

INTERTESTAMENTAL SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

The 400 “Silent Years” between the Old and New Testaments was anything but “silent.”

I. Intertestament sources

A. Jewish

1. Historical books of Apocrypha/Pseudepigrapha
 - a. I Macabbees
 - b. Legendary accounts: *II & III Macabbees, Letter of Aristeas*

2. DSS from the I century B.C.
 - a. “Manual of Discipline”
 - b. “Damascus Document”

3. Elephantine papyri (ca. 494-400 B.C.; esp. 407)
 - a. Mainly business correspondence with many common biblical Jewish names: Hosea, Azariah, Zephaniah, Jonathan, Zechariah, Nathan, etc.
 - b. From a Jewish colony/fortress on the first cataract of the Nile
 - c. The 407 correspondence significantly is addressed to Bigvai, governor of Judah, with a cc: to the sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. The Jews of Elephantine ask for aid in rebuilding their “temple to Yaho” that had been destroyed at the instigation of the Egyptian priests

4. Philo Judaeus (ca. 20 B.C.-40 A.D.)
 - a. Neo-platonist who used allegory to synthesize Jewish and Greek thought
 - b. His nephew, (Tiberius Julius Alexander), served as procurator of Judea (46-48) and as prefect of Egypt (66-70)

5. Josephus (?) (37-100 a.d.)

73 a.d. a. *History of the Jewish Wars* (ca 168 b.c. – 70 a.d.)

93 a.d. b. *Antiquities of the Jews*: apparent access to the official biography of Herod the Great as well as Roman records

B. Non-Jewish

1. Greek

a. Herodotus (fl. 400 B.C.)

(1) “Father of History” and world traveller

(2) Earliest extant historical reference to “Jews and Jerusalem”

b. Xenophon’s *Anabasis* (fl. 360)

c. Strabo (63 b.c.-24 a.d.):

(1) His lost history of 43 books covering 146-30 b.c. is cited by Josephus

(2) A world traveller, he wrote a 17 volume geography of Europe, Asia, and Africa

2. Egyptian: Manetho (ca. 63-21 B.C.)

a. Chronicler

b. His mention of the “Hyksos” first caught the eyes of modern scholars. Value: he traces the Egyptian dynasties, including the Ptolemies

II. Politico-cultural developments

A. Shift of **power base** from East to West. A fickle oriental despotism was replaced by western pragmatism

B. Introduction of universal and versatile **languages** into Palestine

1. Aramaic (n.b., Neh. 8:8)

2. Greek

C. **Demographics:** Israel was decimated by the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions and deportations. It was only sparsely populated when Zerubbabel and company returned with 50,000 to their homeland.

1. The fact that many Jews never returned from Persia and Babylon is evidenced by the development of the Babylonian Talmud separate from the more authoritative Palestinian Talmud.
2. By the time of Jesus, [northern] Palestine in its strategic location in the “modern world” was one of the most densely populated areas on the planet.
3. Samaria, of course, was the wart in later Israel’s complexion. Not only were the Samaritans of mixed blood due to the importation of Gentile tribes by the Assyrians, but the resulting religious syncretism compromised the religion of the fathers. On Mt. Gerezim in Shechem (John 4:20) a temple to Yaweh had been erected to polarize further the life of Samaria from that of hierarchy in Jerusalem.
4. One of the products of this polarized religion was the Samaritan Pentateuch. A separate Samaritan/Jewish cult continues to this day.

D. Refinements in **religion**

1. Anti-idolatry attitude in favor of monotheism
2. Shift from prophets to priests
3. Synagogue developments
 - a. Origins
 - (1) Understandably, in OT Israel there was resistance to localized places of worship as opposed to the central shrine in Jerusalem. The various “high places” implied manifold localized gods.
 - (2) A religious vacuum was created with the destruction of the temple and its ceremonial practice. Proto-synagogue organization came through the ministry of Ezekiel to the captives (chs. 8, 20) and synagogue practice seems to have been followed in Neh. 8 when Ezra built a pulpit on a raised platform, read the Scripture, and gave a [midrash] Aramaic interpretation. Acts 15:21 indicates that, among those who did not return from the lands of captivity, there were synagogues early for the maintenance of the Jewish heritage and worship.
 - b. Structure

- (1) Synagogue means “gathering together.” The Hebrew term is Keneseth.
- (2) Building off their patriarchal system of elders (cf. Moses and levels of authority: Ex. 18:24ff.; Num. 11:16), synagogues were directed by a group of seven elders (or “presbyters” in the Greek), 23 in larger cities.
- (3) Local synagogues were organized into Sanhedrins. The Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem acted as the Supreme court for civil and religious affairs.

c. Worship

- (1) The synagogue system of the intertestamental period served as the bridge that introduced a worship of spirit and of truth in contrast to the ritualistic worship of the temple.
- (2) The chief focus of the local worship was prayer and the reading and exposition of the Scripture.

4. Eschatological interests

(n.b., Acts 28:20, “...for the hope of Israel I am in chains”)

III. Significance of intertestament period

A. Understanding NT times

1. Development of Judaism and sects

2. Literature

a. Septuagint’s importance in the early church

- (1) Reliability for preaching
- (2) Textual criticism
- (3) Bridge for OT theological ideas to NT

b. Pseudepigraphal writings

- (1) Hopes and ideals (eschatology)
- (2) Theology
- (3) Literary form, especially apocalyptic

3. Development of the Talmud
 - a. No prophet to apply Mosaic covenant teachings
 - b. Establishment of oral tradition

B. Corroboration of the OT canon

1. Through translations (LXX) and DSS
2. Ancient tradition of a canon of God's Word

Politics of the Intertestament Era

I. Preliminary considerations

A. Scope of the period (ca. 420-5 B.C.)

1. Last canonical prophet: Malachi
2. Until Last of the old dispensation prophets: John the Baptizer (significantly, mentioned by the last of the writing prophets, Mal. 3:1; 4:5,6)

B. Dominant Palestinian powers

1. Persia (539-331 B.C.)
2. Greece (331-323)
3. Ptolemaic Egypt (323-198)
4. Seleucid Syria (198-164)
5. Hasmonians (164-63)
6. Rome (63 B.C. - 500 A.D.)
7. Daniel's canonical perspective

Daniel 11,2,7

II. Persian Period (539-331 B.C.)

A. Cyrus (559-530)

1. Conquests
 - a. Media
 - b. Lydia
 - c. Babylon (539)
2. Type of Rule: “benevolent despotism” – Is. 44:28-45:4; Ezra 1

B. Cambyses (530-522)

1. Persian conquest of Egypt (525)
2. Threat from Pseudo-Smerdis (Gaumata) back home

C. Darius the Great (522-486)

1. Beginning of Achaemenian dynasty
2. Political efforts
 - a. Started wars with Greece
 - (1) Subjugated Macedonia
 - (2) Turned back at Marathon (490)
 - b. Conquered to India
3. Historical contributions
 - a. Geography: Water link discovered around the empire from the Indus River to the Red Sea
 - b. Political: reorganized empire into regional satrapies with local civil governors (e.g., Nehemiah later) exercising measurable home rule and with military satraps directly answerable to the emperor
 - c. Travel & Communications: interstate road system with pony express
 - (a) “These neither snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness of night prevent from accomplishing each one his appointed task, with the very utmost speed.” (In Pfeiffer, p. 33)

- d. Jewish connection: Ezra 6:1,7,8
- e. Behistun Inscription: 58½ ft long billboard on the trade route btwn Baghdad and Tehran; in three languages: Old Persian, Babylonian, and Elamite.

D. Xerxes (Ahasuerus, Heb; Khshayarsha, Persian) (486-465)

- 1. Wars against the Greeks (Esther 1:3)

Naval battle of Salamis (480)

- 2. Preservation of the Jews

Feast of Purim (Esther 9)

E. Artaxerxes I (465-24)

- 1. End of an era: Athenians growing in cultural ascendancy and power, venturing into Persian Egypt
- 2. Ezra (458) and Nehemiah (445)

(1)Nehemiah was the emperor's cupbearer (prime minister), while Ezra served perhaps as liaison for Jewish affairs (Ezra 7:6,8,14, 21)

F. Later Achemenians

- 1. Darius II (424-05)
 - a. Takes the throne after the heir is assassinated
 - b. Last mention of a Persian in the OT, Neh. 12:22

- 2. Artaxerxes II (405-358)

Xenophon's *Anabasis* (401)

--"Going Up" the river valley: 10,000 Greek mercenaries head for home; only 6,000 arrive

3. Artaxerxes III (358-338): regained Egypt
4. Arses (338-336)
5. Darius III (336-30)

Battle of Issus - 333

III. Macedonian rule

A. Background

1. Philip of Macedon (d. 336): united city states into Hellenic League just before his assassination
2. Alexander (fl. 333-323)
 - a. Tutored by Aristotle
 - b. Took poets, city planners, anthropologists, biologists, musicians on his campaign
 - c. “Apostle of Hellenism” leads to “ideological imperialism”
 - Magnified: human endeavor, beauty, and equality (democracy)
 - Urbanism vs. agrarianism

B. Persian Campaign - Dan. 8:5-7

1. Issus (333), near Cilician gates above Tarsus. After previous skirmishes in Asia Minor, Alexander’s force of 31K defeated the entire Persian army of 600K and captured most of the royal family.
2. Palestine: rather than pursuing Darius III into Persia, Alexander covered his flank by securing Palestine
 - a. Tyre
 - (1) Seven month siege
 - (2) Predicted destruction: Ezk. 26:12-14
 - b. Jerusalem

- (1) After his destruction of Gaza, Jerusalem wisely opened its gates
- (2) Dream account: Josephus' *Antiquities*, 11:8:4-5
Alexander demanded his statue be placed in the temple. Jaddua the High Priest replied that was not possible, that all the priests of the temple that year would name their new-born sons, Alexander.
3. Egypt falls next. The planned polis of Alexandria is designed to replace Tyre as the pearl of the Mediterranean, and ultimately will usurp Babylon's prominence
4. The fall of Persia - Battle of Gaugamela (or Arbela) in 331

C. Demise of Alexander

1. "Son of Amon": Alexander takes this title of deity of the Pharaoh as his victories begin to go to his head
2. "Call me 'Basileus'" - a title that the democratic Greeks had resisted yet which Alexander took upon the death of Darius III. Alexander laid aside his simple Greek tunic for the robes of an eastern potentate and demanded the accompanying bowing and scraping.
3. The end (323) at about age 33.
 - a. Conquest to Indus River
 - b. Life of debauchery in Babylon
 - c. Buried in Egypt; tomb found in January 1995 at Siwa Oasis

D. *Diadochoi* = "Successors," (cf. hapax of Acts 24:27); Dan. 8,11

1. By 315 B.C.
 - a. Antigonous (Asia Minor and Asia)
 - b. Ptolemy Lagi (Egypt and S. Syria)
 - c. Cassander (Macedonia)
 - d. Lysimachus (Thrace)

2. 312 - 301 BC

- a. 312 saw the defeat at Gaza of Antigonus' heir, Demetrius
- b. Seleucus I
 - (1) Alexander's satrap of Babylon whose domain had been usurped by Antigonus. He fled (with his war elephants) to the aid of Antigonus' rival, Ptolemy; when Antigonus was removed by the other three field marshals in 301, Seleucus appropriated Syria and Asia Minor.

- (2) In honor of his father, Seleucus built a new polis on the Orontes River, Antioch.



IV. Ptolemaic Rule

A. Capture of Jerusalem, 312 BC

1. During their campaign against Antigonus, Ptolemy and Seleucus attacked and pilfered Jerusalem on the Sabbath day.
2. Thousands of Judeans were exported into Alexandria. Tribute was required and the High Priest was left in charge.
3. This is the beginning of serious Hellenistic influence in Palestine and 312 was marked as the beginning of the Common Era.

B. General conditions

1. Simon the Just, High Priest ca. 250
 - a. Praised by Ecclesiasticus (ca. 180) as "great among his brethren and the glory of his people."
 - b. Simon is remembered for his teaching that the world hangs on these three principles: the law, [temple] service, and charity. In other words, [vertical] revelation, [vertical] worship, and [horizontal] sympathy.
 - c. Simon rebuilt Nehemiah's walls of Jerusalem that were destroyed by Ptolemy, and he built reservoirs for future sieges.
2. The Tobiads: a wealthy family leading in the mid to late 200s who cooperated in the Egyptian Hellenization of Israel. They were instrumental in paving the way for an aristocratic priestly rule for a time when the Jews would be given more self-determination.

- a. Possible Tobijah the Ammonite connection? - Neh. 2:10, 4:3,7; 6:1-19
 - b. Joseph: when his uncle, the H.P. Onias II, refused to pay the annual tribute tax to Ptolemy IV in the late 200s, Joseph went to Alexandria and bid for the appointment of being Palestine's "tax farmer."
 - He served as an aristocratic proto-publican.
3. The Septuagint (LXX)
- a. There was further Jewish migration to Alexandria in the mid-200s with the establishment of synagogues there.
 - b. Ptolemy Philadelphus (ca. 250) prided himself in having the greatest library in the world. The Legend of Aristeas purports that he commissioned the translation of the Jewish scriptures so that his library would include this significant work. More likely it was translated simply to meet the needs of the Greek speaking Jewish community.
 - c. The Torah only was initially translated around 250.

C. War with the Seleucids

1. "Wars of King of North vs. King of the South" - Daniel 11
2. Though most of Palestine was controlled by Egypt ever since Antigonus was defeated in 301, Antiochus III of Seleucid Syria was cordially received in Jerusalem in 198, especially considering that he promised them three years of tax exemption for their allegiance.

V. Seleucid Rule (198-164 BC)

A. Antiochus III, the Great (223-187)

1. Antioch, the Capital
2. Struggle for Palestine
 - a. Ptolemaic general Theodatus deserted to Antiochus and delivered Tyre and Acre to him in 219
 - b. Raphia (217): getting too close to Egypt, Ptolemy IV rallied his troops and defeated the encroaching Seleucids just above Egypt

Dan. 11:11; note III Macabees 1:9-11; 2:24

“[God] scourged him who had exalted himself in insolence and audacity. [22] He shook him on this side and that as a reed is shaken by the wind, so that he lay helpless on the ground and, besides being paralyzed in his limbs, was unable even to speak, since he was smitten by a righteous judgment. [23] Then both friends and bodyguards, seeing the severe punishment that had overtaken him, and fearing lest he should lose his life, quickly dragged him out, panic-stricken in their exceedingly great fear. [24] After a while he recovered, and though he had been punished, he by no means repented, but went away uttering bitter threats.” –3 Macc 2:21-24

c. Panium (198)

- (1) Later called Caesaria Philippi (cf. Mt. 16:13) by Herod the Great.
- (2) An Egyptian expedition led by the juvenile Ptolemy V was forced to surrender its entire army

3. Hannibal's connection

- a. Hannibal was on the run looking for allies against Rome after his defeat in the 2nd Punic war (218-201)
- b. Feeling his oats, Antiochus challenged the expansion of Rome in the west. He was defeated between Sardis and Smyrna at Magnesia in 190.
 - (1) He lost all of Asia Minor, and was forced to demilitarize, losing his whole navy and his war elephants
 - (2) Rome demanded an annual indemnity of silver and gold. His second son was held under house arrest in Rome to ensure payment.

B. Antiochus IV, Epiphanes (175-164)

1. His start

- (1) Upon the assassination of his brother, Seleucus IV, Antiochus IV took the throne. After 12 years of opulence in Rome, he returned home persuaded of the might of Rome as well as of the need for a thorough-going Hellenism.
- (2) He took the title, “Epiphanes,” or Illustrious One in the sense of being a “manifest” god.

2. Struggle for the high priesthood

- a. Onias III and Jason

- (a) When one of the Tobiads ingratiated himself with the Seleucid governor by pilfering the temple treasury, he covered his tracks by trying to implicate the High Priest, Onias III (Russell, p. 26). Riots broke out in Jerusalem, and Onias set off for Antioch to protest the temple plunder.
- (b) While out of the way, his pro-Hellenist brother Joshua (a.k.a. Jason) bribed Antiochus IV to receive the office of High Priest (II Mac. 4:7-10). His first act was to build a Greek gymnasium and to rename Jerusalem, New Antioch!

b. Menelaus

- (1) origins: with the help of the Tobiads, Menelaus of the tribe of Benjamin out-bribed Jason (II Mac. 4:23ff.)
- (2) crimes
 - (a) murdered Onias III and orthodox leaders
 - (b) transferred the temple treasury to Antiochus IV

c. The Hasidim (“pious ones”), cf. modern “Hasidic” Jews

- (a) This group of faithful Jewish leaders began to mobilize in reaction to the Hellenizing tendencies of Jason and especially Menelaus.

EXCURSUS on the Clash of Cultures from Julius Scott, p. 116

GREEKS	POINT of ISSUE	JEWS
Urban	Culture	Rural
Polytheistic/pantheistic; speculative about the metaphysical	Religion	Monotheistic, ethical, practical
Glorify human spirit and body: become a god	Relation to God	“I-Thou” relation to covenant Creator
Universal/syncretistic	World-view	Particularism and ethnic isolation
Individual	Social focus	Community

3. Reverses in Egypt (168) at the hand of C. Popilius Laenus

- (1) Having defeated Ptolemy VI at Pelusium in 170, Antiochus on his 2nd Egyptian campaign attempted to shore up his base in Egypt. The Mediterranean was quickly turning into a Roman Lake, and he needed the resources of Egypt to withstand further Roman expansionism.

4. “Epimanes” (“madman”) and the Persecution

–80,000 Jews massacred

(cf. II Mac. 7 & Heb. 11:33ff.)

a. Attack on Jerusalem (168)

By now Jason had finally expelled Menelaus (II Mac. 5:5). Antiochus, in a rage and embarrassed and determined to keep Palestine in his orbit, returned from Egypt to purge Menelaus' opponents in a Sabbath attack (I Mac. 1:20-28). The city walls were destroyed.

b. The Fortress of Akra was built on the west side of the temple to garrison Syrian troops in order to prop up Antiochus' puppet.

c. Profaning of Temple (I Mac. 1:41ff.; Dan. 11:29,31-32 ctr. 9:27 & 12:11 & Mt. 24:15 & II Thess. 2:4,5)

- (1) orgy of Bacchus in the temple
- (2) cultic prostitutes with Syrian soldiers in the temple
- (3) swine sacrificed on the altar
- (4) an altar and statue of Zeus Dyonisius, prob. bearing his own image = "abomination of desolation"

This Greek god in Syria was known as "Baal Shamem," which Daniel's wordplay in Hebrew describes as "*shiqquts meshomem*," translated into English as "abomination of desolation/appalling sacrilege" (F.F. Bruce, *NT History*, p.4)

d. Forced Hellenization (II Mac. 7; Heb. 11:33-40)

- (1) No scriptures
- (2) No Sabbath
- (3) No circumcision
- (4) No sacrifices

e. Samaritan immunity

(a)The Samaritans knuckled under at the approach of the madman. They said, "we are Sidonians, not Jews," and they dedicated their temple on Gerezim to Jupiter Hellenius.

VI. Independent Hasmonean Rule (164-63 B.C.)

A. The original Maccabees

1. Mattathias of Modin (d. 166 B.C.; I Maccabees 2:27)

20 miles NE of Jerusalem

B. sons: John, Simon, Judas, Eleazer, Jonathan

1. Judas Maccabeus, “the Hammer”

a. Battle of Emmaus (165) leads to the Nationalists’ retaking of Jerusalem

b. Hanukkah (means “dedication”) = Feast of Lights = Feast of Dedication on 25th of Kislev 165 BC

i) (I Mac. 4:46; cf. John 10:22)

(2) Menelaus skipped town

(3) Legend of the Hanukkah oil lamp: 8 days of light on 7 days of oil

c. Hasmonean set back

(a) The Maccabees were able to liberate much of Edom, Ammon, and Philistia. After a loss to Syria outside Jerusalem, Syria offered terms of peace: the walls would be razed again in return for religious freedom

d. Alcimus (a.k.a., Eliakim) of the Aaronic line replaces Menelaus

e. Death of Judas, 160

2. Jonathan

a. “Friend of Rome”

(a) Jonathan used diplomacy as effectively as Judas had use his guerrillas. He exploited dynastic rivalries in Syria and had himself set up as High Priest, governor, and a Syrian noble by one of the contenders for Syria’s throne.

(b) His crowning achievement was to have Judea recognized by the Roman Senate as “a friend of Rome.”

b. Treacherous Tryphon catches up with Jonathan in 142 (I Mac. 13:24)

3. Simon

a. Alliance with Demetrius II

(1) home rule and tax exemption was granted to Judea under Simon by the successful contender for the Syrian throne. Simon razed the Akra.

(2) independence gained for Jews (I Maccabees 13:51: “The yoke of the Gentiles is removed.”)

b. “Leader and High Priest Forever” (I Mac. 14:25-49)

(a)--marks beginning of Hasmonean dynasty; Simon’s first year is counted as year 1 of the Jewish state

(b) Note his “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem

“The Jews made their entry on the twenty-third day of the second month in the year 171, with acclamations and carrying palms, to the sound of lyres, cymbals and harps, chanting hymns and canticles, since a great enemy had been crushed and thrown out of Israel. Simon made it a day of annual rejoicing.” -1 Macc 13:51

c. Death (135): murdered with two sons by an ambitious son-in-law

C. Subsequent Hasmoneans

1. John Hyrcanus (135-104), third surviving son of Simon

a. Concessions to Antiochus VII around 129 B.C.

(1) Syrians allowed to retain Joppa and coastal cities

(2) Agreement to mutual defense pact

b. Metamorphosis of Hasidim and Hellenists

No longer propped up by Syria, Jewish Hellenists began to shrivel up. They would survive in the compromising form of the Sadducees, while the Hasidim evolved into the Pharisees and perhaps the Essenes. It is under Hyrcanus that we have the first extant record of “Pharisees” (*Antiquities* 13:10:5-7), whom he repudiated when they suggested he give up the high priesthood since his mother was held captive before he was born.

c. Expansion

(1) Idumeans subjugated and circumcised.

(2) Samaritans attacked. Temple on Mt. Gerezim, probably built in days of Alexander the Great, was destroyed.

(3) Perea

2. Aristobulus I (104-103), 2nd son of John Hyrcanus, shelved his given name, Judah, for “Philhellene”

- a. Less than stellar character
 - b. *“King” of the Jews; he conquered to Mt. Lebanon
 - c. Salome Alexandra his widow marries his brother, A.J.
3. Alexander Jannaeus (103-76) (a.k.a. Jonathan)
- a. Expansion that rivaled Soloman’s empire.
 - (1) He ruled from Edom up to Bashan, and from Philistia to Jordan.
 - (2) Built Jewish navy
 - b. Antipater, governor of Idumea. The grandfather of Herod will insinuate himself into Judean politics.
 - c. Six years of civil war
 - (1) Josephus tells of temple riots under Alexander when, as high priest, he poured the drink offering upon the ground instead of on the altar during the feast of tabernacles (cf. John 7:37,38). This early reference to the Pharisees further details the background of how the Pharisees and Saducees were historically polarized.
 - (2) By now, purist Hasidim (8000 strong) who would become the **Essenes**, had withdrawn from the religious/political centers of Judea into the deserts. Some of the sectarian **Dead Sea Scrolls** refer to the “wicked priest,” whom many scholars take to be Alexander Jannaeus. Their persecuted “Teacher of Righteousness” remains unidentified.
4. Salome Alexandra (76-67)
- a. Reconciliation with Pharisees
 - b. Her brother, Simeon ben Shetah, as president of the Sanhedrin, introduced elementary education for boys in synagogue schools
5. Fraternal feud of Salome’s two sons leads to Civil War
- a. Aristobulus II: younger son who headed the army
 - b. Hyrcanus II, as the eldest, served as High Priest.

- (1) At the death of his mother, he claimed the throne, but had to retire due to the strength of his brother's forces
- (2) He was supported by the Pharisees who were seeking revenge against key Sadduceans
- (3) Aretas the Nabatean and Antipater II the Idumean brought military aid to Hyrcanus and besieged Jerusalem

VII. Roman Rule (63 BC-NT Times)

A. Pompey

1. Conquest of Jerusalem

- a. Had absorbed Damascus in 64
- b. Aristobulus conceded but some rebel troops forced a three month siege. 12,000 Jews were slaughtered, but Pompey prevented looting and burning
- c. Pompey's sacrilege of the tabernacle.
The pseudepigraphal "Psalms of Solomon" (ca. 50 b.c.) excoriated Pompey posthumously and anonymously: "I had not long to wait before God showed me the insolent one Slain on the mountains of Egypt ... With none to bury him, since he had rejected God with dishonor." (2:30-32)

2. Reorganization of Palestine

- a. Judea incorporated into the Roman province of Syria
- b. Hyrcanus continues as High Priest (63-40 b.c.) and is made Ethnarc over Judea and Perea
- c. Samaria and the Decapolis gain relative independence from Judea

B. Julius Caesar (47 BC) defeats Pompey in Egypt with the support of Antipater II

1. New Palestinian overlords

- a. Antipater II: Procurator of Judea (Hyrcanus continues as Ethnarc)
- b. Son Phasael: Prefect of Jerusalem
- c. Son Herod: Governor of Galilee

2. Cassius and Brutus (44-42)

- a. Cassius was proconsul of Syria, and with the demise of Julius, he seized Antipater's territory

- b. Antipater is assassinated in 43. Herod shows his leadership skills by punishing the guilty and restoring order. Phasael and Herod are made joint rulers of Judea

C. Mark Anthony and Octavian

1. Philippi (42 BC)

- a. When the triumvirate got organized, they caught up with Brutus and Cassius at Philippi.
- b. Many of Antony's soldiers received land pensions in the area Philippi, which as a new Roman colony, gave its inhabitants the status of Roman citizens; cf. Phil. 1:27; 3:20
- c. Herod and Phasael switch allegiance to the new regime

2. Parthians (40 BC)

- a. Conquered Jerusalem and set up Antigonus ben Aristobulus II as king and HP. Hyrcanus II was maimed.
- b. Phasael kills himself in jail, while Herod escaped from exile

VIII. Herod the Great (37-4 BC) under Roman rule

A. *"King of the Jews" (40 BC) conferred by the Roman Senate

1. Note the historical background of the parable of Luke 19:11,12
2. Idumea and parts of Samaria added to the realm

B. Return to conquer Palestine (37 BC) with Roman armies while Antony fights Parthians in the North

1. Takes Galilee and Idumea first
2. Antigonus postponed his doom by bribing the Romans to break siege
3. Finally conquers Jerusalem and kills Antigonus

C. The consummate politician handles problems above and below

1. Keeps Cleopatra at arm's length

2. Herod was resented by the Jews as an outsider.
 - a. To cement his claims to the throne he married the Hasmonean princess, Miriamne, granddaughter of both Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II
 - b. Beginning in 20-19 B.C., he rebuilt and adorned his people's temple
John 2:20: Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"
 - c. He would later remit 1/3 of their taxes

D. Caesar Augustus (31-14 AD)

1. In 36 b.c., Octavian expelled uncle Lepidus from the Triumvirate. He found his pretext to war against Antony when the latter deserted his wife Octavia, the sister of Octavian.
2. The naval battle of Actium (31 BC) brought the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, leaving Herod with a relatively free hand in Palestine when he shifted allegiance to Caesar.

E. Family Troubles

1. Ten mothers-in-law, the worst being Miriamne's mother who meddled in getting her son Aristobulus set up as high priest. After dispatching his brother-in-law, Herod set up and removed HPs at will. The Roman procurators followed this "non-hereditary" policy.
2. Jealousy over Miriamne leads to the death of her uncle, her attendant, and ultimately, herself.
3. Paranoid in later years, he killed several of his ambitious sons, prompting Caesar to say, "I would rather be Herod's swine than his son" (in the Greek, "*hus* instead of *huios*")

F. Building Projects

1. Cities
(Many new cities were outside his immediate domain and designed as part of his ingratiating foreign policy)
 - a. Jerusalem rebuilt as a Roman polis
 - b. Caesarea for Augustus
 - c. Caesarea Philippi
 - d. Sebaste (Samaria) for Augustus
 - e. Tiberias
 - f. Plus numerous parks, gymnasiums, amphitheaters, covered streets, and baths
2. Fortresses

- a. Antonia on the NW corner of the temple for Antony
 - b. Herodium at Jericho
 - c. Masada on the west side of the Dead Sea (fell in 73 A.D.)
 - d. Macherus on the east side of the Dead Sea
3. Temple (19 BC - 64 AD), his greatest monument, Mk. 13:1
- a. Twice as big as Zerubbabel's temple
 - b. Jews not so trusting: new built around the old by Levites trained in carpentry, etc.
 - c. Surviving Wailing Wall has 35 ft.long blocks of 100 tons
 - d. The *terminus a quo* of temple construction is critical in establishing the timing of events in John 2, vs. 20

G. Last Days

- 1. Losing the confidence of Rome
- 2. Antipater celebrated too soon
- 3. Illness and last command

H. A Divided Kingdom for three surviving sons

- 1. Archelaus (4 BC - 6 AD)
 - a. Ethnarch of Judea, with Samaria and Idumea
 - b. Removed (Matt. 2:22) after the protest of the Jews. He showed all the cruelty of his father with none of the diplomacy.
 - (a)After Archelaus, the Herods were replaced by Roman procuraetors; Pilate was the 5th (26-36 a.d.) in that string.
- 2. Herod Antipas (4 BC - 39 AD)
 - a. Tetrarch (petty prince) of Galilee
 - b. "Fox" --Lk. 13:31,2; 23:6-12
 - c. Agrippa of Acts 12 was his nephew

3. Philip the Tetrarch (4 BC - 34 AD)

half-brother of Antipas

Luke 3:1

Caesarea Philippi in his territory (Mt. 16)

IX. Jewish Groups that crystallized in reaction against Hellenism

These Jewish sects observed different lifestyles, beliefs, ceremonies, and calendars—all because of Alexander the Great.

A. Pharisees

1. The largest of the religious sects, they are estimated to have numbered 5% of the entire population, about 6,000 per Josephus

2. Name: probably from Hebrew, *paras* sr5P6, “to separate”

3. Background

- a. Married by 18
- b. Roots in the Hasidim; originated in days of John Hyrcanus
- c. Survived after 70 a.d. as Zionists

4. Beliefs

- a. Scriptures: acknowledged traditional canon as God-given; gave equal weight to the growing corpus of the oral law (*Ant.* 13:10:6), in the shape of 613 laws today
- b. Supernatural: transcendentalists
 - (1) spirit world: angels and demons
 - (2) reality of the soul and immortality
 - (3) bodily resurrection
 - (4) judgment to come

5. Related identities and/or allies

- a. Scribes (though not all scribes were Pharisees)
 - (1) Background: originally were stenographer/copiests. Because they worked with the biblical documents, they became familiar with the content of the law and developed into ecclesiastical lawyers and ethicists.

--Jer. 36:4,32

--Ezra 7:6,10

(2) Duties

(a) Preserve copies of and defend the Scriptures

(b) Administer and judge fine points of the law

(c) Teach the Scriptures, esp. in the synagogues

b. Zuggoth (“pairs”), the most famous being the duo of the moderate Hillel and the strict Shammai in the century before Christ

6. Clash with Jesus threatened their religious life

a. Hypocrisy, Mt. 23:23

b. Traditions of men, Mt. 15:1,2

7. “But it is clear from the records that Pharisaism was at heart legalistic in character, and legalism can easily lead to formalism, and formalism to externalism and unreality, defects which revealed themselves in course of time...” --Russell, p. 51

B. Sadducees

1. Background

(1) Aristocratic Hellenizers who did not proselytize like the Pharisees. Most were priests and many were involved in the leadership of the Sanhedrin, though they also included some wealthy merchants, especially in the diaspora.

(2) They dissolved after the fall of Jerusalem.

2. Etymological suggestions

a. Zadokites?

b. *tsadiq* צַדִּיק = Hebrew for “righteous”

c. Syndics? (F.F. Bruce), Greek (συνδικος) for “judge, fiscal ruler”

3. Beliefs - “apostles of denial”

- a. Scripture
 - (1) As strict constitutionalists, they received the Torah as their main governing charter. Later scriptures were considered less authoritative.
 - (2) Rejected oral traditions
- b. No predestination; rather, free will in keeping with the Hellenistic view of the destiny of man
- c. No spirit world. They were thorough-going materialists (in the philosophical sense of the word) and rationalists. Note Acts 5:17,19,20
- d. No immortal soul or resurrection
 - (1) Mt. 22:23-33 quoting Ex. 3
 - (2) Acts 23:6-10

4. Relation to Jesus

He threatened their political life (John 11:48)

5. Relation to others

Josephus says the Sadducees were "...argumentative, boorish, and rude to outsiders and to each other." –*Antiquities*, 18.1.4; *Wars of the Jews*, 2.8.14

C. Essenes

- 1. Meaning: possibly Hellenized form of Hasidim
- 2. Sources
 - a. External: Philo, Josephus, Pliny the Elder
 - b. Internal: Zadokite Document out of Cairo, Damascus Doct, Manual of Discipline
- 3. Background: possibly originated as Hasidic refugees under Alexander Jannaeus. These

purists separated themselves from institutional corruptions as well as the ceremonial ones. They, therefore, established their own customs and ceremonies.

4. Beliefs

a. Community of goods

- (1) Tight-knit communal living among the faithful (Qumran means “cloister, monastery”).
 - (a) Identified selves as members of the “new covenant”
 - (b) Organized on basis of Moses’ divisions in Ex. 18:25 into 100s, 50s 10s (Damascus Doc’t, 12,13)
- (2) Settled basically in the Jordan Valley in and among smaller villages
- (3) Hospitable to travellers

b. Ascetic

- (1) most celibate, except Qumran
- (2) no vow of poverty, but a vow of piety and obedience that led to a renunciation of personal goods in Qumran
- (3) No sabbath fires; sabbath constipation; no anointing oils

c. Dualistic, more in a moral/ethical sense of good vs. evil than in the metaphysical sense of spirit vs lower matter, although there are hints of the latter: “light vs. darkness”

d. Scriptures

- (1) High regard for the scriptures in preservation and study of canonical books, yet gave equal attention to pseudepigraphal works that seemed to them more timely
- (2) Interpretation: they lived on the threshold of “Apocalypse Now”. Every passage whether prophetic or not was given a contemporary interp

e. Active in two by two proselytization

5. Relation to NT

a. Jesus

- (1) Words and images common to Christianity: “light, darkness, spirit, new covenant”
- (2) Obscure Messianism of Qumran

b. John the Baptist

- (1) Some scholarship has tried to link John the Baptist's origins with the Essenes (cf. Lk. 1:80; 3:3) because of his personal appearance and his antipathy to the religious hierarchy.
- (2) Still, it is not necessary to interpret John through an Essene lens; the OT background of the Nazarite (Num. 6) and Elijah (Mal. 3:1; 4:4,5; Is. 40:1) give a better explanation.

D. Zealots

1. Background

- a. "As the Pharisees were the heirs of the Hasidim, so the Zealots were the heirs of the Maccabees" -- R.H. Pfeiffer in Russell, p. 54

"Let everyone who is zealous for the law and covenant come out with me!"
--Mattathias in I Maccabees 2:27

- b. Patriots who were Anti-Herodian and largely out of Galilee (note Acts 5:37). They will lead in the revolt of 66ff.

2. Simon the Zealot; not "Simon the Canaanite" of the KJV (Mt. 10:4; Mk. 3:18; ctr. Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13). The KJV apparently mistakenly mistranslated the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic *qanan*, ܩܢܢܐܢܐ –meaning "enthusiast"

- TR of Matt 10:4 has κανανιτης = "Cana-ite" not "Canaanite" of KJV
- UBS of Matt 10:4 has κανανατος = "Cananean," the Aramaic of "zealot"

3. "Sicarii" ("daggers") = radical wing of Zealots with which Paul was mistakenly identified in Acts 21:38. Cf. Barabbas in Mk. 15:7, Lk. 23:19

E. Herodians: Pro-Roman political party. Probably flourished more around Herod Antipas in the north (Mk. 3:6; 12:13; Mt. 22:16)

X. Summary: The Right Time for the New Testament

A. Galatians 4:4 speaks of God's Son coming "in the fullness of time." All the elements of world civilization seemed to coalesce, making it a prime time for God's fullest revelation (Heb. 1:2).

B. Political ingredients: **Rome**

1. The *pax Romana* yielded two factors important for the gestation and spread of the gospel:

2. Roman law and stability. Minorities had some degree of protection under the law as long as they didn't challenge Roman life and culture. Paul cited his citizenship and Roman law several times to get out of a jam.

VEHICLE

3. Roman roads. Originally built for rapid deployment forces in order to control Rome's far-flung empire, paved Roman roads helped shrink the world, facilitating commerce and communication. Pirates and brigands had been swept from these vital channels by Roman arms.

C. Cultural/philosophical ingredients: **Greece**

1. Although Rome had conquered the Greek political world, Greek culture came to dominate the Roman world.

VEHICLE

2. Greek language. "Common" Greek became the universal language of the known world, not only because it had already saturated the Mediterranean region, but simply because of its precision and versatility. Greek became the vehicle for carrying God's revelation to the nations. Note the LXX and NT text.

3. Greek philosophy. The **R**ationalism of philosophers like Aristotle was leading to a healthy skepticism of pagan religions. At the same time, Greek **H**umanism was in search of the perfect Man.

D. Religious ingredients: **Israel**

1. While the pagan world was growing dissatisfied with the feuding, petulant gods of a polytheistic mythology that viewed humans as toys of the gods, Judaism offered:

2. Monotheism (the uncaused Cause)

VEHICLE

3. A network of religious meeting places (synagogues) throughout the empire