

THE HELLENISTIC WORLD
AS THE FOURTH KINGDOM OF DANIEL 2:
AN INTRATEXTUAL DEFENSE OF THE GREEK VIEW

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As interpreted by the prophet, Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel 2 symbolizes a succession of four kingdoms, each represented as a metallic phase of "a great statue" (2:36-45). Only one kingdom receives explicit identification in Daniel 2; Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, "you are the head of gold" (2:38). Accordingly, the Neo-Chaldean Empire (then governed by Nebuchadnezzar II) anchors the succession of kingdoms, possessing "kingdom, power, might, and glory" over the entire realm of earth (2:37-38). However, the latter three kingdoms mentioned in the chapter receive no such identification; interpreters debate their respective fulfillments.¹

Later chapters (especially 7,8,11) also predict a succession of kingdoms through prophetic imagery, occasionally identifying the historical fulfillments of their constituent elements. Dan 2 outlines a succession of four kingdoms (beginning with Babylon; 2:38), as does Dan 7. Dan 8 and 11 also describe a succession of kingdoms (beginning with Media [8:20] and Persia [11:2], respectively), both explicitly including Alexander's Empire and the Diadochi (8:21; 11:2). Readers sensitive to the unity of the book observe that these later chapters apparently parallel and detail the brief prophetic outline submitted in Dan 2.² Thereby, each vision is set

1. The two most popular interpretive schemes are named after the historical empires assigned as the fourth kingdom: the "Roman" view and the "Greek" view. Seventh-day Adventists assume one variation of the Roman view, listing the succession of four empires as Babylon, Medo-Persia [Achaemenid dynasty], Greece [Alexandrine Hellenism], and Rome. By contrast, advocates of the Greek view commonly identify the four kingdoms as follows: Babylon, Media, Archaemenid Persia, Alexandrine Hellenism. These designations will appear throughout this paper in their broadest sense.

2. For a survey of these parallels, albeit towards a defense of the Roman view: Shea, William H., "Unity of Daniel," *Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 2, Symposium on Daniel*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute (1986), 165-255. One might here draw an analogy to a familiar convention of Hebraic poetic verse: parallelism (in which the poet follows a pattern of exposition and re-exposition).

within a larger conversation—illuminating the others towards the crystallization of an overarching prophetic schema.³

Observing these intratextual relationships, especially that between Dan 2:41-43 and 11:4,6,17, this survey recommends the Greek view as the most viable interpretative scheme for Daniel 2. The parallels between those two chapters equate the fourth kingdom of Dan 2 with the Alexandrine/Hellenistic political conglomerate explicitly referenced in 11:2-4—a conclusion in harmony with the other details of the prophecy. This paper will review the intratextual evidence, and cite additional evidences from related studies so to complete its survey of the vision entire.⁴

Survey

“Daniel” introduces the second kingdom and third kingdoms briefly: “and after you shall arise another kingdom, inferior to yours, and a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over the whole earth” (2:39b). Following these is “a fourth kingdom, strong as iron; just as iron crushes and smashes everything, it shall crush and shatter all these” (2:40). This latter kingdom becomes the subject of the prophet’s attention in 2:41-44, which notes that the fourth kingdom shall be a divided realm (presumably in its later days)⁵:

As you saw the feet and toes partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the strength of iron shall be in it, as you saw the iron mixed with the clay. As the toes of the feet were part iron and part clay, so the kingdom shall be partly

3. Of note, increasing detail and decreasing breadth apparently attend each chapter’s re-exposition of the schema (cf. Dan 2 to 7,8, and 11).

4. Evangelical authors have written convincing defenses of the Greek view in recent decades, most significantly: Gurney, Robert J.M., “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel 2 and 7,” *Themelios* 2 (1977) 39-45; and, Walton, John H. “The Four Kingdoms of Daniel,” *JETS* 29.1, (1986) 25-36. Walton’s study is written in conversation with Gurney’s, and refines several of its arguments. This study compliments, and frequently cites, the research in both papers, but prefers Gurney’s synthesis of the relevant data. (Gurney’s complete interpretive scheme for the prophecies of Daniel is available in a single monograph, recently updated and made available on the internet: *God is in Control: An Exposition of the Prophecies of Daniel*, 2nd Edition (2006), [Online Resource: http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/book_god-in-control_gurney.html].)

5. More precisely, Bradshaw notes that the “fourth kingdom would have two distinct phases, the first characterised by strength (2:33, 40; 7:7, 23; 8:7), the second by division (2:41-43; 8:8).” (Bradshaw, Robert I. *The Book of Daniel*, Table 8 [On-line Resource: http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_daniel.html].)

strong and partly brittle. As you saw the iron mixed with clay, so will they mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. (2:41-43)

Daniel concludes his description by prophesying of the coming Kingdom of God:

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever. (2:44)

Details within the text provide clues to identify the fulfillment of each portion of the prophecy. For example, Daniel ascribes the rise of the second kingdom to a time “after you [Nebuchadnezzar II]” (2:39), that is, 562 BCE (the year of his death).⁶

Of note, Daniel explicitly states that the first and third kingdoms will have universal dominion (2:38,39b). The fourth kingdom is also a world empire, as it subdues the other three kingdoms (“it shall crush and shatter all these”; 2:40), two of which exercised global dominion. However, the second kingdom receives so much comment; it is described only as “inferior” to the gold kingdom, likely according to its comparative measure of splendor (symbolized by its place within the hierarchy of metals; cf. Num 31:22; 1 Chr 22:14; 2 Chr 2:7,14).⁷ The text’s failure to ascribe global dominion to the kingdom raises the possibility that it possesses none.

The latter two kingdoms are also represented by metals inferior to gold. These, however, symbolize strength (cf. 7:19), and their use in battle (e.g., bronze in 2 Sam 21:16; iron in 1 Sam 17:7) suggests that they further represent military prowess; Daniel states that the bronze kingdom “shall rule over the whole earth.”

The prophet devotes significantly more attention to the fourth kingdom, detailing six identifying features: (1) The fourth kingdom will possess an invincible military, symbolized by iron, the most powerful metal in ancient warfare (2:40). (2) It will conquer the whole world, by defeating “all these” that is, the first three kingdoms. (2:40). (3) At some point, the empire will become “a divided kingdom” composed of smaller realms (2:40-41). Note that the kingdom is first represented by a single substance (iron), and at a later time experiences division (iron and clay). (4) These

6. This identification of the “you” in 2:39 with Nebuchadnezzar II (and not the Neo-Chaldean dynasty as a whole) relates the singular pronoun “you” in 3:39 to the immediate addressee (“you, O king”; 2:37,38). Gurney concurs, but emphasizes Daniel’s recurring identification of the Neo-Chaldean realm with Nebuchadnezzar alone (Gurney 1977, 42).

7. For a brief discussion of this pattern: Shea 1986, 174.

realms will still be identified with the original empire (2:41-42): the text does not speak of succeeding “kingdoms,” but continues to refer to the fourth kingdom as a single entity. (5) These political divisions will compromise the strength of the larger empire, so that “the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle” (2:42). (6) To overcome the political divisions, the composite realms will attempt to forge alliances or unions by (royal) intermarriage (2:43). These efforts, however, will not succeed; though they “mix with one another in marriage... they will not hold together” (2:43).

The Fourth Kingdom

That final detail is perhaps the most significant in relating this passage to the book’s many parallel sequences. Daniel again predicts a series of (failed) alliances and intermarriages between competing kingdoms in chapter 11. Immediately after describing the rise of Alexander (11:3) and the untimely division of his Empire (11:4), Daniel focuses on the rivalry between Seleucia (“the king of the north”) and Ptolemaic Egypt (“the king of the south”; [11:5]). In the next verse, he predicts:

After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to ratify the agreement. But she shall not retain her power, and his offspring shall not endure. She shall be given up, she and her attendants and her child and the one who supported her. (11:6)

Another failed intermarriage apparently appears in 11:17, with the note “it shall not succeed or be to his advantage.”

As the only other texts that detail specific instances of intermarriage between remnants of a divided kingdom, 11:6,17 are almost certainly parallel to 2:43. The specificity of the prophecies of Dan 11 further distinguish 11:6,17 as expanded treatments of the same subject matter in 2:43; where Dan 2 briefly mentions future intermarriages, Dan 11 offers at least two examples of the same. Any disassociation of the two passages (as if they treated different subjects) is unthinkable from a strictly exegetical perspective. On the contrary, the brevity of 2:43 demands the elaboration 11:6,17 provides.

Dan 11:2-3 explicitly delineates the transition from Gabriel’s discussion of Persian history (11:1-2) to his survey of Alexandrine/Hellenistic history. All interpreters agree that post-Alexandrine, Hellenistic kingdoms are in view in 11:6 (and v. 17), including the major Adventist interpreters.⁸

8. Smith, U., *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, Hagerstown: Review and Herald (1972). 236-7; 247-51. Most interpreters consistently identify “the king of the North” and “the king of the South” as the rulers of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties, respectively; classical Adventist interpreters do not. Understanding v.6 as a reference to the Seleucids and

Consequently, the interpreter is secure in recommending the same Hellenistic conglomerate as the “divided kingdom” in view in 2:43. The aforementioned intratextual evidence is decisive on this point.⁹

In fact, the Hellenistic Empire founded by Alexander easily conforms to the first five features of Dan 2’s fourth kingdom—more precisely than does the Roman Empire. (1) Alexander’s forces were invincible, (2) conquering the entire territory formerly dominated by Babylon, Media, and Persia in a matter of years.¹⁰ (3) After Alexander’s untimely death, his empire was divided among his four generals; by 200 BCE, its territory consisted of ten independent realms of Hellenistic heritage: Ptolemaic Egypt, Seleucia, Macedon, Pergamum, Pontus, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Armenia, Parthia, and Bactria.¹¹

(4) All these divisions were united in the Hellenistic culture and identity they adopted. Collectively, they constituted a “divided kingdom” [singular]—legitimate heirs (politically and culturally) to the original Alexandrine realm, however splintered (cf. 11:4). (Advocates of the Roman view themselves subsume these realms under the kingdom of “Greece,” testifying to their cultural unity). By contrast, the Barbarian tribes succeeding Rome in the Roman view were not contiguous (culturally or politically) with the Empire they overthrew. They were succeeding kingdoms—not constituents of “a divided kingdom.”

Additionally, (5) the strength of the post-Alexandrine Hellenistic Empire was compromised, so that some realms were more powerful than their neighbors. Dan 11:4 ff. largely chronicles the confrontations between these entities as they gained, lost, and recovered their prowess: detailing the brief summary given in 2:41-43. The two passages are natural com-

Ptolemies, they assign v.17 to the final interactions between the Roman Republic and the Ptolemies (specifically Cleopatra). Overlooking the demerits of this paradigm, one sees that Adventists relate 11:6,17 to the Hellenistic period—not the later divisions of the Roman Empire.

9. Most proponents of the Greek view note this parallel, but none (to my knowledge) ground their identification of the fourth kingdom primarily upon it. By contrast, this survey considers it the most decisive piece of evidence available to the interpreter.

10. Roman armies never advanced into Media or Persia, potentially undermining the claim that the Roman Empire “crushed and shattered” at least one of the kingdoms presumed by the Roman view (as 2:40 demands; Gurney 1977, 40,44; Walton 32). In fact, Rome never subsumed most of the territories once controlled by the Medo-Persian and Greek Empires (especially those east of Susa). However, the flexibility of prophetic historiography cautions us against reading too far into these facts. Nevertheless, I agree with Gurney that Dan 2:40 does find a more fitting fulfillment in the conquests of Alexander.

11. Walton 32.

pliments, if not necessary ones (as 2:41-43 demands a more comprehensive treatment of the events described therein, which the Roman view denies it). Again, all intratextual indications recommend the identification of Alexander's Empire with the fourth kingdom.¹²

Second and Third Kingdoms

Having isolated the historical fulfillments of the first and final kingdoms of the sequence, only the second and third kingdoms remain. Alexander conquered the world empire ruled by the Achaemenid dynasty of Persia (commonly referred to as the "Persian" or "Medo-Persian" Empire); 8:20-21 and 11:2-3 are explicit on this point. Undoubtedly, this empire is the third kingdom.

Media emerges as a probable choice for the second kingdom when considered as an individual power (that is, in its twelve years as the region's major power, prior its subjugation to Cyrus, c. 550 BCE). Although Media and Persia were politically integrated at the time of their concerted conquest of Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt, the book of Daniel lists them as discreet entities (5:8). Dan 8:3,20 even suggest that the two are temporally distinct ("the longer one was coming up last"), so that Media precedes Persia in a succession of kingdoms. In that light, it is easy to consider the two

12. Critics of the Greek view excoriate its failure to recognize the achievements of the Roman Empire (in not listing it among the four kingdoms). However, few interpreters find a place for Islam within the prophecies of Dan 2,7,8,11, despite the fact that it has remained *the* dominant political force in the Middle East for fourteen centuries.

Interpreters must respect the conventions of prophetic historiography, which countenances omissions in favor of brevity/simplicity. For example, Gabriel predicts the reigns of "four more kings" in Persia before Alexander (11:2-3), overlooking seven later Persian rulers. Instead, he transitions directly from a reference to the "fourth" Persian king (Xerxes, who launched a great invasion of Greece, 11:2) to the first Greek king (Alexander, who conquered Persia; 11:3), presumably because these two kings are pivotal in tracing the transfer of prestige from Persia to Greece (itself the singular focus of 11:2-3; cf. Shea, William H., "Why Antiochus IV is Not the Little Horn of Daniel 8," *Daniel & Revelation Committee Series* 1, Second Edition, *Symposium on Daniel*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute [1992], 40-41) Intermediate rulers, being less significant to this prophetic movement, are quietly disregarded.

Spiritual interests especially govern the text's presentation of world affairs. Daniel presumably fails to reference the nascent Roman Empire in view of the realm's triviality beside the advent of the Messianic kingdom (outlined later in this essay). After the decree of the heavenly court (7:9-13,26), the world's major power is the Messianic kingdom; all temporal political entities (from Rome to Islam) thereafter fade into inconsequentiality.

as sequential kingdoms, though the former does not achieve global dominion until its integration into the latter.¹³

Notwithstanding, some difficulty surrounds the contention that Media arose “after” the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (Dan 2:39a). Media was a rival and contemporary kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon; after 562 BCE however, Gurney observes that Media “*became the stronger of the two* because the power and wealth of Babylon immediately declined... the scales had tipped in favour of the Medes.”¹⁴ As evidence, Walton cites Median military expansion into Babylonian territory after 562 BCE, especially the annexation of Susa and Elam under Astyages.¹⁵

One must recognize the flexibility inherent in the verb “arise,” used by Daniel to describe the advent of kingdoms. It almost never denotes the initial establishment of a national unit, but more commonly describe its political reorganization (e.g., a new dynasty) or a period of significant growth (e.g., territorial annexation or international prominence).¹⁶ Media’s ascendancy between 562-550 BCE readily satisfies this broader conception of the political processes in view in 2:39.¹⁷

13. This qualification is well within the parameters of the prophecy, which (as mentioned earlier) do not require that the second kingdom be a world empire, instead stressing its inferiority. Walton observes: “The bronze kingdom is one that is characterized by world dominion as over against the inferiority of the silver kingdom. [Dan 2:39] Again, to see Persia as worldwide in comparison to the inferior kingdom of the Medes is logical. The same contrast between Greece and Persia would not be suitable (Walton 31).” Also: “It may also be noted in passing that the inferiority of the second empire when compared to the first (Dan 2:39) would fit Media much more readily than Medo-Persia” (Walton 30).

14. Gurney 1977, 41.

15. Walton 30.

16. For example, though Greece existed centuries earlier, it is said to “rise” (as the third [or fourth] kingdom of Dan 2) through the conquests of Alexander (11:2-3). Gurney provides a comprehensive model of succession, suggesting: “the order of Daniel’s kingdoms is *the order of their rise to the height of power and prominence*” (Gurney 1977, 41).

17. By contrast, unnecessarily narrow definitions of the political processes envisioned in 2:39 are frequently used to exclude Media from consideration, as Gurney reports: “The assertion that there was no Median empire between the Babylonian and Persian empires seems to be based on a misconception.... that Persia succeeded Babylon as dominant world power when it overthrew Babylon in 539 BC. Persia in fact became the dominant world power some years *before* Babylon fell.... If it be admitted, and so it must, that Persia became dominant world power before the actual fall of Babylon, it can also be admitted that Media may have been the dominant world power before Persia.” (Gurney 1977, 41). This model

Cyrus' establishment of the Achaemenid dynasty marked the end of Median independence, and the rise of Persian primacy in the Ancient Near East. Accordingly, Cyrus' successful rebellion against Media (553-550 BCE) demarcates the transition between the second and third kingdoms. Illustrative of the former's absorption into the latter, Daniel considers the two kingdoms as separate entities in Dan 2,7, but as composite and consecutively emerging elements of a single entity in Dan 8 (two horns on a single ram, the latter more exalted than the first).¹⁸ Thereby, both schemes provide us complimentary views of these two powers. Dan 2,7 informs us that the two powers are distinct; Dan 8 (maintaining that distinction) adds that the two are allied, and relates their united rise to global dominion under the leadership of Persia (the "higher" horn in 8:3).¹⁹

may be reflected in Dan 7:12, where the loss of dominion by the first three beasts is distinguished from their later destruction (assuming that "destruction" is equivalent to political conquest or ruin).

18. Most interpreters agree that three of the kingdoms referenced in Dan 2,7 are also in view in Dan 8, albeit under the figure of only two beasts. Advocates of the Roman view resolve this numerical discrepancy by submitting that Dan 8 combines two entities in Dan 2,7 (the third and fourth kingdoms) into a single entity (where Rome is subsumed as a horn upon the goat representing Greece [8:9,20-23]).

Unfortunately, this solution raises new difficulties. Subsuming the fourth kingdom (expressly distinguished from its predecessors on multiple occasions [cf. 2:39-40; 7:7,19,23]) as a constituent element of the third kingdom proves disagreeable, especially when Gabriel explicitly refers to the entire prophetic figure of the goat as "the kingdom of Greece" (8:21). The Greek view more aptly reconciles the sequence in Dan 2,7 to that in Dan 8, preserving the integrity of each kingdom (i.e. Media, Persia, Greece), and combining any two only according to the stated design of 8:20-21.

19. Gurney adds a telling observation: "Note also the way in which Daniel groups together the second and third kingdoms [in 2:39]. The second kingdom is passed over quickly with a brief and belittling remark, possibly indicating that its term of supreme power is comparatively insignificant and short-lived, as well as being inferior in wealth and magnificence. It is grouped with, and closely followed and overshadowed by, the world-ruling third kingdom. The whole description is strongly suggestive of the Medo-Persian situation, because the comparatively insignificant Median empire was absorbed and eclipsed by the subsequently enormous Persian empire only a very short time after it (Media) had itself surpassed Babylon. The description of the second and third kingdoms fits the Median and Persian empires far better than it fits the huge, wealthy, long-lived Persian empire and the... Greek empire."(Gurney 1977, 42)

The Stone Kingdom

A full discussion of the chapter's Messianic image lies outside the limits of this paper²⁰; however, attention is due the historical relationship between the "stone kingdom" and the fourth kingdom (as understood by advocates of the Greek view). Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that "in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed" (2:44).²¹ This process is said to occur in two stages: (1) the stone strikes the image, pulverizing the kingdoms, then (2) the stone becomes a mountain and fills the whole earth (2:34-35; 44-45). Apparently, the text anticipates the destruction of the fourth kingdom before the rise of the Messianic kingdom.²² A parallel passage (7:9-13,26-27) indicates that the transition between the two kingdoms occurs by decree of a heavenly judgment (equivalent to the decrees of "the God of heaven" in 2:44), again resulting in (1) the destruction of the fourth kingdom, *followed by* (2) the Messiah's reception and assumption of power.²³ Evidently, the stone kingdom encapsulates all these divine activities, beginning with the cosmic judgment, and culminating with the universal conquests of the Messiah.

All Christian interpreters link the stone kingdom to the Christ event; some however (including Adventists), restrict that identification to the *parousia*. This view fails to note the breadth of events subsumed in the "stone kingdom," including the bestowal of universal, political dominion upon the Messiah, which the New Testament explicitly assigns to the time of Christ's first advent: Mt 28:18; Eph 1:20-22; Rev 1:5 12:10.²⁴ At that time, the "kingdom of heaven" was established (cf. Lu 23:42-43; 17:20-21), whose spread ("the mountain" of 2:44) will culminate in the visible reign of Christ at His second advent.

20. A historical survey of the major Christian interpreters is found in: Bennett, Douglas, "The Stone Kingdom of Daniel 2," *Daniel & Revelation Committee Series 2, Symposium on Daniel*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute (1986), 333-345. A defense of the Adventist reading of Dan 2:44 (which strictly assigns the stone kingdom to the *parousia*) follows on p. 346-377.

21. Scholars debate the antecedent to "those kings," suggesting either the four kingdoms ("all these kingdoms" in 2:44b), or the rulers of the divided kingdom (Bennett 356-361; Walton 35). In either case, one anticipates the stone kingdom to arrive at the end of the prophetic sequence (after the events in 2:41-43, ushering in the end of the fourth kingdom).

22. Gurney 1977, 40.

23. Gurney, Robert J.M., "A Note on Daniel 11:40-45," *TSF Bulletin* 47 (1967): 11.

24. Gurney 1977, 41.

Interpreters must also recognize the ambiguity of Old Testament messianism, which precludes our narrowly defining the stone kingdom as the final political triumph of Christ.²⁵ No Old Testament prophet expressly distinguishes between the first and second advents of the Messiah (a nuance of New Testament eschatology), confirming Walton's suspicion that "Daniel himself was not necessarily distinguishing between two advents of the Messiah" in 2:44."²⁶ By contrast, most critiques of the "Greek" reading of Dan 2:44, unmindful of this ambiguity, rely upon an "either-or" dichotomy foreign to the Old Testament material.

As expected, the Christ event was preceded by the destruction of the fourth kingdom, which process began in the mid second-century,²⁷ and was consummated in 30 BCE with the fall of the last Diadochian dynasty: Ptolemaic Egypt.

Conclusion

The interpretive task demands that a given text, so far as possible, interpret itself. An observable pattern of exposition and revisitation in the Book of Daniel integrates the book's historical-political visions (chaps. 2,7,8, and 11) into a network, encouraging a form of intratextual study that illuminates each individual chapter by the whole. By relating elements of one vision to those in another, the reader gathers additional data from which to extract his interpretation of any single chapter.

Any increase in data narrows the interpretive possibilities for certain variables, precluding eisegetical abuses. For example, many features proper to the fourth kingdom (e.g. intermarriage between rulers; 2:43) are true of any number of historical realms. Supplementing that general description with more particular details (as expounded in parallel chapters) reduces the text's ambiguity. In the case of Dan 2, references to intermarriages between the remnants of a divided kingdom link 2:41-43 to 11:4,6,17, the latter passage explicitly assigning these actions to kings of rival Diadochian dynasties. Accordingly, one should anchor the fourth kingdom of Dan 2 in the history of the Alexandrine Empire and its successors—effectively permitting the author of Daniel to interpret the vision.

25. Although the chapter emphasizes the ultimate political consequences of the Christ event (in keeping with the chapter's socio-political orientation), it hardly excludes their processual realization.

26. Walton 35.

27. Daniel 7:11 indicates that the cosmic judgment of the little horn (identified as Antiochus IV [Epiphanies] by Greek-view scholars) decrees the destruction of the fourth kingdom. Therefore, the destruction of the "Greek" empire should date from the time of Antiochus IV—a process first evident in the Roman defeat of Macedon in 168 BCE (the heart of Alexander's former empire), and the beginning of the Maccabean war in 167 BCE (Gurney 1967, 11).

Competing interpretative schemes have their merits; but the divorcement of a passage from its literary context violates a fundamental law of exegesis. Although this scheme is not without its inherent limitations, as all are, it remains sensitive to the overarching design of the author, manifested through the literary conventions noted earlier.

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