

## The “Already” and the “Not Yet” in Daniel

### Introduction

Last week, we listened in as the angel revealed to Daniel what was inscribed in the “book of truth.” We saw that this book is the record of what God, in the mystery of His sovereignty has infallibly decreed for the history of the world – a history that revolves around God’s redeeming purposes for His people in this world. It’s because this history revolves around God’s saving purposes that the angel can characterize it as a “great conflict.” Behind all earthly conflict, there’s a spiritual conflict in the heavenly places as Satan seeks to undermine and derail God’s saving purposes – to steal, and to kill, and to destroy (cf. Jn. 10:10), and especially to destroy the “seed” (the people) through whom the promised Messiah would come. It’s in light of this big picture that we read last week about all the details of politics, and plotting and intrigue, and assassinations, and marriage alliances, and stratagems, and battles and war, and rebellions, and cruelty and oppression, and suffering and bloodshed, and God’s people caught in the middle of it all. We saw how the fact that all of these things are the unfolding of what God has inscribed in the book of truth gives meaning to what would otherwise be nothing more than a “trash bag of random coincidences torn open in a wind.” The very fact that such a book exists—and that God has written it—is a wonderful incentive to live faithfully and obediently even in the midst of suffering and persecution – to *fight* the good fight of faith and *take hold* of that eternal life to which we have been called.

Last week, we followed along in the book of truth all the way from Cyrus (the first Persian king of Babylon) to Alexander the Great (who defeated the Persians and established the Greek empire), and then to the kings of the north and the south (the Seleucids and the Ptolemies) all the way to the eighth king of the north (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) and the sixth king of the south (Ptolemy VI). But, of course, God’s book of truth doesn’t stop with Antiochus Epiphanes in 170 BC. In showing Daniel things that were written in the book of truth, the angel is going to take him, in the end, all the way to the resurrection of the dead – the resurrection of some to everlasting life and of others to shame and everlasting contempt (12:2). The question is, how does the angel get there? (**See Chart on p. 6**) You might recognize this same question from chapters 2 and 7 and 9 – and even from chapter 8.

The “problem” with Daniel is that five times he appears to take us in a dream or a vision—and in a sort of sequential, chronological order—all the way to the end of the world and the final judgment and the consummation of all things; and yet if we’re reading with any attentiveness at all we’re going to have to be wondering how he gets there – because looking back at history it could seem to us like entire ages of the world have been skipped. Daniel wouldn’t have had this problem living when he did, but we do today. This is why many people find the book of Daniel so hopelessly confusing and others see it only as an end times chart that has no application to us. So what is the solution to this “problem”? How can we learn to read Daniel and be edified and filled with the true peace and joy of wisdom and understanding?

## **I. Daniel 2**

Remember Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image of gold, silver, bronze, and iron mixed with clay – representing the four successive kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome? Remember how a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand and how it broke in pieces the great image of gold, silver, bronze, and iron mixed with clay so that it became like chaff that the wind carried away? And remember how that stone then became a great mountain that filled the whole earth, representing the triumph of the everlasting kingdom of God over the kingdom of fallen man? We read in chapter two:

- Daniel 2:44 — And **in the days of those kings** the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.

So how do we move from the “days of those kings” (Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) to the everlasting kingdom of God? Can you answer this question now, for yourself? There are some who believe that the promised kingdom of the Messiah has not yet come at all and that the stone has not yet struck the image at all. So the Dispensationalists would insert a “gap” in the middle of the Roman Empire so that there will be a “revived Roman Empire” of some kind in the future, and only then, at the very end of the world (in the days of those kings of the revived Roman Empire), will the stone finally be cut from the mountain and strike the image and become a mountain that fills all the earth (**see 1<sup>st</sup> chart on p. 7**). The Dispensationalist does this because he believes that God has two separate plans for two separate covenant peoples (Israel and the Church; but that would require two separate “new covenants” when there’s only one new covenant). Since God is showing Daniel the future of Israel, the history of the church (God’s “other” covenant people) has nothing whatever to do with these things. The church age is not represented at all in this vision – *or in any of Daniel’s visions*. Therefore the church age is the “gap” that’s inserted by the Dispensationalists in chapters 2, 7, 8, 9, and 11, and this “gap” is how they get from “the days of those kings” (of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and ancient Rome) to the everlasting kingdom of God at the very end of the world. It’s neat and tidy and convenient. The “only” problem, I would argue, is that it’s simply not biblical.

The “mystery” that’s revealed in the New Testament is that the kingdom comes not *just* suddenly, in the *end*, but *also* gradually – like a mustard seed growing into a tree and like leaven permeating a loaf of bread (Mat. 13:31-33; cf. Lk. 17:20-21). The “mystery” that’s now been revealed to us is that before the kingdom is consummated at the end of the world, there is a period when it’s “already” here and “not yet” here (**see 2<sup>nd</sup> chart on p. 7**). This expression isn’t just a “cool” phrase for us to learn; it encapsulates a foundational Gospel reality that enables us to read Daniel and be edified and filled with the true peace and joy of wisdom and understanding. It’s this “already”/“not yet” that helps us understand how the promised kingdom of God in the rule of His Messiah, the Son of David, is already here, but not yet consummated – how the stone has already struck the image and yet the fallen kingdom of man still exists alongside the everlasting kingdom of God like tares growing up with the wheat (Mat. 13:24-30, 36-43). Do you see the difference between the “gap” and the beautiful Gospel truth of the “already”/“not yet”? This explains how we move from the days of those kings to the everlasting

kingdom of God that fills all the earth. We have the same issue again in chapter seven, which is more detailed than chapter two.

## **II. Daniel 7**

Remember the four beasts that came up out of the sea, representing once again the four successive kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome? (**See 1<sup>st</sup> chart on p. 8**) Remember the ten horns of the fourth beast and the little horn that came up last and how the little horn and the fourth beast itself were judged by the Ancient of Days and their dominion taken away and given to the one like a son of man and to all the saints of the Most High? The question is, how do we get from the fourth beast (Rome) with its ten horns and final little horn to the everlasting, indestructible kingdom of the one like a son of man? Once again, the Dispensationalists insert a gap because they believe Daniel's visions have nothing to do with the church as a completely separate covenant people of God (**see 2<sup>nd</sup> chart on p. 8**). Most of the Reformed, however, "stretch" the fourth and last beast so that "Rome" actually covers this entire church age (first it's literal, then it's symbolic); they stretch the fourth and last beast so that today we're still waiting for that final "little horn" to appear, and we're still waiting for the Ancient of Days to take His seat and for the one like a son of man to receive the kingdom (**see 1<sup>st</sup> chart on p. 9**). Can you see the problem here? Can you see what we're forgetting? Here the Reformed seem to forget the "already" and the "not yet" — the Son of Man has "already" been presented before the Ancient of Days and received the kingdom (when He ascended into heaven and sat down enthroned at the right hand of God); the Beast and the "little horn" have "already" been judged and cast out, and yet we still wait in these days of imminence—of "anytime now," of "already" and "not yet"—for the full consummation of these realities. The original "little horn" has already been judged and cast out, but the spirit of the little horn still lives on as the "spirit of antichrist" (1 Jn. 4:3). The saints have already received the kingdom, and yet they're still persecuted by the beast. It's the previously unrevealed mystery of these days of imminence—of "already" and "not yet," of the mustard seed and the leaven and the tares growing up among the wheat—that helps us understand how the little horn has already come and been judged (Titus, the 11<sup>th</sup> Caesar of Rome and the evil spiritual power behind him) and yet how we still await the full manifestation of that judgment at the appearing of Christ in power and glory (**see 2<sup>nd</sup> chart on p. 9**). In this way there's no need to resort to stretching the fourth beast so we can arrive at the end of the world. The fourth beast with its ten horns and final little horn has already come and been replaced with the everlasting and indestructible kingdom of the Son of Man – though we're living still in this wonderful hope-filled time of "already" / "not yet."

## **III. Daniel 8**

In chapter eight, Daniel sees a vision of a Ram with two horns (one higher than the other) and a Goat with a single horn (**see 1<sup>st</sup> chart on p. 10**), and then four horns, and then a little horn and the angel tells him that this Ram and Goat represent respectively the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece. In other words, this vision in chapter eight never goes beyond Greece; we never get to that fourth kingdom that immediately precedes the coming of the kingdom of God. Instead, it takes us to Alexander the Great (the single horn) and then to the kingdoms that his empire was divided up into (the four horns), and finally to Antiochus Epiphanes (the little horn), and that's

where it stops. But even though this vision only takes us as far as Antiochus Epiphanes in 170 BC, notice the language the angel uses:

- **Daniel 8:17, 19** — Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for **the time of the end**... Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to **the appointed time of the end**. (See **2<sup>nd</sup> chart on p. 10**)

When we hear language like this, we automatically think of the end of the world, but that's not the case here. The end, here, is not so much the end of the world (though many Dispensationalists insert another gap here to make it about the end of the world), but rather the end of a certain period of time – the end of an age. The official end of that age didn't actually come with Antiochus Epiphanes (170 BC) because we know there's still a fourth beast that comes after the third, but in terms of the scope of *this* vision and in light of the fact that for Daniel the coming of Antiochus IV was still 360 years in the future it was certainly not inaccurate to say that this vision referred to “the time of the end.” What end? The end of the Old Covenant age with the Old Covenant city and temple and people. *That* end. And yet the end of the Old Covenant age at the first coming of the Messiah is what guarantees and brings even within itself the end of all things at the final appearing of Christ. Can you see how the end of the Old Covenant age is intimately connected with the end of the world even though these two things are separated by these days of imminence – of “already” and “not yet”? The end of the Old Covenant age is, in itself, the harbinger of the end of the world. So you could say that we're living today “between the ends.”

#### **IV. Daniel 9**

In chapter nine, we see that seventy sevens are decreed about Daniel's people and the holy city to bring in final salvation. Can you guess what the question is? The question is, in these seventy sevens how do we get from Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem all the way to the final, eschatological salvation of God's people – their eternal Jubilee and Sabbath rest? We already know what the Dispensationalists do – they insert a “gap” in the seventy sevens (**see 1<sup>st</sup> chart on p. 11**). This gap is based on the belief that one day God will be pleased to be worshiped again with animal blood sacrifices in a rebuilt earthly city and temple. When God is finished with his plan for us, He'll go back to His “other” covenant people. Because I reject this belief, *therefore* I must reject the gap.

So we're left again with the question: In these seventy sevens how do we get from Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem all the way to the final salvation of God's people? Some of the Reformed do more “stretching” here or even see different *kinds* of “gaps” so that this vision of the seventy sevens still brings us all the way to the end of the world and a final antichrist figure. It's complicated. But once again, they seem to be forgetting the power and the beauty of the “already” and the “not yet.”

What we've seen very clearly is that the seventy sevens have already been fulfilled. The eternal Jubilee and Sabbath rest of God's people is already here in Christ and the New Covenant age with its heavenly city and temple while the Old Covenant age with its earthly city and temple have passed away. The transgression and covenant breaking of God's people has been ended, the

guilt of our has been sealed up, iniquity has been atoned for once for all, we have been given the gift of an everlasting righteousness, vision and prophet have been sealed, and a most holy—the true temple that is Jesus—has been anointed. And yet, of course, the full consummation of all these things that we already enjoy through the Spirit is still “not yet.” Notice how Daniel 9 once again uses the language of “the end” to refer not to the end of the world but rather to the end of the Old Covenant age as it was manifested in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

- Daniel 9:26–27 — After the sixty-two sevens, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince—the one who is coming—shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. **Its end** shall come with a flood, and **to the end** there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he [the Messiah] shall confirm a covenant with many for one seven, and in the middle of the seven he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease [by his death on the cross]. And on the wing of abominations shall come desolation, until **the decreed end** is poured out on the desolate [the city of Jerusalem].”

Once again, the “end,” here, is not the end of the world, but the end of the Old Covenant age. And yet the end of the Old Covenant age also guarantees and brings within itself the end of all things at the final appearing of Christ when the New Jerusalem, of which we are citizens even now, finally comes down out of heaven from God. The end of the Old Covenant age is tied together with the end of the world even though these two things are separated by these days of imminence—of “already” and “not yet”—in which we’re living now. The end of the Old Covenant age is, in itself, the harbinger of the end of the world. And so we’re living between the ends (see **2<sup>nd</sup> chart on p. 11**). This brings us, then, to this last section of Daniel and this fourth and final vision of Daniel.

## **V. Daniel 10-12**

Notice what the angel says to Daniel in chapter ten:

- Daniel 10:14 — [I] came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days [the end of the days].

The end of what days? First and foremost, the end of the days of the Old Covenant with the coming of Christ and the eschatological destruction of the earthly city and temple in 70 AD.\* And yet contained in Christ’s coming is the seed and the promise of his second coming. Contained in the end of the Old Covenant age is the seed and the promise of the end of all things. And so the two “ends”—separated by these days of imminence and “already”/“not yet”—are really in a sense just a single “end.” In light of the scope of the vision in Daniel chapter eight, the angel could refer to the days of Antiochus Epiphanes as the time of the end; however, in light of the scope of the vision here in chapters 11 and 12, the time of the end must be pushed further out, beyond the days of Antiochus Epiphanes.

- Daniel 11:27 — And as for the two kings [Antiochus IV and Ptolemy VI]... they shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for the end is yet to be at the time appointed.

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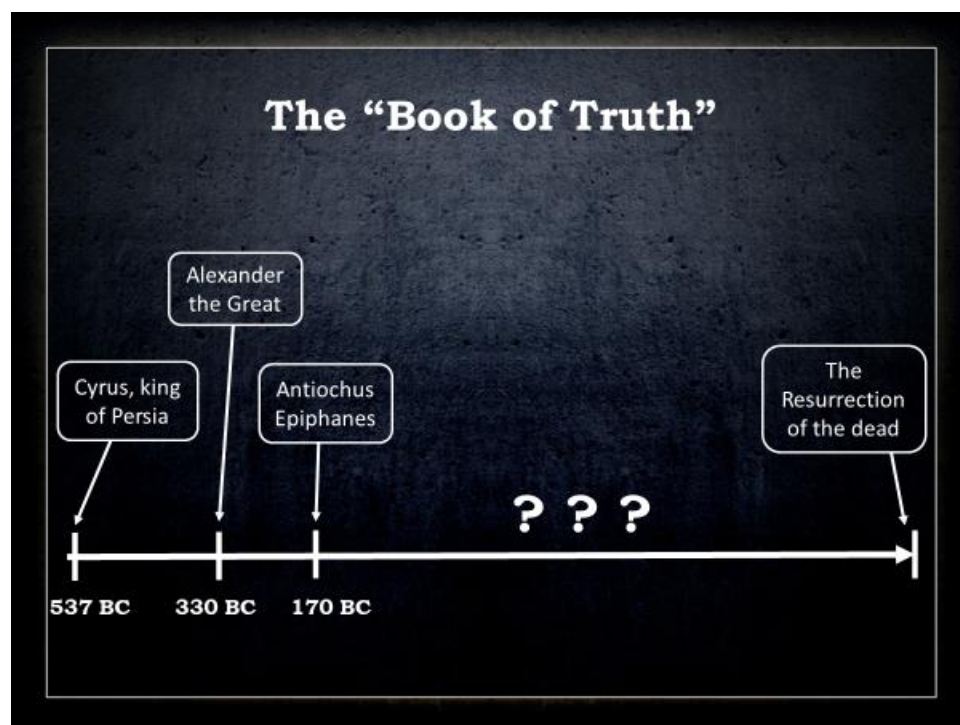
\* The angel tells Daniel: “I came to make you understand what is to happen **to your people** at the end of the days.”

- Daniel 11:35 — [In the days of Antiochus Epiphanes] some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

That’s where we left off last week. But while the vision in chapter eight ended with the little horn between the goat’s eyes (which was Antiochus Epiphanes), this vision keeps going, taking us even further into the future – to the appointed time of the end, even all the way to the resurrection of the dead. The question is, how do we get there (**See chart below**)? Can we find something in these verses to stretch? Is there any good reason we can find for inserting a gap? Or should we come back one final time to that powerful Gospel reality of the “already” and the “not yet” of Messiah’s kingdom – even to the “already” and the “not yet” of the resurrection of the dead, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt? Is the resurrection of the dead already here *and* not yet here?

### Conclusion

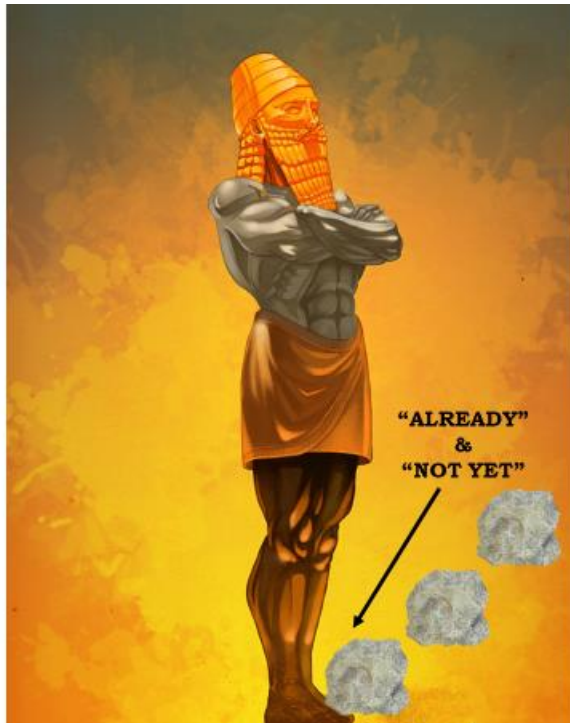
Why do I take the time to go over these things with you – who are God’s saints and holy ones? There is only one answer. Because this is the only way for us to learn to read Daniel for ourselves and be edified and filled with the true peace and joy of wisdom and understanding. This is the only way for us to see the full depth and riches of the Gospel in Daniel. May God open our eyes and help us to learn this wisdom – and, therefore, *live* wisely.





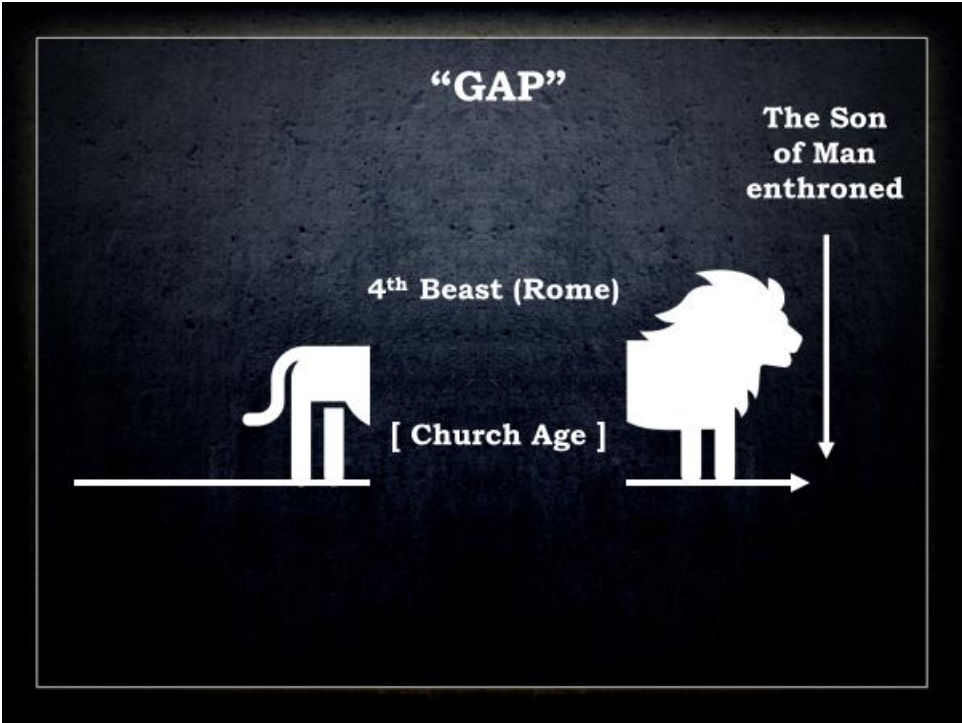
**"Gap"**

**"NOT YET"**

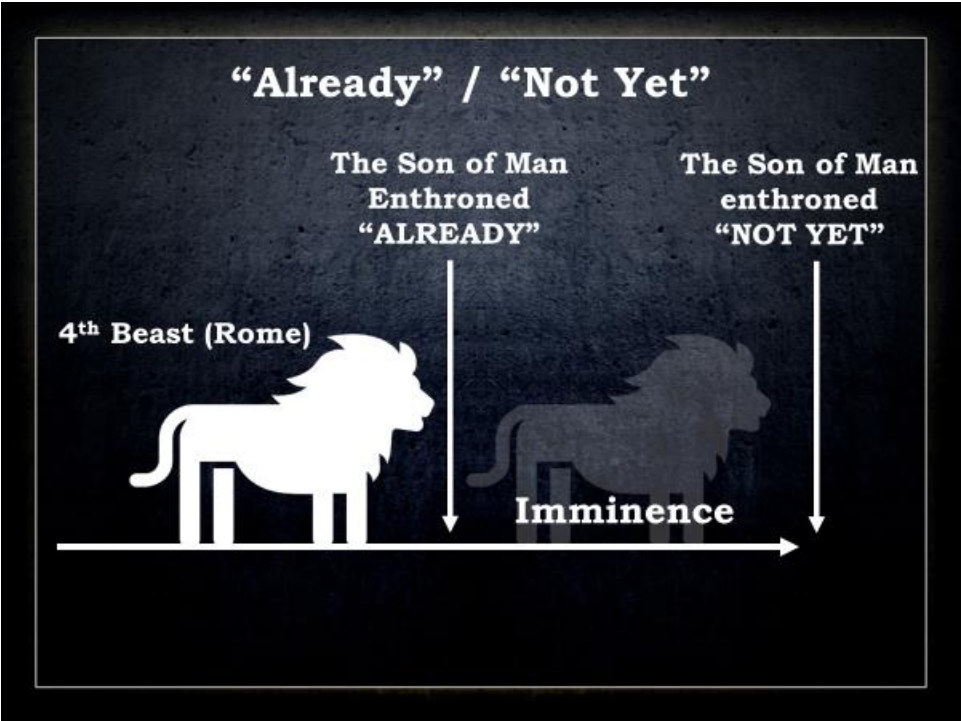
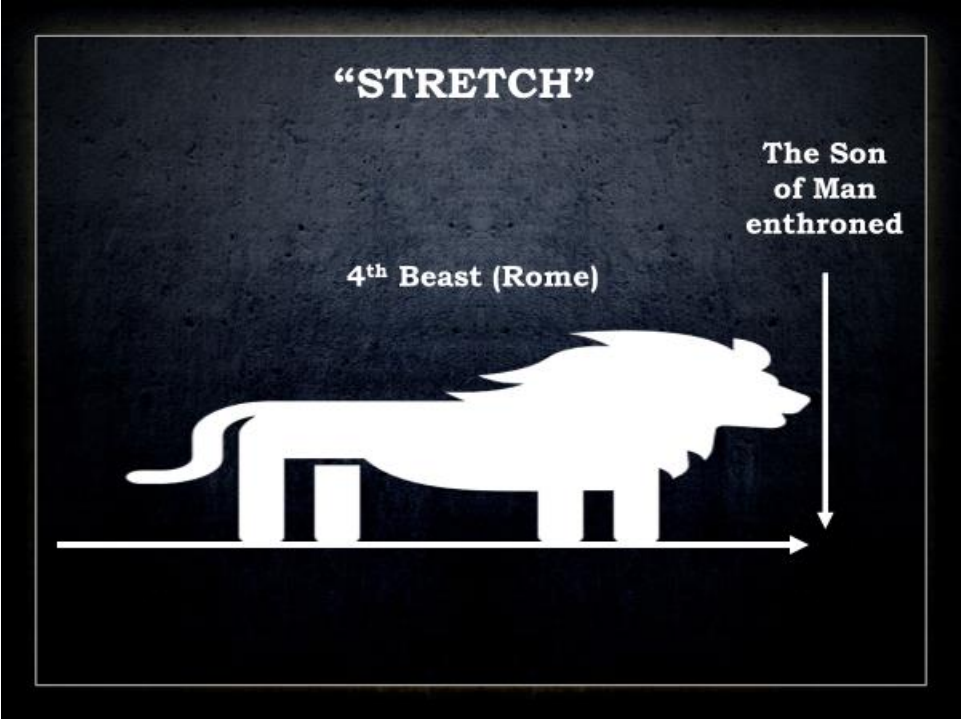


**"ALREADY"**  
&  
**"NOT YET"**











## Daniel 8

□ Daniel 8:17, 19

Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for **the time of the end**... Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to **the appointed time of the end**.

Timeline:

- 537 BC: Cyrus, king of Persia
- 330 BC: Alexander the Great
- 170 BC: Antiochus Epiphanes

