes. Archer says that it is hopeless to make out any plausible link between this bear and the earlier, separate Median Empire that preceded Cyrus's victory over Astyages. The three ribs in the beast's mouth stand for Me-

dia, Persia, and Babylon, while the command "devour much flesh" relates to the subsequent conquest of Lydia and Egypt. The four heads and four wings of the third beast refer to the conquest and the subsequent divisions of the Greek Empire.

7:7, 8 The fourth beast is the Roman Empire, which was ruthless in its destruction of civilizations and peoples, killing captives by the thousands and selling them into slavery by the hundreds of thousands. The description of Daniel 7:7 is more appropriate for this empire than the Macedonian kingdom or any of its derived divisions. "Rome controlled most of the culturally advanced portions of the earth."³ Regarding the horns, Walvoord strongly disagrees with the scholars who tend to spiritualize both the number ten and the number three and thus escape the necessity of finding any literal fulfillment. The ten horns are ten men, and the little horn is also a man because it has eyes and a mouth. For Miller, on the other hand, the number ten in this context may be understood as indicating the concept of "completeness." According to Archer, since the ten horns parallel the ten toes in the vision of Daniel 2, they must be understood as contemporaneous. In the light of Revelation 17:12, Miller explains the ten kings represented by the horns as future rulers. They form a confederation of kings or nations "that emanate from the old Ro-

man Empire."⁴ The Lord's return ends their rule.

The eleventh horn represents the last ruler of the times of the Gentiles, which will end when his empire is destroyed. This ruler will be the final world dictator; he will arise after the ten horns have been set up. Ruling over this coalition, he will be both brilliant and arrogant. According to Miller, he is none other than the "antichrist," the most infamous person in all of human history. Antichrist will differ from the other kings in that he will be greater in power, intelligence, and arrogance. His other biblical titles are the "man of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:3) and the beast (Rev. 13:1). The historic Roman Empire lost its strength gradually, over a period of centuries, so the biblical picture of the destruction of the beast does not fit its fall. In the light of Revelation 19:20, this beast will be destroyed in the future, at the second coming of Christ.

7:9-14 The Ancient of Days is clearly God the Father, and the thrones are placed for him and the Son of Man. Verse 13 is the climax of the chapter, and it follows verse 10 chronologically. For Walvoord, the judgment described in this chapter will take place in heaven at the time of the final judgment on the nations. This comes at the end of the interadvent age and the end of the times of the Gentiles. "It, therefore, demands a fulfillment which is yet future, and it is futile to attempt to find anything in

history that provides a reasonable fulfillment of this passage."⁵

The Second Person in the vision, the "son of man," represents the Lord Jesus Christ, whose millennial rule is described in these verses. For Miller, "the most compelling evidence for the messianic identification of the son of man is furnished by Christ himself. In Mark 14:61-62 he identified himself as that 'Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.'"⁶ Since the dominion of the Son of Man extends over the saints, the "son of man" cannot be a symbol representing them. Moreover, as Archer says, Daniel 7:13 is the verse in Daniel most frequently quoted in the New Testament. "Christ is to be the supreme source of political power on earth after his earthly kingdom is established; and all humans, whatever their race, nationality, ethnic origin, or language, will worship and serve him."⁷ The saints of the Most High, according to Walvoord, include the saved of all ages as well as the holy angels, which are sometimes described as "the holy people" (Dan. 8:24; 12:7; Pss. 16:3; 34:9; Jude 14). The judgment is given on their behalf.

7:23-27 According to Archer, the fourth beast is said to devour the whole earth, yet in reality, that applies not to all known parts of the inhabited earth but rather to the entire territory of the Near and Middle East that in any way

relates to the Holy Land. Walvoord asserts that the little horn is the outstanding personage at the end of the age who will be destroyed with the inauguration of the kingdom from heaven. The little horn's attempt to change times and law represents this person's attempt to change times of religious observance; and the religious traditions that characterize those who worship God. While Miller takes "the set times" to be "religious holidays,"⁸ Archer broadens this activity to "a revision of the calendar such as the one attempted during the French Revolution. While Antiochus Epiphanes may foreshadow the activities of the little horn of Daniel 7, the complete fulfillment will be much more severe and extensive.

The phrase "time, times, and half a time" meets its fulfillment in the last three and a half years preceding the second advent of Christ. Archer relates it to the beginning of the last of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:26, 27. During the second half of "the final heptad of years, the progressive judgments of the wrath of God will be worked out."⁹ These judgments will follow the great tribulation and will climax in the second coming of Christ. That the word "time" stands for a year is confirmed by Daniel 4:25 where "seven times" equals seven years. Thus, concludes Miller, the persecution of the saints will continue for three and a half years, which is exactly half of anti-christ's seven-year career.¹⁰

As a major proponent of this type of application, Walvoord consistently rejects any notion of a figurative interpretation of prophecy and argues for a literal futuristic interpretation that "lends accuracy to prophetic revelations." He says, "It should be borne in mind that when a symbol is interpreted, while the symbol is obviously parabolic and figurative, the interpretation should be taken literally."¹¹ He says there is nothing in this chapter of Daniel to alter the conclusion that the fourth beast is Rome, that its final state has not yet been fulfilled, and that it is a genuine prophetic revelation of God's program for human history. He concludes by saying, "In a modern world, when attention is again being riveted upon the Middle East, and Israel is once again back in the land, these items become of more than academic interest, because they are the key to the present movement of history in anticipation of that which lies ahead."¹²

2. *Intertestamental Application* ("Pret-erism"). Collins agrees with other commentators that chapter 7 occupies a pivotal place in Daniel's book. He dates its composition precisely to late 167 B.C., in conformity with what he calls "scholarly consensus."

7:2-6 Based on the cosmic perspective of Genesis 1, Goldingay suggests that "the totality of the winds of heaven generates the totality of the events of

history in which Israel's own story unfolds."¹³ The great sea must be understood to be a much larger entity than the Mediterranean. The four beasts are not simply kings that arise on the earth. Rather, "they are the embodiments of the primeval power of chaos symbolized by the sea in Hebrew and Canaanite tradition."¹⁴ The description of the individual beasts cannot be explained from any Canaanite sources that are available to us; Daniel 7 is not simply a reproduction of an older source, like a Canaanite one. The imagery of the beasts is determined by biblical tradition, although familiarity with the Canaanite sources and the hybrid forms of Mesopotamian mythology have been an influence. Hosea 13:7-9 contains the closest parallel we have to the sequence of animals in Daniel 7. Creation is threatened by the eruption of the beasts from the sea, but the threat will be overcome by the Rider on the clouds.

The winged lion corresponds to the biblical comparisons to King Nebuchadnezzar, and the positive transformation of the beast into a man anticipates the story of chapter 4. The second beast that stands up ready to attack represents Media, which according to Jeremiah 51:11, 28, God stirred up against Babylon. Porteous sees in the detailed description of this animal "a cryptic allusion to Median greed for booty, while the bear's curious posture may imply aggressiveness rather than some kind of

limitation of effectiveness of the Medes as power."¹⁵ The third beast is characterized by great speed, a detail also mentioned regarding Cyrus in Isaiah 41:3 (and of the Babylonians in Hab. 1:8). The four heads of this beast can be applied either to the four kings of Persia implied in Daniel 11:2, or to the four corners of the earth and thus the universality of the Persian Empire.

7:7, 8 While for Porteous, the fourth beast "undoubtedly" represents the Greek kingdom of Alexander and his successors, Collins does not elaborate much on this beast. For Goldingay, Greece is the general concern of the subsequent visions, such as the one in chapter 8. "The Greek empire is evidently viewed as the last."¹⁶ Only in New Testament times did Rome come to be a part of the scheme of the empires as the fourth, climactic power of the sequence. This incorporation of Rome is "a novel one unknown to Daniel himself." The ten horns represent great strength and violent power and refer specifically to the successive rulers of the Seleucid dynasty from the divided Greek Empire, commencing with Seleucus Nicator, the founder of the dynasty.

The little horn is clearly said to follow in chronological sequence. The symbol of human eyes is associated with haughtiness, which is parallel here with the horn's arrogant speech—also mentioned in Daniel 11:36. Collins concludes that in history, the little horn was

Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Seleucid king who persecuted the Jewish people. Moreover, this ruler was the first Hellenistic king to introduce divine epithet such as "God Manifest" on his coin; Porteous is very emphatic that without the symbolic reference to this king, "who was challenging the authority of God ^ none of his predecessors had done, the chapter loses its point."¹⁷

7:9,10 In Ezekiel 1, the animals support God's throne, but in Daniel 7, the fourth beast in particular seeks to subvert it and is judged before it. While the judgment scene belongs to the tradition of biblical throne visions attested in several prophetic passages, ancient traditions about the council of El, where the gods sit on their princely thrones, definitely stand in the background. The use of the plural form "thrones" indicates that one throne is for the Ancient of Days and the other for "one like a human being" (verse 13). Collins notes that the angel interpreter, most likely Gabriel, never identifies the Ancient of Days, but Porteous considers him to be "a majestic and venerable King." The "one like a human being" is presented in contrast with the beasts that come up from the abyss. He is associated with the saints of the Most High. The title "the Most High" refers to God.

7:13, 14 The identification of the "one like a human being" with the person of Michael, who is mentioned in Daniel 10-12, is greatly strengthened

by the fact that the saints of the Most High are the angelic host. Michael, the prince of Israel and the leader of the heavenly host, is the most logical choice to receive the kingdom. The kingdom given to him is similar to God's dominion mentioned in the doxologies in Daniel 4:3, 34 and 6:26. The same can be said of the kingdom received by the people of the holy ones of the Most High. Goldingay, on the other hand, suggests that since the one like a human being is not identified in the vision, "this is a facet of the chapter which interpretation has to preserve."¹⁸ The focus should be on this person's role, not on his identity. Since in the book of Daniel the title "holy ones" refers to angels, we must expect that it carries that reference in chapter 7, although the phrase in this context is somewhat allusive.¹⁹ "As the kingdoms that are to pass away are symbolized by supernatural beasts, it seems appropriate that the symbol of what is to replace the bestial kingdoms should be both human and supernatural."²⁰

There is synergism between the faithful Israelites on earth and their angelic counterparts in heaven. When things go badly on earth, it is because they are going badly in the heavenly battle, too. But when the Ancient of Days arrives in judgment, fortunes are strikingly reversed on both levels. Michael's victory in the heavenly battle entails the victory of the persecuted Jews on earth.

The symbolism of the beasts received new vitality in Christianity through Revelation, which itself drew heavily on Daniel. While this vision is not one for all seasons, nevertheless "human history has never lacked for situations where such a vision seems appropriate or even necessary."²¹

7:23-27 Collins claims that Daniel 7:25 should be tied to the disruption of the cultic calendar—in the light of 1 Maccabees 1:45, it should be applied to the decree of Antiochus that required the Jews "to profane Sabbaths and feasts." Moreover, 2 Maccabees 6:6 says that a Jew "could neither keep the Sabbath nor observe the feasts of his fathers." Instead, he had to participate in pagan sacrifices and celebrate the festival of Dionysus. The evil of the fourth kingdom was concentrated in Antiochus.

The period of time, times, and half a time totals three and a half years, which matches the last half week of years in Daniel 9:27 and approximates the calculation attempts in 8:14 and 12:11, 12. For Porteous, though, three and a half years are half the period of Nebuchadnezzar's madness, which lasted seven years. He goes on to say that through "a remarkably accurate forecast,"²² the projected time period points to the profanation of the temple under Antiochus IV, which lasted for "exactly three years." Goldingay argues for a figurative meaning of the phrase. One "time" may or may not be a year long.

The period ruled by the prophecy's king is a long one, yet it is brought to a sudden termination. That is where the emphasis should be placed.

In conclusion, one can clearly see that the preterist application of the vision in Daniel 7 is restricted to certain events that took place during the intertestamental period of Jewish history.

1. Walvoord, 8.
2. Archer, 85.
3. Miller, 213.

4. Ibid., 202.
5. Walvoord, 165.
6. Miller, 209.
7. Archer, 91.
8. Miller, 214.
9. Archer, 94.
10. Miller, 215.
11. Walvoord, 170.
12. Ibid., 177.
13. Goldingay, 185.
14. Collins, 289.
15. Porteous, 105.
16. Goldingay, 174.
17. Porteous, 97.
18. Goldingay, 172.
19. Ibid., 178.
20. Porteous, 110.
21. Collins, 324.
22. Porteous, 114.