The Intertestamental Period

“When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son.”
Galatians 4:4

Chronology at the End of the Old Testament
- 722 BC – Assyria Conquers Israel
- 586 BC – Babylon Conquers Judah
- 538 BC – Persia Conquers Babylon
- 536 BC – Exiles Begin to Return
- 516 BC – Second Temple Completed
- 480 BC – Esther Queen of Persia
- 444 BC – Nehemiah Rebuilds Walls
- 430 BC – Malachi
**Xerxes I**

- Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.)
- Same as biblical Ahasuerus (Persian “Khshayarsha”) in the book of Esther
- Feast of Purim (“lots”) established under him
- Victorious at Thermopylae (300)
- Massive invasion of Greece, failed; battle of Salamis (480 B.C.)

**Persian Rulers**

- Cyrus (556-527 BC)
- Cambyses (527-521 BC)
- Darius Hystaspis (521-586 BC)
- Xerxes (486-465 BC)
- Artaxerxes Longimanus (465-424 BC)
- Xerxes II (424-423 BC)
- Darius Nothus (423-404 BC)
- Artaxerxes Mnemon (404-358 BC)
- Ochus (358-338 BC)
- Arsus (338-336 BC)
- Darius III (336-331 BC)

**Quick Historical Overview**

1. Persian rule (539-331 B.C.; ca. 200 years)
2. Greek rule under Alexander (331-323 B.C.; ca. 10 years)
3. Greek rule under the Ptolemies of Egypt (323-198 B.C.; ca. 125 years)
4. Greek rule under the Seleucids of Syria (198-164 B.C.; ca. 35 years)
5. Independence under the Hasmoneans (164-63 B.C.; ca. 100 years)
Persian Empire: Significant Point

During the Persian period Aramaic began to replace Hebrew as the most commonly spoken language in Judah.

The Hebrew Alphabet also undertook some major changes becoming more like the Aramaic square letter.

A Developing Problem

The Samaritans

➤ Throughout the Persian period the rift between the inhabitants of Judah and of Samaria, begun under Zerubbabel and continued under Ezra and Nehemiah, continued to widen.

➤ Ancestrally, Samaritans claim descent from a group of Israelite inhabitants from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, as well as some descendants from the priestly tribe of Levi, who have connections to ancient Samaria.

➤ The Samaritans do not derive their name from Samaria, but rather from the Hebrew term Shamerim שַמֶרִים, "Keepers of the Law." Late in the fourth century the Samaritans built their own temple to Yahweh, on Mt. Gerizim.

A Developing Problem

The Samaritans

➤ They developed their own worship system and possess a distinct version of the Torah known as the Samaritan Pentateuch.

➤ The tension between the Jews and Samaritans grew through the intertestamental period.

➤ The tension climaxed around 129 BC, when the Jewish Hasmonean king (John Hyrcanus) destroyed the Samaritan temple and devastated Samaria.

➤ This was avenged in 8 AD when the Samaritans defiled the inner sanctuary of the temple.
Tyre

- Fall of Tyre on July 29, 332 B.C.
- Seven month siege

Alexander at Jerusalem

“And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and he was then glad.” (Antiquities 11:8:5).
The high priest Jaddua met the young conqueror outside the city and showed him how he fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel (Dan. 7:6; 8:5-8, 21; 11:3).

World of Alexander
- Cultural interchange from east to west
- Scientific learning
- Hellenization
- Greek language
- Treated the Jews well
- Punished Samaritans
And then he died

On either 10 or 11 June 323 BC, Alexander died in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar II, in Babylon, at age 32.[129]

Aftermath of Alexander’s Death

• Cassander, one of his generals, murdered Alexander’s widow Roxana and his infant son Alexander IV, clearing the way for them, the generals, to claim the rule.
• After seven years of fighting four men emerged as the most powerful:
  • Antigonus (Mediterranean Sea to Asia)
  • Ptolemy Lagi (Egypt and south Syria)
  • Cassander (Macedonia)
  • Lysimachus (Thrace)

Aftermath of Alexander’s Death

• In 312 B.C. the other three Diadochoi contained the overambitious Antigonus, and in the next year Ptolemy’s general Seleucus split off on his own and established himself as ruler of Babylon and Syria.

• The development of four distinct powers seems to fulfill the predictions of Daniel (Dan 7:6; 8:8; 11:4).
Aftermath of Alexander’s Death

• Of special importance to Jewish history were the Greek dynasties of the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Syria; Palestine became a political football between these competing families.
Ptolemy II Philadelphus

- Pharos Lighthouse With a height variously estimated at somewhere in-between 393 and 450 ft, it was for many centuries among the tallest man made structures on Earth.
- Library of Alexandria
- Septuagint
- War with the Seleucids

- In 312 B.C. Ptolemy took advantage of the Jews’ refusal to fight on the Sabbath and entered the city of Jerusalem without opposition (Josephus Contra Apion and Antiquities 12:1:1).
- In general the Jews enjoyed tolerance and peace during the third century, but little in particular is known of the Jews in Judah during this time. Apparently they continued to live under the local rule of the high priest, sending annual tribute to Egypt.

Jews in Egypt ? Alexandria

- Alexandria became an important city for the Jews, with many thousands of Jews living there.
- The Jewish philosopher Philo and the Jewish Christian preacher and apologist Apollos hailed from Alexandria.
- That probably was the place of residence for Joseph and Mary when they fled from Herod with the baby Jesus.
War with the Seleucids

- As soon as Seleucus I split from Ptolemy I in 311 B.C., the two dynasties fought with other for control of Palestine.
- This fighting continued off and on over a hundred years.
- These wars were accurately predicted in Dan 11, where “the king of the north” represents Seleucids, and “the king of the south” represents Ptolemie.

Antioch

- The capital of the Seleucid empire was the new city of, established by Seleucus I to honor his father Antiochus;
- this city often is called Antioch-Syria, to distinguish it from Antioch-Pisidia, a city Paul visited in the book of Acts.
- Where Christianity first made inroads among the Greeks.
- It is also where believers were first called Christians.
- It was the center from which Paul based his missionary travels.
Hannibal and Antiochus III

- The Romans had recently defeated the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War (202 B.C.), and Hannibal came to live under the protection of Antiochus III.
- He attacked Rome on the advice of Hannibal.
- He lost.
- Rome stripped Antiochus III of Asia Minor, and forced him to surrender his navy and his war elephants. They also demanded a huge payment, to be spread over twelve years. To assure payment, which amounted to tons of silver, the Romans took as one of their hostages his younger son, to become Antiochus IV.

Jason and the Hassidim

- While the high priest Onias III was in Antioch defending the rights of the temple, his brother Joshua, who used the Greek name Jason and favored Hellenism, paid a large bribe to Seleuchus and was declared by him to be the new high priest.
- Jason as soon as he became high priest instituted a policy of pro-Hellenism.
166 BC: Antiochus returned to Jerusalem:
– Stripped the Temple of its valuables.
– Massacred 1,000s
– Carried 10,000 captives back to Syria (Josephus)
– Demolished the walls of the city
– Built a tower and supplied it with armed mercenaries
– Desecrated the Temple by erecting an image of Zeus
– Offered a pig on the altar and sprinkled its blood around the temple grounds

Antiochus imposed the following Regulations

• Jews could not assemble for prayer
• Observance of the Sabbath was forbidden
• Possession of the Scriptures was illegal
• Circumcision was illegal
• Dietary laws illegal
• Pagan sacrifices mandated
The Samaritans

- Meanwhile, the Samaritans, eager to protect their interests, assured Antiochus IV of their cooperation. They said they were not Jews, but Sidonians. They renamed their temple on Mt. Gerezim “the temple of Jupiter Hellenius.” This duplicity contributed to increased hatred by the Jews in NT times.

Maccabean revolt began in the Village of Modin

- 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem
- Apelles, Antiochus’ general, demanded the village offer a sacrifice on a pagan altar.
- First demanded that a leader and a priest, named Mattathias offer the sacrifice.
- Mattathias refused.
- Another Jewish man did.
- Mattathias and his five sons killed the Jewish traitor, Antiochus’ general Apelles, and the soldiers.
Mattathais, his five sons, and many others left the village for the Judean hill country.

- In the months that followed, they fought a guerilla war against the stronger Syrian force.
  - Ranks continued to grow
  - Mattathias
  - Became terminally ill
  - Appointed his son Simon as administrator
  - Appointed his oldest son, Judas, as General of the Army

- Judas was called Maccabeus—the Hammer.

- Under Judas' leadership, the Jews recaptured the Temple in December, 165 BC.
  - 25th of Kislev, 165 BC
  - The celebration
    - lasted 8 days (The Manorah burned for eight days on oil that should have only lasted for one day)
    - singing, feasting, and sacrifices
    - decided to celebrate every year
    - the festival of lights, or Hanukkah
    - Hanukkah celebrates the cleansing of the temple under Judas Maccabeus.
• Simon becomes new leader
• Judah recognized as a free state: 142 B.C.
• High Priesthood is held by the king.

• John Hyrcanus becomes leader
• Samaria, Galilee & Idumea conquered
• Forced conversions of conquered peoples

Two New Jewish Parties

• Hasidim: “The Pious Ones”
  later called Pharisees.

• Hellenists: Greek influence
Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.)

- During the reign of Jannaeus the strife between Sadducees and Pharisees broke out into open civil war.
- In the Feast of Tabernacles Jannaeus, as the high priest, poured a water libation at his feet, rather than on the altar (cf. John 7:37-38).
- The enraged worshippers pelted him with citrons, and Jannaeus’s troops slaughtered many of the Pharisees.
- Soon, however, most of the Pharisees recanted and defected to Jannaeus; the Syrian soldiers were sent home. Alexander returned to Jerusalem, but rather than seek reconciliation, he assured permanent hatred for himself.
- He gave a great banquet for his Sadducee friends, and during the festivities the banqueters watched as he had 800 Pharisees crucified.
- By now some purist Hasidim, who would become the Essenes, had withdrawn from the religious/political centers of Judea into the deserts.

Salome Alexandra (76-67 B.C.)

- When Alexandra finally became queen, she was 70 years old. She quickly made peace with the Pharisees, and during her rule the Pharisees were able to exact some vengeance on the Sadducees.
- Since she was a woman, Alexandra could not be high priest. She appointed her elder son Hyrcanus to that position. She made her younger son Aristobulus head of the army.

Salome Alexandra (76-67 B.C.)

- As Alexandra grew older the two brothers began to oppose each other. Hyrcanus favoring the Pharisees and Aristobulus the Sadducees.
- When Alexandra died in 67 B.C. strife broke out immediately.
- Hyrcanus the rightful heir soon fled for refuge to his allies in the south.
- And with their help, was able to seize most of Judea, taking the countryside first.
- The warfare between the two brothers continued for several months, but news of their fighting reached the Roman general Pompey, who was campaigning in the East. Pompey, eager to add to his conquests, moved south to “arbitrate.”
**Pompey the Great**

- Commissioned to clear the seas of piracy
- Conquests in Syria
- Conquest of Jerusalem
- Territorial arrangements

**Roman Rule (63 B.C. – NT times)**

- The Roman Empire, the fourth kingdom predicted by Daniel (ch. 2, 7), was approaching its greatest power during the NT era.
- By the time the Romans took control of Israel they had spent several centuries growing from a local and regional power to the most powerful empire in the world.
Pompey sided with Hyrcanus, and forced Aristobulus to surrender. Some of Aristobulus’s supporters barricaded themselves in the temple. When Pompey reached Jerusalem with his army, the supporters of Hyrcanus let him enter the western half of the city, later he took the temple and the rest of the city. About 12,000 Jews were killed in the fighting. Pompey did not interfere with Jewish worship or practices, but he did out of curiosity enter the most holy place in the temple, thus alienating the Jews from Rome. Pompey separate and freed Samaria nad the Decapolis form Jewish control. The actual administration of the region was left to Antipater II.
Campaign against Pompey

- As Pompey achieved fame and power in the East, Julius Caesar began becoming more powerful in the West.
- Conflict between the two was inevitable.
- The resulting war was resolved when Julius Caesar pushed Pompey from power and pursued him to Egypt, where Pompey was murdered.
- During the final stages of the war Antipater II and Hyrcanus II gave valuable aid to Caesar by sending relief to Caesar while he was besieged in Alexandria.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antipater II, Phasael and Herod</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• In gratitude Caesar confirmed Hyrcanus’s appointment as ethnarch and appointed Antipater procurator of Judea (47 B.C.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caesar also added to Judea several territories taken from it by Pompey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Antipater II then appointed his two sons to important posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• His older son Phasael he made governor of Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• His younger son Herod he designated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antipater II, Phasael and Herod</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• In 44 BC Julius Caesar was assassinated by Brutus and Cassius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Antipater II supported Cassius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The following year Antipater II was murdered, but young Herod stepped in, executed the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• murderers, and restored order in the territory. In 42 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Phasael and Herod were appointed joint rulers of all Judea.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark Anthony and Octavian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Octavian was Julius Caesar’s nephew, a clever politician and statesman; Mark Anthony was the most powerful general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Together they defeated Cassius and Brutus in the battle of Philippi (42 B.C.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many of Anthony’s troops remained there in Philippi, which was granted the status of a Roman colony, making them all Roman citizens (Acts 16:12; cf. Phil 1:27; 3:20).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Return of The Hasmoneans

• In 40 B.C. the Parthians invaded Palestine and set up as ruler Antigonus, of the house of the Hasmoneans (40-37 B.C.).
• Herod escape and went to Rome where he made a good impression on Octavian and Anthony, who persuaded the Senate to appoint him “king of the Jews” (40 B.C.; cf. Luke 19:11-12). In addition, the Romans also added additional parts of Samaria and Idumea to his kingdom.

Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.)

• Having been proclaimed king, Herod set out the following year to seize his kingdom from the Parthians and Antigonus.
• He had the support of Roman troops. First he recaptured Galilee; then he took parts of the kingdom of Idumea and eastern Galilee. His first attack on Jerusalem failed when Antigonus bribed his Roman soldiers and they left the city.
• The next year Roman help was more effective; Herod retook much of the Jordan valley and Judah and again besieged Jerusalem.
• Finally Jerusalem fell to Herod; Antigonus was executed; many Jews were slaughtered also (37 B.C.).

Another Civil War

• After defeating Brutus and the other murderers Octavian and Mark Anthony Emerged as the leaders of the western and eastern parts of the empire.
• In an promise of union between the friend and co-regents Mark Anthony Married Octavian’s sister
• When he abandons his wife an produces an Heir with the heiress of the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt, Cleopatra. Civil War breaks out again.
• Octavian won the decisive victory in the naval battle of Actium (31 B.C.). He was then the ruler of the whole Roman Empire.
• In the next year Octavian conquered Alexandria, and Anthony and Cleopatra committed suicide.
Herod after the War

- All during the war Herod had supported
- Herod promised the same allegiance to Octavian. The new emperor, now titled Caesar Augustus ("august, majestic"), accepted Herod’s promise, and even added to his domains.
- Actually, during his rule Herod nearly doubled the size of his kingdom.
- Augustus enjoyed a long reign as the first emperor of Rome (31 B.C. – A.D. 14), although he never sought the title from the Roman Senate, instead being titled “Princeps” (“First Citizen”).
- He outlived Herod by ten years. It was under his rule that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and lived as a child in Nazareth (Luke 2:1). Jesus’ adult years, ministry, and death were under the next emperor, Tiberius (14–37 A.D.; Luke 3:1).

The Romans

- Julius Caesar (49-44 BC)
- Mark Antony (44-31 BC)
- Augustus (31 BC – AD 14)
- Tiberius (AD 14-37)
- Caligula (AD 37-41)
- Claudius (AD 41-54)
- Nero (AD 54-68)
- Galba (AD 68-69)
- Vitellius (AD 69)
- Vespasian (AD 69-79)
- Titus (AD 79-81)
- Domitian (AD 81-96)
Herod the Great

40 - 4 B.C.

Herod’s Reign

• Herod never achieved popularity with the Jews. They looked on him as an Idumean upstart.
• Herod tried to help himself by marrying into that family. He loved his wife Mariamne passionately.
• But he was insanely jealous of his power.
• Herod was suspicious of everyone. He executed most of his family and friends during his long reign. He had ten wives in all, and murdered most of his children.
• Octavian mockingly said that he would rather be Herod’s hog (hus) than his son (huios)!

Herod and Building

• Herod established several cities; the most renowned was Caesarea, the “capital on the sea.”
• He also rebuilt Samaria, renaming it Sabaste, in honor of Augustus.
• He built many fortresses including Herodium near Jericho; Macherus on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea; and the famous Masada on the western shore of the Dead Sea.
• Herod rebuilt and enlarged the old Maccabean fortress just north of the temple, called Baris, and renamed it Antonia in honor of his friend Mark Anthony.
Herod and Building

• Herod built a magnificent palace for himself in the northwest corner of the Upper City (Western Hill), and capped it with three magnificent towers, named after Phasael, Mariamne, and his friend Hippicus. The base of the largest tower, Phasael, still remains, and today is called the
• Tower of David.

Herod’s Temple

• He began the work in 19 B.C. And we know from John 2:20 ("This temple has been forty-six years in building") that Jesus must have begun his ministry in the year A.D. 27. Work on the temple area was not completed until A.D. 64, only six years before it was all destroyed by the Romans.
• The temple represented Herod’s major effort to win the loyalty of the Jews, and while the Jews loved the magnificent temple, they still mistrusted and despised Herod.

Herod’s Temple

• Herod specially trained the Jewish priests in construction, that they might themselves build the temple, lest Gentile hands should defile it.
• The new temple was twice the size of the old one, dating back to Zerubbabel. It was built around the old temple, and then the old one was dismantled and removed.
• Herod spared no pain or expense to make the temple the most magnificent structure in that part of the empire, and it was admired by all visitors, and the pride of the Jews (cf. Matt 23:16; 24:1).
Herod’s Temple

- Fine examples of large Herodian stone blocks can be seen on the southern portions of the eastern and western retaining walls around the temple mount. These blocks form the lower visible rows of the Western Wall ("Wailing Wall"). The largest one is 35 feet long! The heaviest stones weigh ca. 100 tons.
Herod’s Last Days

- As Herod grew older, he grew more and more suspicious, hostile, and cruel. By the time of his death he had lost the confidence and favor of the Romans. This fact can explain why Quirinius could order a tax registration in Herod’s kingdom ca. 8 B.C.
- Herod’s claim to fame in history is his order to slay all the male infants in Bethlehem (Matt 2:16-18). Although this foul deed is not recorded in secular history, it was no worse than many other atrocities he committed, and it fits the pattern of his life. His insane jealousy for power surely would not have allowed unchallenged even an infant’s claim to be “king of the Jews” (Matt 2:2).

Herod’s Last Days

- Josephus says that Herod knew the people would rejoice when he died; so he imprisoned the principle Jewish leaders and ordered that they should be executed when he died, so that there would be mourning in Jerusalem on that day.
- Fortunately, that order was not carried out

Herod’s Sons

- Archelaus ethnarch of the Jews, with general oversight of all of his father’s territory. His own territory included Judea, Idumea, and Samaria.
- Antipas was given the territories of Galilee and Perea.
Herod's Sons: Archelaus

- Archelaus was an incompetent and cruel ruler. His bad reputation is reflected in Matt 2:22, where it states that Joseph and Mary avoided his territory when they took Jesus out of Egypt to Nazareth.
- In A.D. 6 a delegation of Jews and Samaritans agreed, and went to Rome to complain about Archelaus. Augustus deposed him and, instead of appointing another ethnarch, demoted his territory to an imperial province under the rule of a Roman prefect.
- This Roman governor would be of the equestrian class, the second highest class in Roman society.
- The Roman prefects of Judea ruled a difficult people, and most did not last long. The most famous (or infamous) prefect was the fifth one, Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26-36).

Herod's Sons: Herod Antipas

- Herod Antipas is remembered for beheading John the Baptist in Perea. While Herod was visiting in Rome, he was attracted to Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip (not Philip the Tetrarch).
- She forsook her husband, and with her daughter Salome she went with Herod back to Galilee.
- John the Baptist declared that Herod was guilty of grave sin. For this reason Herod imprisoned John and later executed him (Matt 14:1-12 = Mark 6:14-29).
- When Jesus was warned to flee from Herod's territory of Perea, Jesus took his time in leaving, and called Herod a “fox” (Luke 13:31-32). During his trial, Jesus refused to speak at all to Herod Antipas (Luke 23:9).

Herod's Sons: Philip

- Herod the Great's son Philip received the least important section of his kingdom, the territories NE of the Sea of Galilee, including Iturea and Trachonitis.
- Philip is mentioned in the NT only in Luke 3:1. He seems on the whole to have been a good ruler. He married Salome, who had danced for his brother Herod Antipas.
- Jesus visited Caesarea Philippi, a city in Philip's territory which he had built up and named for himself. While Jesus was there, Peter gave his great confession (Matt 16:13-20).
- Nearby Mt. Hermon may have been the site of Christ's transfiguration (Matt 17:1-2).
Diversified Response

- Essenes: Withdrawal
- Pharisees: Boundary markers
- Zealots: Violent revolt
- Sadducees: Strategic compromise

---

### Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>400 BC</th>
<th>331 BC</th>
<th>167 BC</th>
<th>4 BC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Testament completed</td>
<td>Alexander conquers the Persian Empire</td>
<td>Maccabean Rebellion</td>
<td>Death of Herod the Great</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Persian Empire
- Hellenistic Kings: Ptolemies, Seleucids
- Pompey the Great
- Roman kings

---

New Testament Survey
Western Reformed Seminary
(www.wrs.edu)
John A. Battle, Th.D.