

THE R.U.S.H. BIBLE STUDY

THE INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIOD



KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT FAST

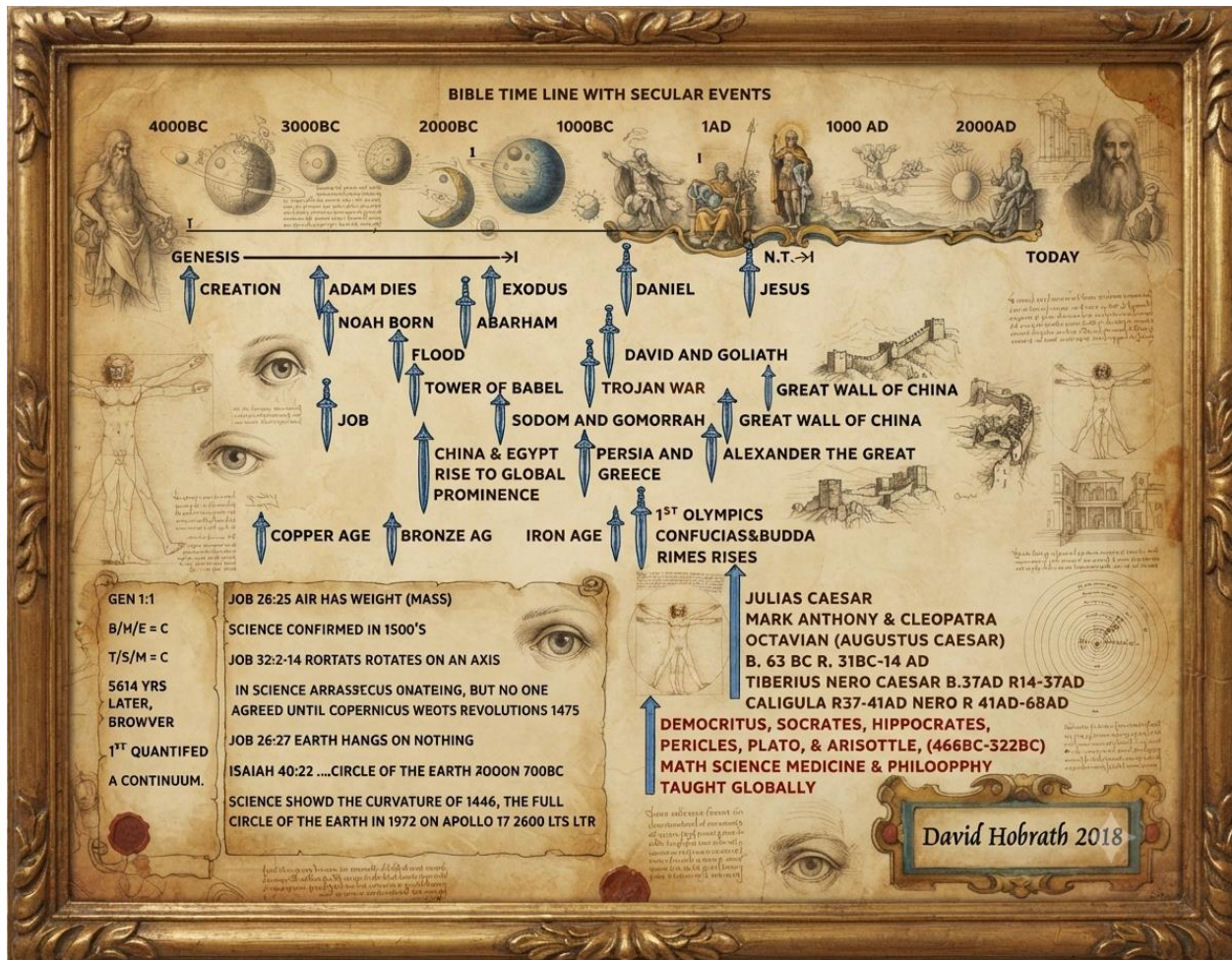


WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY FIRST EDITION 2020 VER.26

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THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD is considered to cover roughly four hundred forty-four years, spanning the end of the ministry of Malachi (c. 436 BC) to the appearance of the Archangel Gabriel to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist in the early 1st century AD. It falls completely with-in the age of Hellenistic Judaism. (516 BC-70 AD).

In this lesson we will study this period, to show how God uses governments and global leaders to fulfill His purpose and how He prepared the world for the arrival of His son, Jesus Christ our Lord.



In the chart above you see above the time line in the period before Jesus, 4 red letters.

P.G.I.R.

They stand for 3 empires that occupied and governed Israel, in succession, and a short period of independance. All predicted in Daniel 2, 7-8, and 11. They are: The Persians, The Greeks, Independence, & The Romans.

The Persians

This first world empire began with Cyrus II's conquest of his fellow Iranians, the Medes, in about 550 BC, and came to an end in 330 BC with the death of Darius III, following the incursion of a young Alexander the Great and his Greek forces.

At its greatest extent the Persian Empire stretched from Libya in the west (Africa) to the Indus River (Tibet) in the east. Cyrus's victory over Nabonidus of Babylon in 539 BC and the resultant release of Hebrews from Babylonian exile gave him significant standing in several biblical books, which also refer to subsequent Persian kings and rule.

For my money, Nabonidus has to be Belshazzar from Daniel 5. The name Nabonidus would have to be Belshazzar in a different language. Theoretically, it could be Nebuchadnezzar, but that would force me to use a certain amount of poetic license.

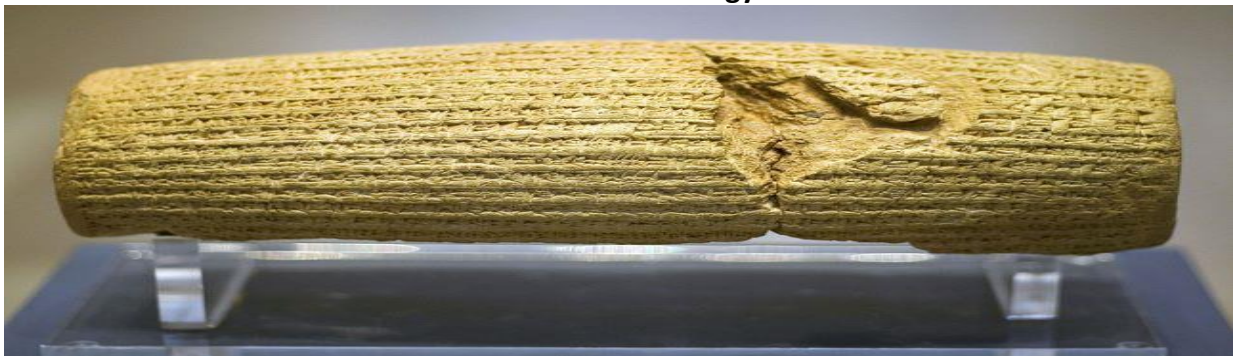
The biblical texts mentioning the Persians include Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah (1–8), I and II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel.

The Jews hated the Babylonians because they were removed from their homeland and forced into exile, the Temple was destroyed etc. so they loved the Persians (most of the time).

Under Ancient Persian rule, many Jews returned from exile to the province that became known as "Yehud" (Judah), the Second Temple was built in Jerusalem, and new theological concepts began to appear in biblical texts. Does anyone know why Israel was called Judah often instead of Israel after the exile? The 10 lost tribes. Conquered by the Assyrian King Shalmaneser V, they were exiled to upper Mesopotamia and Medes, today modern Syria and Iraq. The Ten Tribes of Israel have never been seen since.

The timeframe from Cyrus's entry to Babylon, all the way through to the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem and its temple, to the incursion of Alexander, is denoted by biblical scholars as the "post-exilic," or "restoration" period.

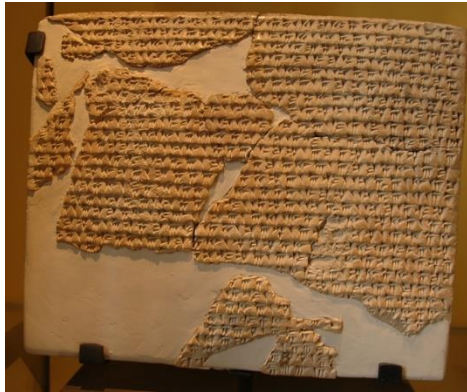
Persian Archaeology



The Cyrus Cylinder.

For many years skeptics doubted that an ancient king would allow captured people to return and re-establish their cultures and religious traditions. This cylinder documents Cyrus the Great's capture of Babylon and restoration as documented in scripture, and the inscriptions ends with this request.....

“May all the gods whom I settled in their sacred centers ask daily of Bêl and Nâbu that my days be long and may they intercede for my welfare.”



The DSF Foundation Inscription of Darius (left) The Tattanai Governor fragment. (right) Describes the Temple per Ester 1:5-6 & Ezra 5. Tattanai and the biblical Tattannu are one in the same. Both the fragment and the Bible describe him as “across the river” as a witness.

SUMMARY:

These three Persian inscriptions confirm an event (the public policy of Cyrus to return exiles to their home countries to rebuild their places of worship), a place (the palace of Darius I at Susa) and a person (Tattenai, governor Beyond-the-River) described in the Bible.

They all contribute to the evidence that the Bible is historically reliable.

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The purpose of the Persian Empire in God's plan is 2 fold. 1st is they would return the Israelites to their homeland. 2nd they developed the world's 1st postal service throughout their empire. This would later be ESSENTIAL in spreading the Gospel.

This postal service would be continued and maintained by all subsequent empires to this day.

The Greek historian Herodotus once wrote in 500 BC: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." He was describing the Persian postal service, which he deeply admired. This same inscription is carved on New Yorks General Post Office Building.

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The Greeks

Alexander the Great defeats Darius (King of Persia) and introduces Greek rule.

Alexander required Greek culture to be taught and followed in all conquered lands. He allowed religious freedom, but promoted Greek lifestyles. The Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint), but on the downside, the pagan/humanistic Greek culture also pervaded society.

The world would soon worship at the feet of the elites. This practice began with Alexander's father, Philipp of Macedon. *(Celebrity worship is also annoyingly pervasive today and for the life of me I just don't get it)*



Philipp of Macedon and wife number 4 Olympias
(from the Museum of Thessaloniki)

In 360 B.C., an extraordinary individual, Philip II of Macedon (northern Greece), came to power. In less than a decade, he had defeated most of Macedon's neighboring enemies: the Illyrians and the Paionians to the west and northwest, and the Thracians to the north and northeast. Phillip II instituted far-reaching reforms at home and abroad. He was what you might consider a renaissance man. By 338 BC he became the undisputed ruler of Greece. He began to spread Greek art culture science and education around his empire but was assassinated in 336 BC. The New Testament city of Philippi whom Paul wrote his epistle of Philippians to was named after him. Alexander the Great, his son, would take over.

Phillip and Alexander share a strong bond as father and son. It is clear Philip wanted the best for his son because he gave him an amazing education. Philip provided him with a strong military and political education, using Alexander as a diplomat in his stead as he conquered the world. He also sent for Aristotle the most learned and exceptional philosopher of this time. Aristotle instilled in Alexander a love for all kinds of learning. He received education in politics philosophy and esoteric studies. These were taught to a small amount of people whom Aristotle deemed worthy. Aristotle as you may know was a student at the Academy founded by Plato, and later a professor there, ultimately starting his own school.

The following are a list of philosophers/scientists that lived during this period of renaissance:

- Hippocrates:** The Father of Medicine, physician, system of prognosis, & clinical study, categorization of diseases, and the "Hippocratic Oath."
- Democritus:** Atomic Theory.
- Pericles:** He was a general that loved architecture education and culture. Part of the Persian conquests and subsequent battles and retired to building. His most notable project still exists to this day. The Parthenon. He also fostered Athenian democracy. He died during the conflict at Sparta.
- Plato:** Founded "The Academy". His real name was Aristocles. Plato was a nickname given to him by his wrestling coach because he was a beast. His most famous contribution is the Theory of forms, where he presents a solution to the problem of universals. He is also the namesake of Platonic love and the Platonic solids. Things to google, Allegory of the Cave, Cardinal virtues, Form of the Good, Theory of forms, Divisions of the soul, Platonic love, Platonic solids, and the City of Atlantis. His teacher was Socrates.
- Socrates:** Socratic dialogue, Socratic intellectualism, Socratic irony, Socratic method, Socratic paradox, Socratic questioning. He coined the phrase "The unexamined life is not worth living."
- Aristotle:** He taught at "The Academy" Physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, aesthetics, poetry, drama, music, rhetoric, psychology, linguistics, economics, politics, meteorology, geology, and government. He was Tutor to Alexander the Great.
- Euclid:** Greek mathematician considered the "father of geometry", he is chiefly known for the *Elements* treatise, which established the foundations of geometry that largely dominated the field until the early 19th century. His system, now referred to as Euclidean geometry, involved new innovations in combination with a synthesis of theories from earlier Greek mathematicians, including Eudoxus of Cnidus, Hippocrates of Chios, Thales and Theaetetus. Along with Archimedes and Apollonius of Perga, Euclid is generally considered among the greatest mathematicians of antiquity, and one of the most influential in the history of mathematics.



Alexander the Great

The reign of Alexander the Great (336–323 B.C.) would change the face of Europe and Asia forever. As crown prince, he received the finest education in the Macedonian court under his celebrated tutor Aristotle. At the age of twenty, already a charismatic and decisive leader, Alexander quickly harnessed the Macedonian forces that his father’s reforms had made into the premier military power in the region.

In 334 B.C., he led a grand army across the Hellespont in Asia. With some 43,000 infantry and 5,500 cavalry, it was the most formidable military expedition ever to leave Greece. The first to reach Asiatic soil, Alexander leapt ashore, cast a spear into the land, and dramatically claimed the continent as “spear won.”

In a remarkable campaign that lasted eleven years, he went on to fulfill his claim and more by conquering the Persian empire of western Asia and Egypt, and by continuing into Central Asia as far as the Indus Valley.

In the end, he was defeated by his own army, which insisted on returning to Greece. On the way back, he died of fever in Babylon at the age of thirty-three.

When Alexander the Great died, his empire would be divided among his generals eventually into 4 pieces of a big fat Greek pie.

The Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt, the Seleucid Empire in the east, the Kingdom of Pergamon in Asia Minor, and Macedon. All led by Greek generals.

Only 2 of these matter to Israel. The Ptolemy’s, and the Seleucid’s.

The Ptolemy’s were great to Israel, allowing free worship and temple services to flourish. The Old Testament was freely produced and circulated and taught without resistance, and often encouraged. But the Seleucids had their eyes on the location of Israel as it connected 3

continents. Europe, Africa and Asia. Antiochus Epiphanes took over in about 175 BC. Make no mistake, he was very much everything that describes a pre-Revelation anti-Christ. Epiphanes did not allow religious freedom. He overthrew the line of the priesthood and went so far as to desecrate the temple with unclean animals and a pagan altar. Swine were strictly unclean to Jews, but Diodorus wrote, Antiochus "sacrificed a great swine at the image of Moses, and at the altar of God that stood in the outward court, and sprinkled them with the blood of the sacrifice. He commanded likewise that the books, by which they were taught to hate all other nations, should be sprinkled with the broth made of the swine's flesh. And he put out the lamp (called by them immortal) which burns continually in the temple. Lastly he forced the high priest and the other Jews to eat swine's flesh" (Diodorus 34:1(4)). The Jews eventually revolted, restoring the lineage of the priesthood and the temple. Violence, war, and infighting characterized the period that followed.



Coin depicting Antiochus IV adorned with a radiate crown, Greek inscription reads ΘΕΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΥ / ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ (King Antiochus, God manifest, bearer of victory)

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The purpose of the Greek Empire in God's plan was uniform language and corporate, free, education. This system of public education would simplify and establish a means of amassing and spreading information, news and innovation in a uniform language. By the time of Christ's ministry the entire world could read and write, or at least had the option, and would speak only 3 languages. Their mother tongue, Greek & Latin, making the Gospel available, teachable and understandable on a global scale. The end result? The Septuagint. The Old Testament in the Greek language.

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Jewish Independence

According to 2 Maccabees, he (Antiochus Epiphanes) died from divinely-inflicted disease:

The following is from *2 Maccabees 9:5-9 (NRSV)*

But the all-seeing Lord, the God of Israel, struck him with an incurable and invisible blow. As soon as he stopped speaking he was seized with a pain in his bowels, for which there was no relief, and with sharp internal tortures— and that very justly, for he had tortured the bowels of others with many and strange inflictions. Yet he did not in any way stop his insolence, but was even more filled with arrogance, breathing fire in his rage against the Jews, and giving orders to drive even faster. And so it came about that he fell out of his chariot as it was rushing along, and the fall was so hard as to torture every limb of his body. Thus he who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea, and had imagined that he could weigh the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all. And so the ungodly man's body swarmed with worms, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of the stench the whole army felt revulsion at his decay.

The Maccabees were a group of Jewish rebel warriors who took control of Judea, which at the time was still part of the Seleucid Empire. They founded the Hasmonean dynasty, which ruled from 167 BCE to 37 BCE, being a fully independent kingdom from about 110 to 63 BC. They reasserted the Jewish religion, expanded the boundaries of Judea by conquest, and reduced the influence of Hellenistic Judaism.

They were formed and led by Judas Maccabeus and his 4 brothers. They called Judas “the hammer”.

According to 1 Maccabees, Antiochus banned many traditional Jewish and Samaritan religious practices: he made possession of the Torah a capital offense and burned the copies he could find; Sabbaths and feasts were banned; circumcision was outlawed, and mothers who circumcised their babies were killed along with their families; and traditional Jewish ritual sacrifice was forbidden. It was said that an idol of Olympian Zeus was placed on the altar of the Temple and that Israelites set up altars to Greek gods and sacrificed "unclean" animals on them.

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The RUSH Bible Study version goes like this:

A devout priest named Mattathias the Hasmonean, leads a revolt against Antiochus soldiers by refusing to worship their pagan god's. He kills a false Jewish priest for offering a sacrifice to a pagan god and escapes under duress to the jungle around Judea with his 5 sons. A year later he dies in the wilderness and those 5 boys came out men. And they came out swinging. Pure guerilla warfare. In relatively short order they march into and take control of Jerusalem, ritually cleanse the temple, reinstate the priesthood and worship with Jonathan Maccabee as High Priest.

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The Jewish festival of Hanukkah celebrates the re-dedication of the Temple following Judah Maccabee's victory over the Seleucids. According to rabbinic tradition, the victorious Maccabees could only find a small jug of oil that had remained uncontaminated by virtue of a seal, and although it only contained enough oil to sustain the Menorah for one day, it miraculously lasted for eight days, by which time further oil could be procured.



Ancient "Freedom of Zion" coins from the Maccabean period found in Modi'in

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The purpose of Jewish Independence in God's plan was that the Jewish nation would remain distinct from the rest of the world as they are "God's Prophetic Clock." Most importantly, the end result of Jewish Independence was that Israel was now looking for the soon coming Messiah.

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The Romans

Pompey of Rome conquered the region in about 63 BC and put the Caesars in charge.



Pompey

Gaius Julius Caesar

Pompey was a general of Rome who was named the “Teenage Butcher”. He joined forces with Crassus and Julius Caesar to form the Triumvirate. The Triumvirate would fade and Julius Caesar would famously cross the Rubicon. By 49 BC Julius Caesar was made Dictator. Chasing Pompey into Egypt, he hooks up with Cleopatra and has a child. He would fight several wars expanding and solidifying his empire and rule for a few years in Rome and is assassinated in 44 BC. Gaius Octavianus Julius Augustus Caesar was Julius Caesar’s Great-nephew and Julius heir. History refers to him by his birth name Octavian, the Bible by his title Caesar Augustus. He is mentioned in Luke 2:1. He ruled from 27 BC-14 AD. Then Tiberius from AD 14-37, Luke 3:1 Matthew 22:17 etc., Claudius Caesar AD 41-54 in Acts 11:28, 17:7 and 18:2, and finally Nero AD 54-68 in Acts 25:8-12,21,25, and Phil. 4:22 among several others.



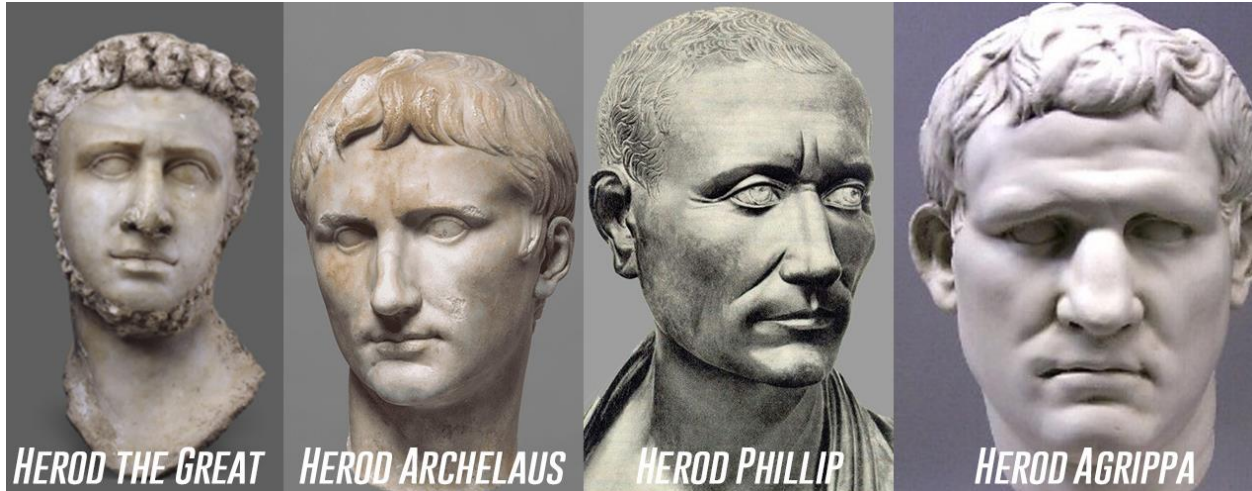
Caesar Augustus

Tiberius Caesar

Claudius Caesar

Nero

Eventually the Herod dynasty was appointed rulers over Israel by the Roman emperors and senate. The Herods were responsible for carrying out the Roman tax gathering and peace, and ruled over the Jews and other residents of Judea.



Several Herods are mentioned in the New Testament—Herod the Great who was Herod when Jesus was born, his son Archelaus, who succeeded him and attempted to have Jesus killed as a child in Matthew 2:22 and Herod Antipas to whom Jesus was sent during His trials prior to His crucifixion (Luke 23). Herod Phillip pictured above is mentioned in Matthew 14:3, and Mark 6:17 in conjunction with the beheading of John the Baptist.

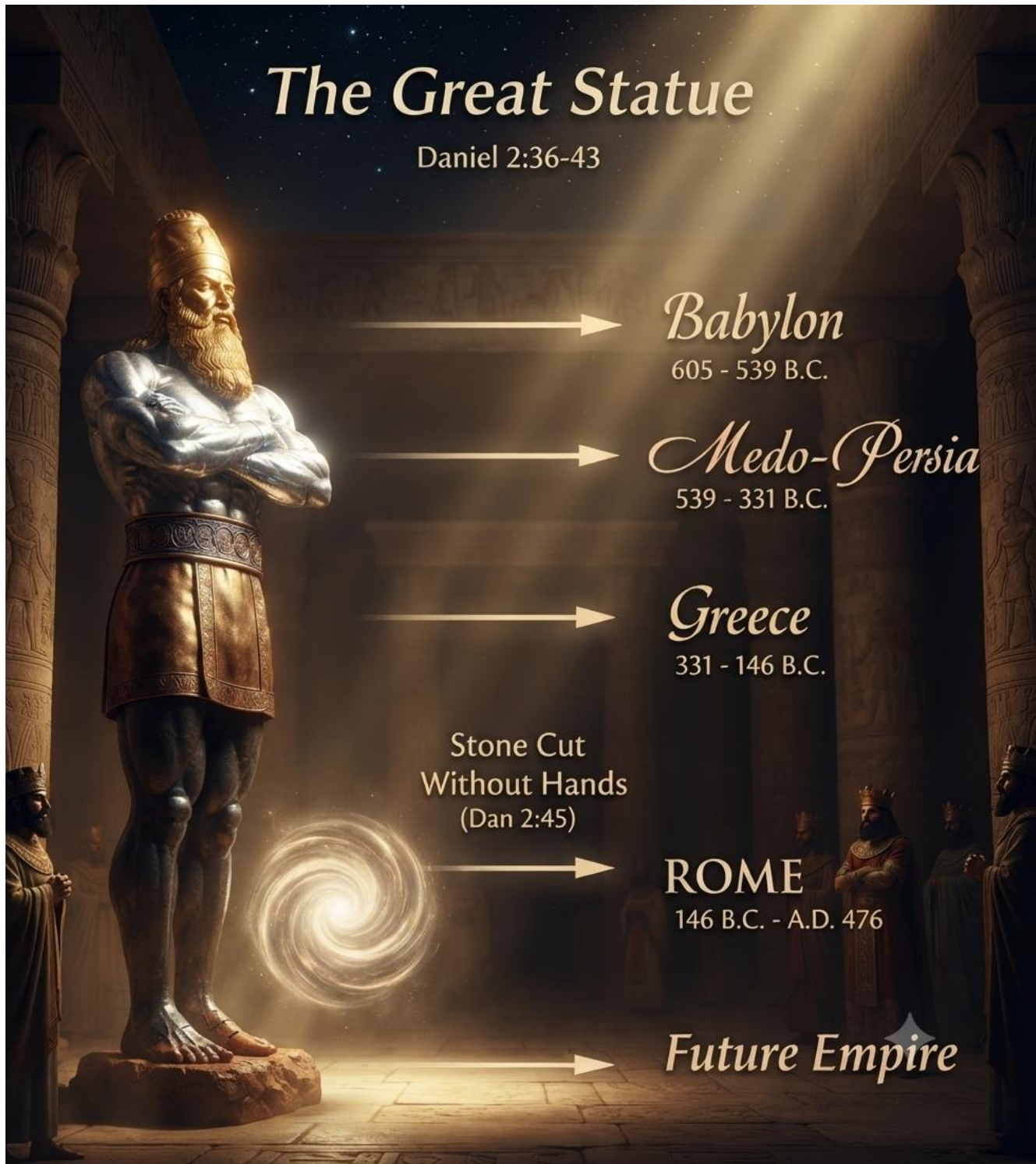
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The purpose of the Romans in God's plan was 3 fold. 1st the census in Luke 2:1 fulfilling the Micah prophesy that the messiah would be born in Bethlehem. 2nd infrastructure. Specifically the Caesars wanted "all roads to lead to Rome". Moderately safe travel was accomplished by the time Jesus was born, allowing the Gospel to spread through the known world. 3rd, Language. Along with Greek, Latin was now being taught globally as well. Later scholars would be able to compare early correspondence in 2 well chronicled languages to compare Biblical translations and meanings with near perfect clarity.

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The Stage is now set for the arrival of The Messiah.

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