

Daniel 11:36-12:1

Introduction

Two weeks ago we followed along in the “book of truth” (in Daniel 11) all the way from the beginning of the Persian empire under Cyrus to the beginning of the Greek empire under Alexander the Great and then to the kings of the north and the south (the Seleucids and the Ptolemies), all the way to that infamous king of the north (Antiochus Epiphanes). That’s where the vision of the Ram and the Goat in chapter eight stopped – with Antiochus Epiphanes in 170 BC. But this time—just like in chapter two with Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great image composed of four different metals, and just like in chapter seven with the four beasts that came up out of the sea, and just like in chapter nine with the seventy sevens—this time the angel is going to take Daniel all the way to the appointed time of “the end” (10:14; 11:27, 35), even to the resurrection of the dead (12:2). And once again (just like in chapters 2 and 7 and 9) we’re going to have to ask the question: “How do we get from Antiochus Epiphanes in 170 AD (where we left off in the “book of truth” two weeks ago) all the way to the appointed time of ‘the end’ and the resurrection of the dead?” (See chart on page 9.) We pick up again in Daniel chapter eleven, verse 36:

I. Daniel 11:36a — And **THE KING** shall do as he wills.

Who is this “king”? The main subject of the last fifteen verses has been the “king of the north” (Antiochus Epiphanes), though we haven’t heard him referred to as a “king” for quite some time now (cf. 11:27). There are many who see a shift in verse 36 from Antiochus Epiphanes to a different king further on in the future – “*the king.*” Remember how between verses 2 and 3 the angel skipped over 135 years of Persian history (six Persian kings) without giving us any hint that he had done so. Remember also that in verses 5-6 (and in other places; vv. 10-11, 14, 25) the angel switches kings without ever telling us. So it’s entirely possible that when we come to verse 36 we’ve moved on to a different king – a king who comes at “the time of the end” (cf. 11:35) – a king who comes in the days of the fourth and last beast, the days of the Roman Empire (cf. 11:18, 30). One clue that this could be the case is that this is the only verse that speaks simply of “the king” rather than the “king of the south” or the “king of the north.” It kind of jumps off the page at us. For many, another sign of this transition from Antiochus to a different future king is that verses 36-39 can’t be made to fit what we know of Antiochus. I’m not convinced of that. I’m still open to the idea that these next few verses (36-39) are still describing Antiochus Epiphanes. However, for right now I’m going to assume that it’s here at verse 36 that we’ve transitioned from the *third* to the *fourth* beast – from the Greek Empire to the Roman Empire represented by the Roman Caesars. (See chart on page 10.)

Now here’s the important thing: Look how far ahead we’ve skipped. We’ve only skipped ahead 130 years. We’ve not skipped the fourth beast and we’ve not skipped this Messianic age in which we’re living now. The Dispensationalists, on the other hand, insert their “gap” here at verse 36 and skip all the way from Antiochus Epiphanes in 170 BC—*past* the fourth beast and *past* the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and *past* this entire messianic age—all the way to the end of the world when God raptures us out of the world and goes back to dealing with His “other” covenant people, Israel. (See chart on page 11.) That’s not surprising.

But what does surprise me is that the majority of the Reformed also suddenly skip ahead here from Antiochus Epiphanes, *past* the fourth beast, *past* these days of Christ's enthronement at the right hand of God, all the way to a final antichrist figure at the end of the world. Can you see the giant "leap" we're taking? Can you see how we're assuming that the "end" *must be* only the end of the world and not the end of the Old Covenant age (cf. 10:14; 11:27, 35)? Since the Reformed can't insert this gap on a Dispensational foundation (two separate covenant peoples of God) they have to go through what feels to me like all sorts of awkward contortions and gymnastics to make this gigantic leap "work." But I would suggest that *in the context of Daniel*, it's unthinkable that this vision would skip from Greece all the way to the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead (cf. chapters 2, 7, & 9). It's unthinkable that this vision would skip entirely the fourth kingdom that is the Roman Empire, the eschatological "end" of the Old Covenant age, and the establishment of Messiah's kingdom when Jesus sat down at the right hand of God.¹ The angel has skipped ahead here not from the third beast to the end of the world, but from the third beast to the fourth beast – the Roman Empire represented by the Roman Caesars. I suggest that that unqualified reference to "The king" is not a reference to one specific historical personality, but rather a reference to "the king" of Rome – the line of the Roman Caesars (cf. "the king of the south" / "the king of the north").² So with this in mind let's read now in verses 36-39. And as we read, we need to see that these are very *general* descriptions.

II. Daniel 11:36–39 — And **THE KING** shall do as he wills [**general; cf. 8:4; 11:3, 16**]. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god [**the Roman Imperial cult (emperor worship); "As the Roman Empire developed the Imperial cult gradually developed more formally and constituted the worship of the Roman emperor as a god. This practice began at the start of the Empire under Augustus, and became a prominent element of Roman religion."** (Wikipedia)], and he shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. [**A general expression. This could be another way of referring to the Caesar's arrogant claims to divinity which is by default to speak against the God of gods; Titus said: "If he (the God of Israel) is really mighty, let him come up on the dry land and fight with me" (Babylonian Talmud; Gittin 56b); Gaius ordered that a statue of himself be set up in the Jerusalem temple, though this order was apparently reversed; Philo says that the Jerusalem temple was called the Temple of Illustrious Gaius the New Jupiter (Wikipedia)**] He [**the king of Rome**] shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished [**until Jerusalem is destroyed; this doesn't imply that he will cease to prosper after Jerusalem is destroyed**]; for what is decreed shall be done [**Jerusalem shall be destroyed; cf. 9:26-27**]. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. [**The Caesars were known for their self-exalting arrogance; "Nero despised all religious cults except that of the Syrian Goddess, and showed one day, that he had changed his mind even about her, by urinating on the divine image"; Suetonius, "Lives of the Twelve Caesars," 6.56.**] He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these [**A generic expression (he shall worship his military might? Roma (Rome)? Mars, the Roman god of war and founding deity of Rome?)**]. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the

¹ Furthermore, Jesus said that after the end of the Old Covenant age, marked by the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, His appearing would be imminent (at any time) – which means that this king prophesied in Daniel must have already come.

² It's only in verse 40 that the references are once again "particularized."

strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign **[previously unknown] god [Roma?]**. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor **[a general/common practice]**. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price **[or: “as payment”; a general/common practice³]**.

There’s obviously a fulfillment to these verses that God could explain perfectly. God could fill in all the blanks for us from history – but he hasn’t done this. So from our perspective, these very general descriptions could all be fulfilled in a whole variety of different ways. We simply haven’t had the historical “matches” given to us by divine inspiration. Remember, the point of this vision is not for us to be able to accurately and confidently fill in every blank afterwards, otherwise God would have been far more specific. The main point is to assure Daniel before any of these things ever happened that God is the one who has decreed all things and that all of history, therefore, is revolving around His saving purposes for His people. And yet having said all this, when we see “*the king*” representing the line of the Roman Caesars in the days of the fourth beast, it’s very easy to see how these verses were all fulfilled.

As we come now to verse 40, there are two things that happen. First, the language becomes much more detailed and specific, and second, we’re told very clearly that these are things that will happen “at the time of the end.” The time of *what* end? I believe this must be the time of the *fourth* and last beast (the Roman empire) and the eschatological end of the Old Covenant age as it was manifested in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and Jesus’ enthronement at the right hand of God (remember that the end of the Old Covenant age contains within itself the seed of that final “end” of the world). In the following verses, notice how the angel returns once more to the designations “king of the south” and “king of the north.”

III. Daniel 11:40 (cf. NASB; NIV; Hebrew) — At the time of the end, the king of the south **[a generic/stereotyped reference to whomever the “ruler” of the south/Egypt might be; in this case, Cleopatra VII]** shall attack him **[the king of Rome, Octavian]**, and the king of the north **[Marc Antony ruled Syria as a member of the 2nd triumvirate and was in league with Cleopatra]** shall rush upon him **[the king of Rome]** like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships **[“Before Augustus could gain the throne... he was forced to battle the (combined) armies of both Cleopatra VII (‘king of the south’) and Mark Antony (‘king of the north’)... Augustus was victorious (at the sea and land battle of Actium in 31 BC).” Biography.com]**. And he **[the king of Rome]** shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through.

(See maps on page 12.) If this is the fulfillment of these verses, then it’s amazing, explicit, and obvious. But why is all of this called the time of the end? Because Octavian would become the first emperor of Rome, marking the rise of the fourth beast. It was the Battle of Actium that

³ “Octavian was left to decide where in Italy to settle the tens of thousands of veterans of the Macedonian campaign, whom the triumvirs had promised to discharge. The tens of thousands who had fought on the republican side with Brutus and Cassius could easily ally with a political opponent of Octavian if not appeased, and they also required land. There was no more government-controlled land to allot as settlements for their soldiers, so Octavian had to choose one of two options: alienating many Roman citizens by confiscating their land, or alienating many Roman soldiers who could mount a considerable opposition against him in the Roman heartland. Octavian chose the former. There were as many as eighteen Roman towns affected by the new settlements, with entire populations driven out or at least given partial evictions.” (Wikipedia)

essentially marked not only the start of the Roman Empire since it cleared the way for Octavian's rise to power but also the end of the Greek Empire (the Ptolemaic kingdom was the last remnant of the Greek empire). Remember that in chapter seven the Caesars (or kings) of Rome are pictured as the horns of the fourth beast. So in other words, as the last of Daniel's four empires, the rise of Rome and the line of the Roman Caesars signals that the time of the end has come. It was during the reign of this Caesar Augustus that Jesus, the Messiah, was born.

- Luke 2:1 — In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

Remember what we read in Daniel chapter two: "In the days of *those* kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed..." (2:28, 44). And so now we go on to read in verse forty-one:

IV. Daniel 11:41 — He [the Roman King, Octavian] shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall [**this would seem to be a generalized summary of Octavian's conquests**], but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.

While Judea came under the control of Augustus Caesar, Nabataea (which covered the former territory of Edom, Moab and the greater part of the land of the Ammonites) did *not* come under Roman control until the beginning of the 2nd century AD (see Nabataea.net/explore/history/history/). If this is the fulfillment of this verse then it's amazing, explicit, and obvious. The Caesar's of Rome took control of Palestine (the glorious land) beginning with Caesar Augustus, but Edom, Moab, and the main part of the Ammonites were delivered not only out of Caesar *Augustus*' hands but also out the hands of all the Roman Caesars until after AD 100. The boundary of the Roman Empire stopped precisely at the former boundaries of Edom, Moab, and the main part of the Ammonites (Nabataea). (**See maps on page 13 & top of page 14.**) We're reminded again that history is not meaningless. We go on to read in verses 42-43:

V. Daniel 11:42-43 — He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites [**allies and neighbors of Egypt and part of the territory of the king of the south; cf. Greidanus**] shall follow in his train.

When the King of Rome (Octavian / Caesar Augustus) defeated Cleopatra and Marc Antony ("the king of the south" and the "king of the north"), the land of Egypt with all of its renowned wealth came under Roman control.

"The seizure of Cleopatra's treasure enabled [Octavian] to pay off his veterans."
(Britannica.com; cf. history.com)

"When [Augustus] brought the treasures of the Ptolemies [Egyptians] to Rome at his Alexandrian triumph, so much cash passed into private hands that the interest rate on

loans dropped sharply, while real estate values soared.” (Suetonius, “Lives of the Twelve Caesars”; 2.41.)

The use of Egypt's immense land rents to finance the Empire's operations resulted from Augustus's conquest of Egypt... As it was effectively considered Augustus's private property rather than a province of the Empire, it became part of each succeeding emperor's patrimonium... The highly productive agricultural land of Egypt yielded enormous revenues that were available to Augustus and his successors to pay for public works and military expeditions. (Wikipedia)

Once again, if this is the fulfillment of these verses then it's a fulfillment that's amazing, explicit, and obvious (“He [the king of Rome] shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt”).

Remember how earlier in Daniel 11 the angel would refer to “he” or “him” without telling us that “he” or “him” was now a totally different king. That seems to be what happens again in verses 44-45.

VI. Daniel 11:44–45 (cf. NET; Hebrew) — But news from the east and the north shall alarm *him* [**the Caesar / the king of Rome; now Nero**], and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the seas [**the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea**], toward the glorious holy mountain [**Jerusalem**]. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.

Looking back at history from our vantage point today, it appears that this is Nero – the 9th Caesar who sent his troops to crush the revolt in Judea in AD 67. At the exact same time that Judea was revolting against Rome in the east, Gaul was revolting against Rome in the north (the revolt began in AD 68; Gaul was in the northern region while Judea was in the eastern region; **see map on bottom of page 14**). The Roman historian, Suetonius, describes very vividly Nero's alarm and rage upon hearing that additional armies had joined the revolt in Gaul (the goal of which was to replace Nero with a better emperor).⁴ We know Nero was also alarmed and enraged at the revolt of the Jews in Judea. He went out (in the person of his military generals Vespasian and Titus⁵) to destroy and devote many to destruction and he did indeed pitch his *palatial tents* between the seas, outside the city of Jerusalem. Josephus describes the arrangement of the Roman camp during the siege of Jerusalem like this:

“The outward circumference resembled a wall, and was adorned with towers... They also erected four gates, one at every side of the circumference... They divided the camp within into two streets, very conveniently, and placed the tents of the commanders in the middle; **but in the very midst of all is the general's [Vespasian's] own tent in the**

⁴ “Thus, he [Nero] intended to depose all army commanders and provincial governors, and to execute them on a charge that they were all involved in a single conspiracy; and to dispatch all exiles everywhere for fear they might join the rebels; and all Gallic residents at Rome, because they might be implicated in the rising. He further considered giving the army free permission to pillage Gaul.” (The Lives of the Twelve Caesars, 6.43.).

⁵ If Nero had gone out himself, he certainly couldn't have gone to the east and to the north at the same time.

nature of a temple, insomuch that it appears to be a city built on the sudden.” (Wars of the Jews, 3.5.2)

And yet even as Nero’s troops were surrounding Jerusalem to destroy it, Nero himself was declared an enemy of the state by the Roman Senate and therefore, “having none to help him,” he committed suicide and “came to his end.” Once again, here is an amazing, obvious, and explicit fulfillment. And so we come to chapter twelve, and verse one:

VII. Daniel 12:1 — At that time [in the days of the Caesars Nero and Vespasian] shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of *your people*. And there shall be a time of trouble [for your people; cf. 10:14], such as never has been since there was a nation till that time [67-70 AD]. But at that time *your people* shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.

What is this unparalleled time of trouble – such as never had been since there was a nation until that time? Jesus described the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD like this:

➤ Matthew 24:21 (cf. Mk. 13:19) — For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

If we think this can’t have been fulfilled in 67-70 AD then we probably haven’t understood the horrors of those years on the one hand or the hyperbole of this expression on the other (cf. Ezek. 5:9; Dan. 9:12; Exod. 11:6; Joel 2:1-2). We also have to remember that in both Daniel and Luke this time of great tribulation is not worldwide but a localized one in Judea (cf. Lk. 21:23-24). Jesus said that this “great tribulation” for the Jews living in Judea would take place before the generation of His own day had passed away (cf. Mat. 24:34). So we see that these verses in Daniel have been fulfilled already in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. But if that’s so, how can we say that Daniel’s people were delivered, everyone whose name was found written in the book? It was Jesus Himself who warned His disciples to flee from Judea when they saw the approach of the Roman armies.

➤ Luke 21:21–22 (cf. Mat. 24:15-20) — Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.

The early church historian, Eusebius, writes in the 4th century:

“The people of the Church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ traveled from Jerusalem, so that... holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea.” (Eusebius, “Church History,” 3.5.3.)

Epiphanius, a Bishop who lived at the same time as Eusebius speaks of “the exodus from Jerusalem when all the disciples went to live in Pella because Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and to go away since it would undergo a siege.” (Epiphanius, “Panarion,” 29.7.7-8.)⁶

The early Jewish Christians were delivered physically when they fled from Judea after having been warned by God ahead of time (cf. Dan. 3:28; 6:16, 20). But more importantly, they were all delivered spiritually from being cut off as God’s covenant people⁷ (cf. Mat. 3:7-12). Listen to what John the Baptist said when he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism:

- Matthew 3:7–10 (cf. Mat. 21:43) — Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? [A wrath about to be foreshadowed in the destruction of Jerusalem.] Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father [so we’re automatically in the covenant],” for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham [he did this when He grafted the Gentiles in to the covenant as children of Abraham]. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees [to cut you off from the covenant people]. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Who were the people who were delivered from this terrible fate of being cut off from the covenant – a fate graphically pictured in the destruction of Jerusalem? It was only the believing remnant of the Jews (those whose names were found written in the book) who were spared this judgment and who instead became the nucleus and the first fruits of this New Covenant people – the Church. While the earthly city and temple were destroyed, this spiritual remnant of the Jewish people—whose names were found written in the book—were made citizens of the heavenly city and temple that can never be destroyed. It’s perhaps in light of this “dual” salvation—a deliverance from being cut off both physically from the earth and spiritually from the covenant—that we hear the Apostle Peter’s exhortation to the Jews in Jerusalem:

- Acts 2:40 — And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves [be saved/delivered] from this crooked generation.”

And so we see how those who believed the message that Peter was preaching were indeed *delivered* “at that time,” just as the angel said to Daniel (cf. Rom. 10:5-13).

Conclusion

⁶ “For after all those who believed in Christ had generally come to live in Perea, in a city called Pella of the Decapolis of which it is written in the Gospel that it is situated in the neighbourhood of the region of Batanaea and Basanitis, Ebion’s preaching originated here after they had moved to this place and had lived there.” (Epiphanius, “Panarion,” 30.2.7)

“Aquila, while he was in Jerusalem, also saw the disciples of the apostles flourishing in the faith and working great signs, healings, and other miracles. For they were such as had come back from the city of Pella to Jerusalem and were living there and teaching. For when the city was about to be taken and destroyed by the Romans, it was revealed in advance to all the disciples by an angel of God that they should remove from the city, as it was going to be completely destroyed. They sojourned as emigrants in Pella, the city above mentioned in Transjordania. And this city is said to be of the Decapolis.” (Epiphanius, “On Weights and Measures,” 15)

⁷ The spiritual nature of this deliverance is seen in that it is limited only to true believers (those whose names are written in the book) and in the fact that it is manifested in their resurrection (cf. 12:2).

If you were reading this passage at home in your own private devotions or reading it aloud to your family what “applications” would you draw? We’re certainly reminded again of God’s *absolute* sovereignty over history, but here in this last verse we’re especially encouraged to know that it’s not just historical events that are written in God’s book, but *names* – even *our* names! We remember that our names are not written in God’s book based upon His foresight of who *will* believe. This book isn’t God’s record of what He found out by looking ahead. Our names are written in God’s book as an expression not of our self-determination but of God’s sovereign decree and of His infinite free grace. *Our names written by God in God’s book* reminds us powerfully that *He* is the ultimate cause and guarantee of our faith in Him and of our perseverance in that faith until the end. Therefore, our names written in God’s book should be for us a constant source of comfort and peace and a beautiful, wonderful security (cf. Rev. 13:8).

But even as we rejoice in this, we also know that our names written in the book can never lead us to complacency. If God is the cause and guarantee of our faith and perseverance, then we are the ones who believe and who persevere – never forced, but always freely; never automatically, but always with the utmost diligent effort and striving. And so the amazing reality of these names written in God’s book is a constant exhortation to all of us to believe and be saved and persevere in faith, and to *know* and *be assured* that our names—that *my name*—is written in that book and will be found written there on the last day. Jesus said:

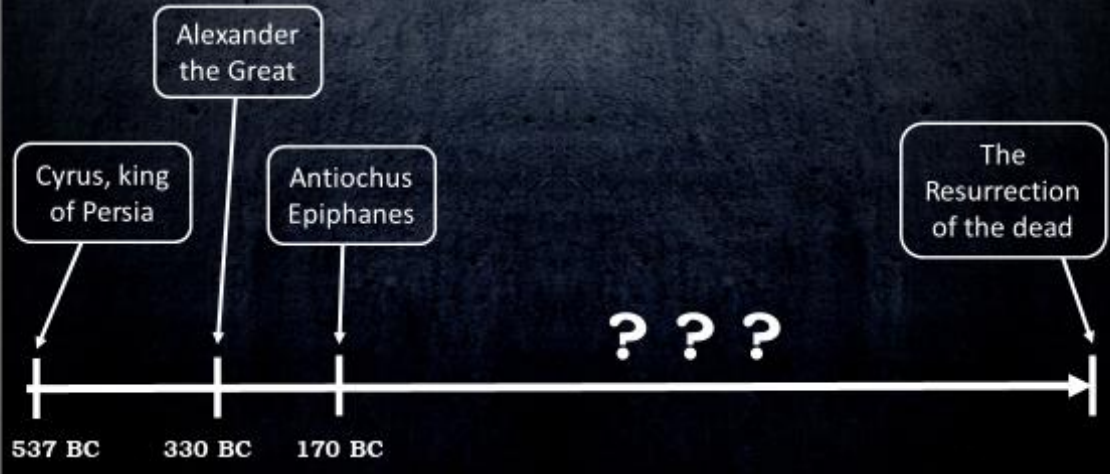
- Revelation 3:5 (cf. 13:8; 20:15) — *The one who conquers* will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot *his name* out of the book of life. I will confess *his name* before my Father and before his angels.

Is your name written in the book? Have you repented of your sin and are you trusting wholly in Christ? Will we be those who conquer? May we all be able to answer: “YES! By God’s sovereign grace, we will.

The "Book of Truth"

The 2nd
Beast
(Persia)

The 3rd
Beast
(Greece)

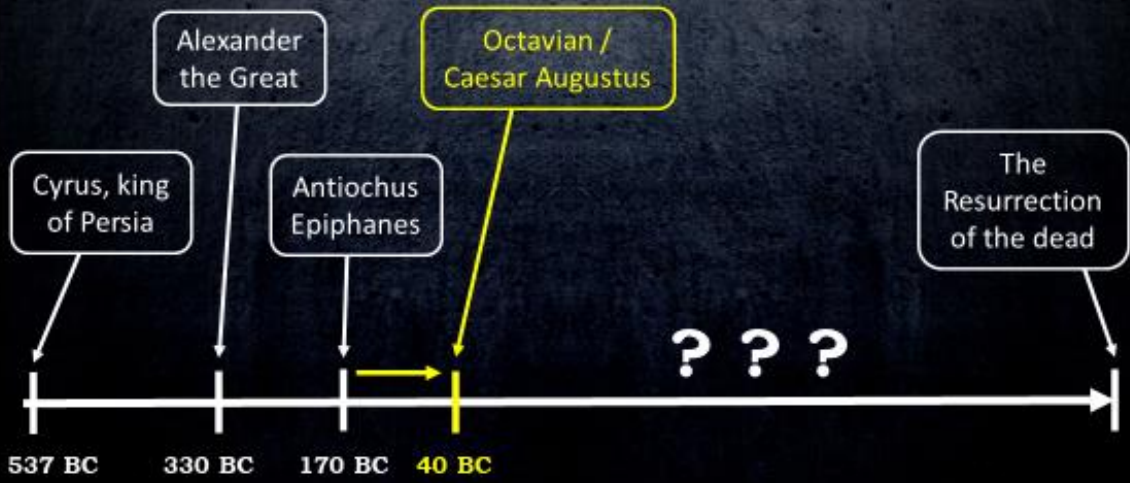


The "Book of Truth"

The 2nd
Beast
(Persia)

The 3rd
Beast
(Greece)

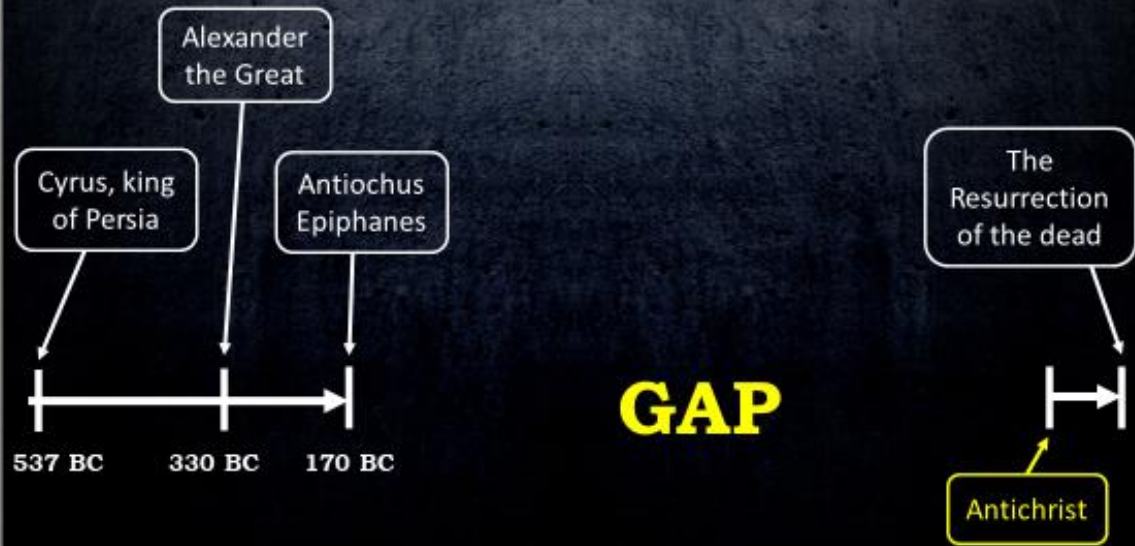
The 4th
Beast
(Rome)



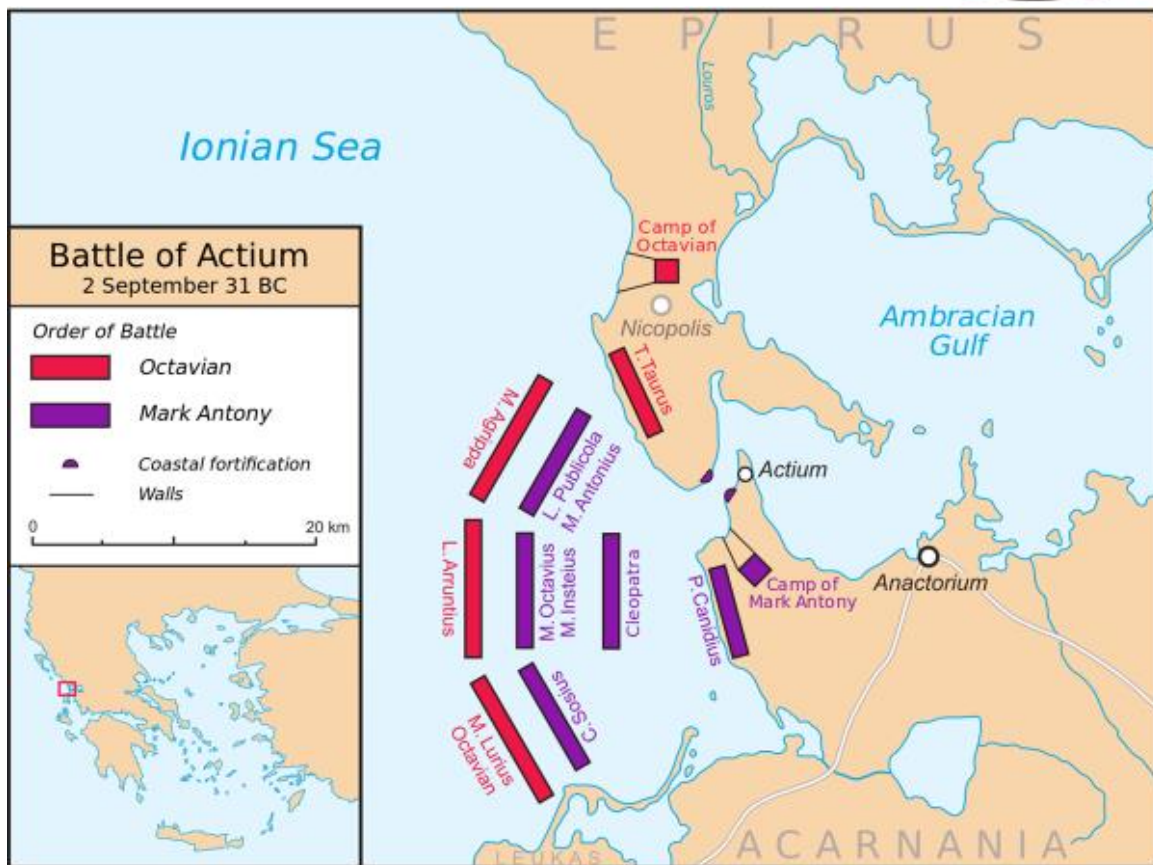
The "Book of Truth"

The 2nd
Beast
(Persia)

The 3rd
Beast
(Greece)



Battle of Actium (31 BC)







- Roman empire to death of Caesar, 44 BCE
- Roman empire to death of Augustus, 14 CE
- Roman empire to death of Trajan, 117 CE

