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Between the Testaments



Linking Old and New



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Between the Testaments

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The period between the Old and New Testaments has been called “the four hundred silent years.” We are aware of no direct oral revelation from God during this period. The books of Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, and Malachi were written between 458 BC and 400 BC. The New Testament opens with the birth of Christ at about 6–4 BC, but there is a real sense in which it opens with John the Baptist (see Mt. 3:1; Mark; Luke; Jn. 1:6). Malachi (4:5-6) closes with the promise of the coming of “Elijah the prophet,” and the New Testament opens with the birth of John the baptist as the fulfillment (Lk. 1:8-25; see esp. vs. 17).

During those 400 silent years God was preparing for the coming of Christ. In Nebuchadnezzar’s image there was foretold the history of world empires from the Babylonians to the Romans (Dan. 2:31-45).

Head of Gold	– BABYLONIAN EMPIRE	– 626 to 539 BC.
Breast of Silver	– MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE	– 539 to 331 BC
Belly & Thighs of Brass	– GRECIAN EMPIRE	– *331 BC & following
Legs of Iron	– ROMAN EMPIRE	– *63 BC to 5th Cen. AD.

*Exact Dates Difficult

The Old Testament closes during the Persian period and the New Testament opens in the days of Rome. What happened between these periods?

I. BRIEF SURVEY OF LATTER OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY AS RELATED TO THE GREAT WORLD EMPIRES.

A. The Babylonian Period (626–539 BC).

1. Judea captured and Jerusalem destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar: 605, 597, 586 BC. Many Judeans taken captive. Temple destroyed, 586 BC.
2. Prophets: Zephaniah, Nahum (tells of the fall of Nineveh, 612 BC), Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Ezekiel.

B. The Persian Period (539–331 BC).

1. Cyrus (550–530 BC).
 - a. Capture of Babylon, Oct. 29, 539 BC.
 - b. Cyrus Cylinder (in British Museum) says Cyrus allowed captives to return to their homelands, build temples, etc. See 2 Chron. 36:22-23. The first group of Israelites returned from captivity in 536 BC.
 - c. Daniel was active during this period (Dan. 10:1).
 - d. Who is the Darius the Mede (539–525 BC) of Daniel 9:1? Some think he is the same as Cyrus (Wiseman); others think he is the

- same as Gubaru (Gobryas) (?), the governor of Babylon under Cyrus (Whitcomb).
2. Cambyses (530–521 BC).
 - a. Not mentioned in the Old Testament.
 - b. Defeated the Egyptians.
 3. Darius “the Great” (521–486 BC).
 - a. Rebuilding of the Temple (520–516 BC; Hag. 1:1; Ezra 6:15ff.).
 - b. Left a tri-lingual inscription on the Behistun Rock (in Iran) which became the key to unlock Babylonian cuneiform before 1850 AD.
 - c. Efficient organizer. Built roads, postal system, etc.
 4. Xerxes (486–464 BC).
 - a. Same as Ahasuerus. The Septuagint version, Josephus, and several Jewish sources identified Ahasuerus with Artaxerxes. Modern scholars, on the basis of inscriptional evidence, say, “there is no doubt that Ahasuerus was Xerxes...the son of Darius I” (Yamauchi 187; 228-29).
 - b. The events of the book of Esther took place during his reign.
 5. Artaxerxes (464–423 BC).
 - a. Ezra returns with second group of captives (458 BC).
 - b. Nehemiah rebuilds the wall of Jerusalem (444 BC). Close of Old Testament.
 6. The Persian dominion continued for another century until the rise of Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander.

II. THE RISE OF THE GREEK EMPIRE AND THE SPREAD OF GREEK CULTURE.

- A. **The Greeks.** Greece began to emerge as a nation several centuries before the time of Alexander the Great but that part of the history is not essential to this study.
- B. “The very mention of the word Greek brings to mind some of the glorious achievements of this remarkable race. They excelled in almost every area of human activity. Ancient Athens was the intellectual center of pre-Christian history. Here all the arts flourished and reached the heights of attainment. The Greeks developed the most effective language the world has known. In philosophy, literature, sculpture, architecture and other liberal arts they made a contribution unequalled by any other people. They gave to the world such men as Thucydides, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes, Alexander, Demosthenes and many others. In the fourth century before Christ their culture was to be taken by zealous apostles far east into the Orient itself” (Hester 22).
- C. **The Persians encounter the Greeks.** The Persians continued to press westward until they reached the Aegean Sea, the Western boundary of Asia Minor. They crossed the sea to enter Europe (Greece) where they

maintained a presence for a short time. The strong Greeks drove them out and eventually conquered the territory once held by Persia. Think what subsequent history might have been like if the Persians had been successful. Paul told the Greeks that God determined the appointed times and the boundaries of the nations (Acts 17:26).

D. Philip of Macedon (King of Macedonia, 359–336 BC)

1. Philip laid the foundation of the Greek empire by uniting the Greek city states under a single ruler.
2. Though not a Greek, strictly speaking, he wanted to lead a united Greece against Persia.
3. He trained his son, Alexander, to carry out his ambitions.

E. Alexander the Apostle of Hellenism (336–323 BC).

1. "Like most great leaders, Alexander represented a mass of conflicting strands. He was a Macedonian by nationality, and he dreamed of national glory as the heir of Philip. Culturally he was a Greek, educated by Aristotle himself. He carried the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* with him on his campaigns" (Pfeiffer 67).
2. Alexander, at the age of 13, was taught by Aristotle (343 BC). "Aristotle once said: 'The Greeks might govern the world, could they but combine into one political society.' Here is the genesis of Alexander's aim and method. This was the task Alexander set himself to accomplish, but the idea was Aristotle's, and to this day Aristotle rules the world" (Snaith 24).
3. Alexander moves eastward.
 - a. Crossed the Hellespont and defeated the Persians at the Granicus river, thus opening the way to Asia Minor (334 BC). He passed through towns such as Sardis, Ephesus, Miletus and Tarsus.
 - b. The defeat of the Persians at Issus gave him the option to continue east or to move to the south to Phoenicia, Palestine and Egypt.
 - (1) Sidon surrendered to Alexander, but the island city of Tyre resisted. Alexander spent seven months in capturing the city. He built the now-famous causeway and thus fulfilled Biblical prophecy (Ezek. 26).
 - (2) "Tradition states that he spared the city of Jerusalem because Jaddua, the high priest, showed him out of the prophecy of Daniel (ch. 8) that he would conquer Persia. Whether this tradition is historically correct is difficult to determine, but it is a fact that Jerusalem was not destroyed even though other conquered cities were" (Gromacki 7).
 - (3) In Egypt he was welcomed as a deliverer and was recognized as a Pharaoh at Karnak. Typically, at Memphis he sacrificed to the gods. He saw the Pyramids, and established a great city which he named Alexandria (332 BC). "The new city of

Alexandria was the enduring monument to the Macedonian conquest of Egypt" (Pfeiffer 69).

- (4) Retracing his steps through Palestine, he went through Syria and moved eastward beyond the Tigris river to defeat the "Grand Army" of Darius at the battle of Gaugamela (331 BC). He took the entire territory of Persia. "The capitals of the Persian Empire — Babylon, Susa, Persepolis and Ecbatana — were successively occupied" (Pfeiffer 69).
- (5) Upon the death of Darius in 330 BC, Alexander assumed the title of *Basileus* (Great King).
- (6) He continued as far east as the Punjab region of India, but his army refused to follow him any further.
- (7) In Persia he adopted Persian dress and ruled as an oriental despot (Contrast this with his Hellenic ideals!).
- (8) His last headquarters was at Babylon. He had great plans to make Babylon the capital of a new commercial empire. (But, see the prophecy that Babylon was never to be inhabited, Isa. 13:20-22; Jer. 51:26). "None of it, however, was to be. Alexander died at Babylon in the grip of some sudden and mysterious disease in June of BC 323, after twelve years of rule and a mere thirty-two years of life" (Peters 54).

F. **A Mediterranean *oikoumene*.** "The Greek dispersal of the years after BC 334 created the *oikoumene*, the 'known inhabited world,' not in the literal sense, to be sure, but as a kind of spiritual empire coterminous with Hellenism. The *oikoumene* was as far as the mind could reach, a Greek mind thinking Greek thoughts, elastic enough to recognize, salute and co-opt what lay outside its pale. It differed from the then forming Jewish Diaspora, which saw itself as a community in the form of a network within a larger alien body....The *oikoumene* was the creation of Alexander, not so much by intent as by what he did" (Peters 63).

III. THE DIVISION OF ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE.

- A. Alexander had many capable generals, but no man was strong enough to succeed him and hold together the empire he had molded. The kingdom was divided after Alexander's death in 323 BC. The four leading generals and the areas they controlled are listed:
1. **Ptolemy.** The Ptolemaic Empire centered in Egypt with Alexandria as its capital. The later rulers were called Ptolemies. Cleopatra (died 30 BC) was the last ruler.
 2. **Seleucus.** The Seleucid Empire centered in Syria with Antioch as its capital. Several rulers were named *Seleucus*; others were called *Antiochus*.
 3. **Lysimachus.** Ruled Thrace and Bithynia. Of no further importance in this study.

4. **Cassander.** Ruled Macedonia. Of no further importance in this study.
- B. "The kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided after his death were Greek kingdoms. In them Greek was at least the dominant language of the courts and of the large cities. Thus the results of Alexander's conquest were conserved" (Machen 28).

IV. THE **DIASPORA** (cf. Jn. 7:35, the Dispersion among the Greeks).

- A. The **Diaspora**. This term describes the scattering of the Jews outside of Palestine.
- B. Causes of the Dispersion.
 1. The Israelites were taken by force into various lands.
 - a. Israel was taken by Assyria in 722 BC.
 - b. Judah was taken to Babylon in 605, 597, 586 BC.
 2. Wars and famine at home made foreign residence more desirable (Machen, 39).
 - a. Some of the Jews who had been scattered preferred to stay where they were when conditions improved (e.g., the Jews in days of Esther).
 - b. In the days of Jeremiah there were communities of Jews in Egypt at Tahpanhes, Migdol, Memphis, and in the land of Pathros (Jer. 42:14; 43:7; 44:1).
 - c. There was a Jewish colony at Elephantine, an island in the upper Nile, in the 5th century BC.
 3. "The Seleucid kings of Syria encouraged Jewish colonies in the cities of Asia Minor" (Machen 39).
 4. Advantages of commerce may have caused voluntary migration.
- C. "By New Testament times it was estimated that more Jews lived outside of Palestine (perhaps as many as three to five million) than lived in the homeland" (Drumwright 119).
 1. Josephus could observe: "There is not a community in the entire world which does not have a portion of our people" (Josephus, *Bell.* ii. 16.4).
 2. Many of the cities Paul visited throughout Asia and Europe had Jewish communities (e.g. Acts 13:14; 14:1; 16:3, 13; 17:1, 17; 18:2-4; 19:8; 28:17). This provided a great benefit to early Christianity!

V. THE JEWS UNDER THE PTOLEMIES.

- A. Palestine came under the control of the Ptolemies (320–198 BC)
- B. The Jews seemed to fare well during this period. Many were brought, or came voluntarily, to Egypt. A large population of Jews lived in Alexandria.
- C. During the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285–246 BC) the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures was begun. It was called the Septua-

gint. Hellenism was now so prevalent that the Jews were beginning to speak Greek.

1. *The Letter of Aristeas*, written about 100 BC, purports to have been written by an official in the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus (note date of his reign!). It says that six elders were chosen by the High Priest in Jerusalem from each of the 12 tribes to do the work of translation.
2. The Septuagint is designated by LXX (the nearest round number in Roman numerals to 72).
3. The LXX was probably the work of Egyptian Jews.
4. This meant that every person who read Greek could read the Scriptures. It made the prophecies of the Messiah available to thousands who could not have read Hebrew.
5. More than one half of the quotations in the New Testament from the Old Testament are from the LXX. The man of Ethiopia was reading Isaiah in the Greek Bible (Acts 8:32).

VI. THE JEWS UNDER THE SELEUCIDS.

- A. The Seleucids and the Ptolemies fought frequently during the Ptolemaic rule of Palestine. The Ptolemies were defeated at the battle of Banias in 198 BC, and the Seleucids took control of Palestine.
- B. Seleucid rulers included Antiochus III, "the Great" (223–187 BC), Seleucus IV (187–175 BC) and Antiochus IV (175–164 BC).
- C. Antiochus IV was nicknamed "Epiphanies" (the brilliant one), but by some was called "Epimanes" (the madman or the dullard). He was a strong devotee to Hellenism and sought to impose his philosophy on all his subjects.
- D. **Rivalry among the Jews.** "Among the Jews two factions developed, 'the house of Onias' (pro-Egyptian) and 'the house of Tobias' (pro-Syrian). The Syrian king Antiochus IV or Epiphanies (175–163 BC) replaced the Jewish high priest Onias III with Onias' brother Jason, a Hellenizer, who planned to make Jerusalem a Greek city" (Gundry 5).
 1. Pfeiffer describes this period as one of Israel's darkest: "A systematic attempt was made to Hellenize the country by force. An edict demanded the fusion of all the nationalities of the Seleucid empire into one people. Greek deities were to be worshipped by all.
"An elderly Athenian philosopher was sent to Jerusalem to supervise the enforcement of the order. He identified the God of Israel with Jupiter, and ordered a bearded image of the pagan deity, perhaps in the likeness of Antiochus, set up upon the Temple altar. The Jews popularly spoke of this as 'the Abomination of Desolation.'
"Greek soldiers and their paramours performed licentious heathen rites in the very Temple courts. Swine were sacrificed on the altar. The drunken orgy associated with the worship of Bacchus was made

- compulsory. Conversely, Jews were forbidden, under penalty of death, to practice circumcision, Sabbath observance, or the observance of the feasts of the Jewish year. Copies of the Hebrew Scriptures were ordered destroyed" (Pfeiffer 81).
2. Gundry elaborates on some of the Greek customs: "A gymnasium with an adjoining race track was built. There Jewish lads exercised nude in Greek fashion, to the outrage of pious Jews. The track races opened with invocations to pagan deities, and even the Jewish priests attended such events. Hellenization also included attendance at Greek theaters, adoption of Greek dress, surgery to remove the marks of circumcision, and exchange of Hebrew for Greek names" (5).
- E. The Jews who opposed the Hellenization efforts were called *Hasidim*. The name *Hasidim* means "the pious." They developed a resistance movement and attempted a defense of orthodox Judaism. The Hasidim were the forerunners of the Pharisees.
- F. Antiochus Epiphanies invaded Egypt in 170 BC. Before doing so he removed Jason as high priest in his stead. Menelaus was a Hellenizing Jew of the tribe of Benjamin (priests were to be from Levi!) who offered higher tribute.
1. Word came to Jerusalem that Antiochus had been killed in Egypt. Jason hurried to Jerusalem and ousted Menelaus. (The report was false.)
 2. After a second invasion into Egypt (ca. 168 BC), Antiochus was pressured by the Romans to relinquish all claims to Egypt. He vented his frustration on the Jews.
 - a. This is when a sow was offered on the Temple altar. Jews who resisted were put to death.
 - b. The Maccabean revolt was begun.
 3. Gromacki describes the spirit of the Jews at that time: "Unknown to the Seleucidae, they had stimulated a spirit of nationalism among the Jews. Tired of oppression and years of Gentile dominion they prayed and conspired to be free. this determination not only produced the Maccabean revolt but permeated Jewish thought into the New Testament era up to the time of Bar-Cochba (AD 135). Among the orthodox developed a longing for a military, political messiah who would smash the Gentile war machine. This is why so many were disenchanted with Jesus' teaching and actions" (10). Paul and Barnabas went out from Antioch (Acts 11:19-26).
- G. For the Biblical prophecies concerning this period see Daniel 8–11. *The Prophecy of Daniel*, by Edward J. Young, is a good commentary to consult.

VII. THE MACCABEAN REVOLT.

- A. Antiochus Epiphanies continued to heap outrage upon the Jews, even after the desecration of the temple in 168 BC.
- B. The Maccabean Revolt.
 - 1. At Modin, a village north-west of Jerusalem, the Syrians tried to force an old priest by the name of Mattathias to offer a pagan sacrifice. The priest refused but another Jew volunteered to offer the sacrifice. Mattathias killed the Jew and the Syrian officer. Overnight, Mattathias became a national hero. He was of the family of Hasmon (or Asmoneus). Thus began the Hasmoneans.
 - 2. Mattathias had five sons: John, Simon, Judas (surnamed Maccabaeus), Eleazer, Jonathan.
 - 3. The family of Mattathias, joined by other zealots, carried on a guerilla warfare with the Syrians.
 - 4. Soon after the death of Mattathias, leadership fell to Judas the Maccabee ("the hammer").
 - 5. The Maccabees (followers of Judas) made their way to Jerusalem, entered the temple, removed evidence of pagan worship, erected a new altar to God, and ground to dust the statue of Zeus-Antiochus. They observed an eight day Feast of Dedication also called Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights. The feast began on the 25th of Kislev (December), 165 BC, exactly three years after the desecration by Antiochus.
 - a. The Feast of Dedication was celebrated annually by the Jews.
 - b. Jesus was in Jerusalem during this feast at least once (Jn. 10:22).
 - 6. Judas died on the battlefield in another battle with the Syrians in 161 BC.
 - 7. The discovery of a burial cave at Modin thought to have been used by the Maccabees and/or their descendants was reported in November, 1995.
- C. Successors to Judas.
 - 1. Jonathan held a place of leadership from 161 to 142 BC when he was murdered by a Syrian general.
 - 2. Simon succeeded his brother from 142 to 135 BC. During his leadership the Jews were granted immunity from taxes by the Syrians, and proclaimed their independence. Simon was made high priest. The High Priesthood was now hereditary in the Hasmonean line. "Here, then, we see the emergence of an independent Jewish state in which the civil head and the military leader were at the same time the High Priest" (Russell 31). Simon was slain by his son-in-law, Ptolemy, and his son, John Hyrcanus, became High Priest.

VIII. THE HASMONEAN DYNASTY (135–63 BC)

- A. The division of Jewish history into Maccabean and Hasmonean periods is arbitrary. Some scholars make the distinction by limiting “Maccabean” to Judas and his two brothers. The term “Hasmonean” describes the five descendants of the Maccabees.
1. **John Hyrcanus** (135–104 BC). John Hyrcanus reached an accord with Syria. The Hellenists became loyal citizens of the Jewish community.
 - a. The ideals of the Hellenist party were perpetuated in the party of the Sadducees.
 - b. The Hasidim were perpetuated in the party of the Pharisees. The parties are mentioned for the first time during the reign of John Hyrcanus (Pfeiffer 98).
 - c. Independence was gained in 129 BC and was confirmed by the Roman Senate.
 - d. “Hyrcanus forthwith began to extend his territory. In the south, for example, he seized Idumaea, compelling the inhabitants to be circumcised; in the north he seized Samaritan territory, destroying the rival Temple (of the Samaritans) on Mount Gerizim” (Russell 32). “There is something ironical in the thought of a grandson of Mattathias forcing religious conformity on a people conquered by Jewish arms! Many historical parallels may be drawn. The oppressed frequently become the oppressors” (Pfeiffer 98).
 - e. The Hasmoneans took over the High Priesthood and it became increasingly worldly and irreligious.
 2. **Aristobulus** (104–102 BC). The eldest son of John Hyrcanus preferred his Greek name to his Hebrew name, Judah. He cast his three brother in jail.
 - a. He continued the territorial expansion begun by his father.
 - b. He took to himself the title of “king.”
 3. **Alexander Jannaeus** (102–76 BC). Son of John Hyrcanus.
 - a. Jannaeus continued the policy of territorial expansion. “The size of the Jewish state was comparable to that of the glorious days of David and Solomon” (Pfeiffer 99).
 - b. The Hasmoneans sought to become a maritime power. Ships were sculpted on the family tomb near Modin and were depicted on coins.
 - c. There was a rift between the Pharisees and the Hasmoneans. Open civil war erupted after Jannaeus was officiating in the temple as King-Priest and poured out a water libation at his feet rather than upon the altar. The Pharisees asked the King of Syria to join them in a fight against Jannaeus. “The descendants of Hasidim asked the descendants of Antiochus Epiphanies to aid them against the descendants of the Maccabees” (Pfeiffer 100). Strange allies! Later the Pharisees deserted the Syrians and went to the aid of Jannaeus. He wasn’t too impressed. When the war was over he gave a banquet

for the Sadducean leaders and had 800 Pharisees crucified in the presence of the guests.

4. **Alexandra** (76–67 BC). The wife of Alexander Jannaeus who had been appointed queen by her husband.
 - a. She had her son, Hyrcanus II, appointed as High Priest.
 - b. Hyrcanus favored the Pharisees.
 - c. The younger son, Aristobulus, wanted to be king. The Sadducees found in him a champion.
 5. **Aristobulus II** (66–63 BC). After the death of his mother he defeated Hyrcanus and forced him to give up office. Aristobulus was both king and priest.
- B. The end of the Hasmoneans and the entrance of Rome.
- “The story of the Hasmoneans draws to an end with the account of one Antipater, governor of Idumaea, who encouraged Hyrcanus in exile to remove his brother from office. With the help of an Arabian ruler, Aretas III, he besieged Aristobulus in Jerusalem. It was at this point that Rome decided to interfere in Palestinian affairs. Pompey sent his general, Scaurus, to quell the rising and he, through bribery, supported Aristobulus. In the year 63 BC. Pompey in person, fearing the designs of Aristobulus, attacked Jerusalem and conquered it, entering in person into the Temple and the Holy of Holies. Aristobulus was carried captive to Rome. Hyrcanus was confirmed in the High Priesthood and was appointed Ethnarch of Judea which was now added to the province of Syria” (Russell 34-35).

IX. THE ROMANS IN PALESTINE.

- A. Rome, according to legend, was founded by Romulus and Remus in 753 BC.
 1. Rome gained control over the western Mediterranean in 146 BC, after three wars with the Carthaginians. (These were known as the Punic Wars.)
 2. Roman rule soon extended over Macedonia, Corinth and all Achaia.
 3. “In 133 BC, Attalus, king of Pergamum, bequeathed his territory to the Romans. The Roman province of Asia was then organized” (Pfeiffer 104).
 4. By 64 BC, the Roman general Pompey, ended the Seleucid dominion in Syria. The territory was annexed as another Roman province.
- B. The Roman general Pompey intervened in the civil dispute between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. He took the side of Hyrcanus who was appointed ethnarch of Judea.
 1. Judea became a part of the Roman province of Syria.
 2. Hyrcanus ruled Judea, Galilee, Idumea and Perea. He paid annual tribute to Rome.

- D. Antony was defeated at the battle of Actium in 31 BC. Herod informed Octavian that he would now serve him with the same loyalty he had shown Antony.
 - 1. Herod assisted Octavian in his invasion of Egypt. In return he received "the cities of Jericho, Gadara, and Samaria, with the territories of Gaza, Joppa and Strato's Tower, which later became Caesarea" (Tenney 50).
 - 2. With Herod's co-operation the Roman control of the East was finally completed.
- E. "Although Palestine remained nominally independent until his (Herod's) death, its real sovereignty lay in the hands of the Roman legate of Syria, and later in the command of the procurators. Throughout the period of the New Testament the shadow of Rome fell over the land, and under its oppression and protection Christianity was born and flourished" (Tenney 50-51).

X. THE HERODS.

- A. Herod the Great, son of Antipater, an Idumean, was born 74 BC.
 - 1. He was made governor of Galilee by his father at the age of 25.
 - 2. He reigned as King of the Jews from 37 to 4 BC.
 - 3. Gundry describes Herod: "Herod was scheming, jealous, and cruel; he killed two of his own wives and at least three of his own sons. It was he who had the infants in Bethlehem slaughtered according to Matthew's nativity account (ch. 2). Augustus once said that it was better to be Herod's pig than his son (a word-play, since the Greek words for pig and son sound very much alike). But Herod was also an efficient ruler and a clever politician, who managed to survive the struggles for power in the highest echelons of Roman government" (Gundry 12-13).
 - 4. Herod married Mariamne, a descendant of the Hasmoneans, thus strengthening his claim to the throne.
 - 5. Herod's greatest achievement was his building program. He proved to be a miniature Augustus in building projects. Josephus informs us that there was not any place in the kingdom fit for the purpose that was not without something to Caesar's honor (*The Jewish Wars* I.21.4). The program included the following:
 - a. **Samaria.** Renamed Sebaste in honor of Augustus. "His extensive building operations support the contention that he encouraged the cult of the Emperor, for all the many temples he built throughout Palestine were dedicated to Caesar" (Russell 37).
 - b. **Jerusalem.** Strengthened the walls, and erected 3 towers; built the fortress of Antonia (named to honor Mark Antony); the temple platform; the walls around the temple area (the Western Wall or

“wailing wall” of the Jews); rebuilt the temple; a theater; an amphitheater.

- (1) Work on the temple was begun in 20/19 BC. The temple proper was finished in 1 ½ years; 8 more years were spent on the courts.
- (2) Work on the surrounding buildings was still going on during the ministry of Christ (cf. Jn. 2:20-22).
- (3) The work was completed during the time of the procurator Albinus (AD 62-64), just a few years before the destruction by Titus in AD 70.
- c. **Other ruins** of the Herodian period can be seen at Ashkelon, the Herodium, Masada, Machaerus, Jericho, Caesarea, and other places in Palestine.
6. Herod goes down in infamy as the one who tried to have the infant Jesus put to death.
7. Herod died of cancer of the intestines and dropsy in 4 BC.
8. Charles Pfeiffer says Herod “must go down in history as one of the world’s great failures. That he was jealous even of the infant Jesus shows the extent to which the desire for worldly sovereignty may lead a man astray” (110).

B. Herod’s Successors.

1. His Sons. They lacked his ability and ambition.
 - a. Archelaus – Ethnarch of Judea – 4 BC to AD 6 (Mt. 2:22).
 - b. Herod Philip (son of Cleopatra) – Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis – 4 BC to AD 34 (Lk. 3:1).
 - c. Herod Antipas – Tetrarch of Galilee – 4 BC to AD 39.
 - (1) Rebuked by John the Baptist for marrying Herodias, the wife of Philip (son of Mariamne). He had John beheaded (Mt. 14:3-12; Mk. 6:17-29).
 - (2) Jesus called him “that fox” (Lk. 13:32).
 - (3) Jesus stood trial before him (Lk. 23:7-12).
2. His Grandson.
 - a. Herod Agrippa I – King of Judea – AD 37 to 44. He was the son of Aristobulus, the son of Mariamne.
 - b. Executed James the Apostle (Acts 12).
3. His Great Grandchildren (born to Herod Agrippa I).
 - a. Bernice became the consort of her brother Herod Agrippa II (Acts 25:13).
 - b. Herod Agrippa II – Tetrarch of Chalcis and of northern territory – AD 48 to 70. Paul made a defense before him (Acts 25:12 – 26:32).
 - c. Drusilla married Felix, procurator of Judea – AD 52 to 59 (?). (See complete chart in Tenney 370).

C. The Roman Procurators.

1. As a result of the misrule of Archelaus he was removed from office by Augustus in AD 6. Roman governors ruled the territory. The ones of biblical importance are listed:
 - a. Pontius Pilate – AD 26 to 36 – Jesus Crucified.
 - b. M. Antonius Felix – AD 52 to 59 – Paul tried (Acts 23–24).
 - c. Porcius Festus – AD 59 to 61 – Paul tried (Acts 25–26).
 - d. Florus – raided the Temple treasury and “ignited the Jewish revolt of AD 66–73” (Gundry 15).

D. The Jewish Priesthood.

Gundry reminds us that “in spite of the Herod’s and the Roman governors, the Jewish priesthood and the Sanhedrin (a kind of Jewish Supreme Court) largely controlled local matters affecting daily life” (Gundry 15).

XI. THE SYNAGOGUE.

A. The origin of the synagogue is difficult to determine, but it is generally held that it arose during the time of the Babylonian exile. It did not become common until the intertestamental period.

1. “With the destruction of the Temple (586 BC), sacrifices ceased. Prayer and the study of the sacred Scriptures, however knew no geographical limitations. The Book of Ezekiel describes the elders of Israel gathering in the prophet’s house (8:1; 20:1-3)” (Pfeiffer 59).
2. The word *synagogue* is of Greek origin (Greek, συναγωγή). It simply refers to a gathering of the people, or a congregation. “The Hebrew word for such a gathering is *keneseth*, the name used for the parliament in the modern state of Israel” (Pfeiffer 59).
3. After the rebuilding of the Temple (520–516 BC), the synagogue continued to fill the spiritual needs of the Jews of the Diaspora.
 - a. There were synagogues in many of the cities visited by Paul: Damascus (Acts 9:2); Salamis (13:5); Antioch of Pisidia (13:14); Thessalonica (17:1); Corinth (18:4); Ephesus (19:8), and others. Only ten families were needed to compose a synagogue.
 - b. One rabbinic tradition has it that there were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem alone.
 - c. Even the small villages of Galilee had synagogues at the time of Jesus (Mt. 4:23; 9:35).

B. The Building and the Service.

1. “The typical synagogue was a rectangular auditorium with a raised speaker’s platform, behind which rested a portable chest or shrine containing Old Testament scrolls. The congregation sat on stone benches running along two or three walls and on mats and possible wooden chairs in the center of the room. In front, facing the congregation, sat the rulers or elders of the synagogue. Singing was unac-

- accompanied. To read from an Old Testament scroll, the speaker stood. To preach, he sat down. For prayer, everyone stood" (Gundry 41).
2. The synagogue was a place of *instruction* and *worship*, but not a place of sacrifice.
 - a. The service consisted of recitation of the Shema (the Hebrew word for "hear") (Dt. 6:4ff.), and praise to God, prayer, singing of psalms, reading from the Hebrew Old Testament, with a Targum (an oral translation into Aramaic or Greek), a sermon (if a competent person was present), and a blessing or benediction" (Gundry).
 - b. There are several graphic descriptions of synagogue services in the New Testament.
 - (1) Jesus at Nazareth (Lk. 4:16-30).
 - (2) Paul at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14-16).
 - C. Archaeologists have uncovered several synagogues dating from the first to the fifth centuries AD.
 1. A first century synagogue was discovered at Masada (1963-1965).
 2. Several 2nd to 5th century synagogues are to be seen in Israel: Capernaum, Meiron, Beth Alpha, et al. See *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Nov./Dec., 1983.
 3. One of the most spectacular synagogue finds is that of Dura Europos in Syria. It was excavated by M. I. Rostovtzeff of Yale (1932-1935), and has been reconstructed in the Damascus Museum. It has elaborate murals depicting Old Testament events and is dated about AD 250.
 4. Archaeologists found a Greek inscription from a synagogue on Mount Ophel, not far from the Temple precinct, in Jerusalem. The Theodotus Inscription states that the building was for "reading of the law." This inscription is in the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem.
 5. In the small museum at ancient Corinth one may see a broken lintel with the inscription "synagogue of Hebrews."

XII. THE SAMARITANS.

- A. **Their Origin and Brief History.** Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel captured by the Assyrians in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:3-6; 18:9-11). Many of the Israelites were taken away by Assyria and put in Halan, and on the Habor, the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.
 1. Foreigners from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim were brought by Assyria and placed in the cities of Samaria. These people intermarried with the remaining Israelites and became known as the Samaritans (2 Kings 17:24, 29). Kelso suggests that more likely the Samaritans "were the descendants of the Israelites left in the land, for Samaritan theology shows no sign of the influence of paganism among the colonists sent by the Assyrians. If there was intermarriage, the children became true Israelites" (245).

2. When the Jews returned from captivity (536 BC) the Samaritans offered to help rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Their offer was refused by Zerubbabel and Joshua (Ezra 4:3, 10, 17; 520–516 BC).
 3. “In Maccabean times Jewish tradition represents the Samaritans as joining with the Seleucid oppressors” (MacRae 244).
 4. John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim in 128 BC. Josephus claims the temple was erected in the days of Alexander (c. 333 BC; *Ant.* 11.7.2; 11.8.2), but others question the accuracy of this date (245; Prideaux I:324). According to Josephus, the temple was an exact replica of the temple in Jerusalem.
 - a. Note the statement of the Samaritan woman, “Our fathers worshipped [past tense] in this mountain” (Jn. 4:20). Archaeologists think the ruins of this temple were visible from Jacob’s Well (Bull).
 - b. Yitzhak Magen, chief Israeli archaeologist for Judea and Samaria, announced in 1995 the discovery of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim (*The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, April 29, 1995).
 5. By New Testament times the Jews and the Samaritans had no dealings with one another (Jn. 4:9).
- B. The Samaritan Religion.
1. The Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch. Manuscripts of the “Samaritan Pentateuch” differ from the Masoretic Hebrew text in several places. Preference is given to Mt. Gerizim rather than Jerusalem.
 2. A small group of Samaritans still live in the city of Nablus (near ancient Shechem in the valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal). The Samaritans still observe the passover annually on Mount Gerizim.
- C. The Samaria Papyri. A collection of about 20 fragmentary Aramaic documents were discovered by the Ta’amireh Bedouin at Wadi Daliyeh (9 miles north of Jericho) in 1962–1964. About 300 skeletons were found in the same cave. The papyri have added considerable information about the inter-testamental period.
1. The papyri, mostly administrative, is dated between 375 and 335 BC.
 2. Reference is made to Artaxerxes II (404–359 BC) and Darius III (335–330 BC). This places the documents immediately prior to Alexander’s invasion in 332 BC.
 3. There is also reference to “Sanballat, governor of Samaria.” This is thought to be Sanballat III, and not Sanballat I of the book of Nehemiah (2:10, 19; 3:33; 4:1; et al.).
 4. Frank Moore Cross, who was the first to read the Samaria Papyri, suggests the historical setting: “Although the people of the city of Samaria initially ingratiated themselves with their foreign ruler Alexander the Great, they later burned alive Andromachus, Alexander’s prefect in Syria. The act was not only a heinous crime, it was the first

sign of revolt in Syria-Palestine. Alexander returned in all haste to Samaria and took vengeance on the murderers who were 'delivered up to him,' according to the ancient historian Curtius Rufus.... Alexander destroyed the city of Samaria. Archaeologists have uncovered the late fourth century towers at Samaria which were built in Greek design rather than Palestinian. This suggests that Samaria was resettled by Greek Macedonians after its destruction, excavations at Shechem reveal that the city was rebuilt in the late fourth century after a long abandonment. This is probably to be explained by the fact that the Samaritans who fled Samaria rebuilt Shechem as their new capital" (25; More information can be found in *Discoveries in the Wadi Ed-Daliyeh*, ed. by Paul and Nancy Lapp). Cross thinks that some Samaritans went to Wadi Daliyeh where they found temporary refuge in the cave. Alexander's men found them in the cave, lit a fire at the mouth of the cave and waited for the occupants to suffocate.

D. Miscellaneous Information.

1. Herod the Great built Samaria as one of his magnificent cities. He dedicated a temple to the Emperor Augustus. "One of his wives was a Samaritan, who was the mother of Herod Antipas" (Kelso 246).
2. Archelaus proved a poor ruler, so Samaria fell under the control of the Roman procurators. Josephus states that Pilate's handling of a fanatical assembly on Mt. Gerizim led to his removal as procurator in AD 36 (*Antiquities* XVIII.iv).
3. Travel in first century Palestine was affected by the Samaritan-Jew conflict (cf. Lk. 9:52-56). Many Jews of Galilee traveled along the Jordan Valley or through Perea on their way to Jerusalem.
4. The Samaritans gave a favorable reception to the gospel (Acts 8:1-25).

XIII. THE JEWISH SECTS AND OTHER IMPORTANT GROUPS.

A. **The Pharisees.** The most numerous and influential of the five Jewish sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Herodians, and Essenes. The Pharisees numbered about 6000 at the time of Herod the Great (Gundry 48).

1. The most succinct description of the Pharisees that I have found is by Rivkin: "A scholarly class dedicated to the teaching of the twofold law (the written and the oral) and to the dissemination of their belief in the world to come and the resurrection of the dead. They are not mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, they taught laws and doctrines not set down in those scriptures, and they promised salvation to the individual in a life beyond the grave, a concept not formulated in the Pentateuch. Yet these Pharisees were so successful in winning over the people to their innovational teachings that in the time of Jesus they are sitting in the chair of Moses, and legitimately so (cf. Mt. 23:1-3)" (657).

2. The Pharisees are first mentioned during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135–104 BC). (See point VIII.) They were the successors of the Hasidim (“the pious”), the Jews who resisted the Hellenization efforts of the Seleucids (See point VI, E). Antagonism between the Pharisees and the Sadducees was known this early. The Sadducees favored the efforts of Hellenization.
3. Josephus tells us much about the Pharisees. This information is summarized by Rivkin 658.
 - a. They passed on to the people certain regulations *handed down* (παρέδωσαν) by former generations. Oral *traditions* not recorded in the law of Moses.
 - b. Most accurate expositors of the Law.
 - c. Held position of leading school of thought.
 - d. Offered a total system of governance to believers.
 - e. Preached the immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body.
 - f. Affirmed the interplay of fate and free will.
 - g. Simon, son of Gamaliel, is mentioned as an unrivaled expert in the laws.
4. New Testament information about the Pharisees.
 - a. The New Testament names Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Gamaliel, and Saul of Tarsus as Pharisees. Paul stated that the Pharisees were the “straightest sect of our religion” (Acts 26:5), the epitome of orthodoxy.
 - (1) As to the law, Paul had been a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5-6).
 - (2) He was zealous for the *traditions* of the fathers (Gal. 1:13-14). This was the technical expression used by Josephus and the Gospels to denote *oral law*.
 - b. The Gospels present the Pharisees as a scholar class of the twofold law (Mk. 7:5).
 - c. The Pharisees rebuked Jesus and His disciples on several occasions.
 - (1) For plucking grain on the sabbath (Mk. 2:23-27).
 - (2) For allowing the disciples to transgress the traditions of the elders (Mt. 15:1-9).
 - (3) Challenging him on the legality of divorce (Mt. 19:1-9).
 - (4) Questioning the payment of tribute to Caesar (Mt. 22:15-22).
 - (5) They commended Jesus when he refuted the Sadducees about the resurrection (Mt. 22:23-34).
 - (6) They differed with Jesus on whether the Messiah must be the son of David (Mt. 22:41-45).
 - d. Jesus’ analysis of the Pharisees. They sit “in the chair of Moses.” Practice what they tell you, but do not follow their practice (Mt. 23:2-3). “Here the Pharisees are explicitly confirmed as the authoritative spokesmen for the Law and legitimately so. This, despite whatever hostile feelings they engender in the followers of

- Jesus and however hypocritical they may seem to be. (They may indeed wish all their deeds to be seen by men; they may indeed wear their phylacteries broad and their fringes long; they may relish the place of honor at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, and being called rabbi, but withal they sit in Moses' seat and exercise authority over the law legitimately (Mt. 23 *passim*).)" (Rivkin 658).
5. The Synagogue was used by the Pharisees to perpetuate their views. Rivkin admits that the origin of the synagogue is obscure, but states that there was no mention of it in Palestine before the Hasmonean period. He says, however, that "the most durable of institutions which the Pharisees created was the synagogue..." (Rivkin 661).
 6. The Pharisees may not have accepted the resurrection of Christ, but they could not scoff at the idea of resurrection.
 7. The Pharisees tend to be looked upon as "guardians of orthodoxy," "legalists," or "extremists." Their name literally means "separatists." Gundry lists some of their extreme positions (48-49).
 - a. Scrupulous Sabbath Observance.
 - (1) Some forbade spitting on the bare ground on the Sabbath lest this be considered plowing, thus Sabbath-breaking work.
 - (2) A woman should not look in a mirror on the Sabbath lest she see a gray hair and be tempted to pluck it.
 - (3) Some questioned whether they could eat an egg laid on a festival day. It might be tainted even though the hen was unaware of the festival day.
 - b. They devised legal loopholes for their convenience.
 - (1) One could not carry his clothes out of a burning house on the Sabbath, but he could put on several layers of clothing and wear them out of the house.
 - (2) Travel on the Sabbath was limited to three-fifths of a mile from the town where he lived. On Friday they could take food to a house three-fifths of a mile from home and go there on the Sabbath. This was considered his "home away from home" so he could go yet another three-fifths of a mile.
- B. **The Sadducees.** The Sadducees were a smaller group than the Pharisees, but wielded more political power because they controlled the priesthood (Gundry 49).
1. The Origin of the Sadducees. They are first mentioned as a party during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-104 BC). (See point VIII.) They perpetuated the ideal of the Hellenist party.
 2. The Name. There is considerable difference as to the origin of the name Sadducee.
 - a. The name means "righteous ones."

- b. The name is derived from Zadok, a leading priest under David (2 Sam. 8:17; 15:24ff.) and chief priest under Solomon (1 Kings 1:32; 2:35).
 - c. T. W. Manson has suggested that the Aramaic/Hebrew word is a transliteration of the Greek word *σύνδικοι*, meaning "syndics," "judges," or "fiscal controllers." "The use of *su/ndikoi* can be traced back to 4th cent. BC Athens. It came during the Roman period to refer to individuals having responsibilities and authority quite similar to that held by the Sadducees in Jerusalem (i.e., serving in somewhat of a mediatorial role between the Roman authorities and the local or national community). Thus the word *syndic* was used also to refer to members of the Jewish senate, the Sanhedrin" (Hagner 212).
 3. Beliefs and Teachings.
 - a. Regarded only the Pentateuch (Mosaic law, or Torah) as fully authoritative. they denied the oral law of the nonpriestly rabbis.
 - b. "They did not believe in divine foreordination, angels, spirits, or the immortality of the soul and resurrection of the body, as did the Pharisees" (Gundry 49). See Mt. 22:23 and Acts 23:8.
 4. The Sadducees were of the aristocratic class. In their religious views they were liberals.
 5. When the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, the Sadducean party disintegrated.
- C. **The Zealots.** The Zealots were concerned chiefly with political matters, longing for the independence of the Jewish people as a nation. They were "revolutionaries dedicated to the overthrow of Roman power. They refused to pay taxes to Rome, regarded acknowledgment of loyalty to Caesar as sin, and sparked several uprisings, including the Jewish revolt which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Scholars usually identify the Zealots with the Sicarii ("assassins"), who carried concealed daggers" (Gundry 51).
1. Origin. According to Josephus the sect of the Zealots was formed in AD 6 when Judas the Galilean and Zadduk the Pharisee rebelled against Rome. Russell points out that "they may justifiably be regarded as true spiritual children of the Maccabees" (37, 53).
 2. One of the twelve apostles had been a member of this party, "Simon the Zealot" (Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13). *Cananean* is the Aramaic word for Zealot (cf. Mk. 3:18).
- D. **The Herodians.** A minority of influential Jews who were wholly politically minded. Gundry says they were mainly "the Sadducean aristocracy of priests who supported the Herodian dynasty and, by implication, the Roman rule, which had put the Herods in power" (51).

- E. **The Essenes.** Not mentioned in the New Testament, but mentioned by Pliny, Josephus and Philo of Alexander. The monastic group who left the Dead Sea Scrolls, at Qumran, on the west shore of the Dead Sea, are usually identified with the Essenes.
1. Origin. Some scholars look upon the Essenes as "a Palestinian phenomenon, the fruit of a reaction against the progressive hellenization of Palestinian Judaism" (Murphy-O'Connor 103). W. F. Albright, in 1946, and Murphy-O'Connor, in his recent "provisional" article, suggest that the Essenes were Jews who returned from Babylon just prior to the time of the Maccabean high priest Jonathan (152–143 BC). He believes that the "wicked priest" of the Dead Sea literature was Jonathan, who held the office of high priest without having any traditional right to it. This makes the "Teacher of Righteousness" a contemporary of Jonathan.
 - a. Gundry says that the Essenes, like the Pharisees, "evolved from the Hasidim" (50).
 - b. Possibly during the time of Jonathan, but probably during the reign of John Hyrcanus, at least part of the Essenes took up residence in the wilderness at Qumran.
 - c. The dated coins at Qumran help to identify the time period of the settlement. Coins range from the reign of Antiochus VII (132–130 BC) to the days of the Roman prefects and procurators. Occupation at Qumran was from the second half of the second century until about AD 68 (cf. Vermes 210).
 2. It has been suggested by some that John the Baptist was an Essene, by others that Jesus was an Essene, and that the early church grew out of the Essene movement. For a reply to this view see Jenkins ("Did Christianity...?") or Bruce (*Second Thoughts*).

OTHER GROUPS

- F. **Scribes.** Not a religious or political group, but a "professional group." The terms "lawyer," "scribe," and "teacher (of the law)" are used synonymously in the New Testament. These men were also called "rabbi," literally, "my great one," or "my master, teacher" (Gundry 51).
1. Originated with Ezra who read and interpreted the law to the returned captives (Ezra 7:12; Neh. 8:8).
 2. Most of the scribes were identified with the Pharisees at the time of Christ. (See information about Pharisees above).
 3. The scribes were regarded as authoritative interpreters of the law. They likewise had to be experts in all the traditions of the elders.
 4. The teaching methods of Jesus (as one possessing authority, "I say unto you...") was impressive to the people who had been listening to the scribes (Mt. 7:28-29). The scribes would cite the law and then give the various interpretations of the fathers.

G. The Sanhedrin.

1. Under Roman rule the Jews were allowed to exercise power over religious and domestic affairs. There were many local courts but the supreme court was the Sanhedrin.
 - a. There were 71 members: a high priest and 70 other members from both Pharisees and Sadducees. The Sanhedrin was dominated, however, by a priestly aristocracy (therefore, mostly Sadducees) (Hagner 271).
 - b. New Testament Names: council (assembly) of the elders, chief priests, scribes (Lk. 22:66; Mt. 27:1; 26:59; Acts 22:5). The Greek name is συνέδριον (*sunedrion*), literally meaning "a sitting together."
 - c. They commanded a police force (Jn. 18:3). Jesus was tried by the Sanhedrin. Note that they had to deliver Jesus to the Romans for execution (Jn. 18:31).
2. History. rabbinic tradition traced the Sanhedrin back to Moses (Num. 11:16). Ezra is said to have reorganized the Sanhedrin. This was called the "Great Synagogue." The first historical record of the Sanhedrin is in the days of Antiochus III (223–187 BC).
3. The Sanhedrin exercised some power in the Diaspora. From the Sanhedrin Paul received letters to the synagogue at Damascus (Acts 9:1-2, 14).
4. The Sanhedrin and the early church.
 - a. Apostles were admonished not to continue preaching (Acts 4:5-22; 5:17-42). Gamaliel, the famous rabbi, made a plea for justice.
 - b. Stephen tried and stoned (Acts 6:9 – 8:1). See the article by Hagner in on the question of whether the Sanhedrin really had power in capital cases.
 - c. Paul was tried by the Sanhedrin.
5. Some famous members of the Sanhedrin.
 - a. Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-5; 7:50-51; 19:39).
 - b. Joseph of Arimathaea (Jn. 19:38).
6. The Sanhedrin was dissolved in AD 70.

H. The Tax Collectors (Publicans). The term *tax gatherer*, *tax collector*, or *Customs Officer* is preferable to the KJV *publican*.

1. Under Roman rule wealthy men bought the privilege of collecting the taxes in certain localities. These men were "tax farmers" who employed local Jews to do the actual collecting of the taxes. Revenue collected in Palestine went to the emperor. This prompted the question, "Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" (Mt. 22:17).
2. Attitude toward the Tax Collectors: "As a class, the tax collectors were hated by their fellow Jews. This was almost inevitable. They represented the foreign domination of Rome. Their methods were necessarily inquisitorial. That they often overcharged people and pocketed the

surplus is almost certain. In the rabbinical writings they are classified with robbers. In the synoptic gospels they are bracketed with 'sinners' (Matt. 9:10; 11:19; Mark 2:15; Luke 5:30; 7:34). This shows the common attitude of the Jewish people toward them. They were considered to be renegades, who sold their services to the foreign oppressor to make money at the expense of their own countrymen" (Earle 606).

XIV. LITERATURE OF THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD.

The liberal view that canonical books such as Daniel, Ecclesiastes and some Psalms were written during this period between the testaments is rejected. For replies to this view see Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*; Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*; or Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*.

- A. **The Septuagint (LXX).** A Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, begun by Jews (ca. 280 BC) in Alexandria, Egypt, during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. (See point V above).
- B. **Apocrypha** (hidden, secret). Books which were never accepted as canonical (part of inspired scripture) by the Jews. There is no clear New Testament reference to these books. They did not come into common use until the 2nd century AD. Augustine (AD 354–430) was the first to favor canonizing them. The Roman Catholic Council of Trent (AD 1546) declared the books to be canonical (except those marked with an asterisk). The Apocrypha may be classified, in general, according to the content of the book. Most of them were written in Greek.

Historical:	<i>Esdras*</i> <i>1 Maccabees</i> <i>2 Maccabees</i>
Didactic or Teaching:	<i>The Wisdom of Solomon</i> <i>Ecclesiasticus</i> (by Sirach. The only book whose author is known with certainty.)
Religious Romance:	<i>Tobit</i> <i>Judith</i>
Prophetic:	<i>Baruch</i> <i>Epistle of Jeremiah</i> (<i>Baruch</i> , ch. 6, in Douay [Catholic] Version.) <i>2 Esdras*</i>
Legendary:	Additions to <i>Esther</i> <i>Song of Three Young Men</i> (Prayer of Azariah). (Dan. 3:24-90, Douay) <i>Susanna</i> (Dan. 13 in Douay) <i>Bel and the Dragon</i> (Dan. 14 in Douay) <i>Prayer of Manasseh*</i>

1. Value and importance of the Apocrypha: "Although the books of the Apocrypha have and claim neither inspiration nor authority, yet they have value and importance. They are a part of the literature of God's covenant people, and they help to fill the gap of 450 or more years between the end of the Old and the beginning of the New Testament literature, when prophecy and inspiration had ceased. They supply a connecting link. Although through lack of inspiration they contain inaccuracies, contradictions, absurdities, and teaching which conflict with the teaching of Scripture, yet they yield valuable information concerning the outer and inner life of Judaism, an insight into the Jewish thought, feeling, philosophy, character, and history during the time in which they were written" (Miller 112).
- C. **The Pseudepigrapha.** False or spurious writings, written under false names. These books have never been accepted as canonical by Jews, New Testament writers, or the church fathers. Catholics call them the "apocrypha." Protestants have referred to these books as the "wider apocrypha" or "apocalyptic literature." "Most of these books are comprised of dreams, visions and revelations in the apocalyptic style of Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah" (Geisler and Nix 166). Geisler and Nix classify the 18 books "worthy of mention" as follows:
- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Legendary: | <i>The Book of Jubilee; The Letter of Aristeas; The Book of Adam and Eve; The Martyrdom of Isaiah.</i> |
| Apocalyptic: | <i>1 Enoch; The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs; The Sibylline Oracle; The Assumption of Moses; 2 Enoch; 2 Baruch; 3 Baruch.</i> |
| Didactical: | <i>3 Maccabees; 4 Maccabees; Pirke Aboth; The Story of Ahikar.</i> |
| Poetical: | <i>The Psalms of Solomon; Psalm 151.</i> |
| Historical: | <i>The Fragment of a Zadokite Work.</i> |
1. Nature of Apocalyptic Literature: It was occasioned by an hour of desperate need. "Most of it was written between the years 200 BC and AD 100. when the Jewish nation was struggling for its very life.... When trials and persecution were the most severe, the light of apocalyptic hope burned the brightest" (Jenkins 35. See this work for more information on apocalyptic literature.).
 2. The Pseudepigrapha is alluded to in the New Testament. Examples: Jude 14-15 (possibly 1 Enoch 1:9 and Assumption of Moses 1:9); 2 Tim. 3:8 (allusion to the Penitence of Jannes and Jambres). Same principle as quoting from heathen poets, Aratus (Acts 17:28); Menander (1 Cor. 15:33); Epimenides (Tit. 1:12). "Truth is truth no matter where it is found, whether uttered by a heathen poet, a pagan prophet (Num. 24:17), or even a dumb animal (Num. 22:28). Nevertheless, it

should be noted that no such formula as 'it is written' or 'Scripture says' is connected with these citations" (Geisler and Nix 165).

D. The Dead Sea Literature (See THE ESSENES, Point XIII, E).

1. The Essene community lived at Qumran on the north west shore of the Dead Sea between the second century BC and AD 68. They spent much time in copying Biblical manuscripts and writing their own literature. When the Essenes learned that the Romans were about to take Jerusalem they hid many of their scrolls in clay jars in the caves around Qumran. They never returned, and the scrolls were hidden until the first of them were found by chance in the spring of 1947.
2. The scrolls may be divided into 4 categories.
 - a. Biblical: fragments of every Old Testament book except Esther were found. One complete scroll of Isaiah was found, and another one almost complete.
 - b. Commentaries on Scripture: Commentary on Habakkuk, fragments of commentaries on Psalms, Isaiah, and Nahum, etc.
 - c. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: fragments of Tobit, Psalm 151, etc.
 - d. Essene Literature: War Scroll (War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness); Thanksgiving Hymns; Manual of Discipline.
3. The Significance of the Scrolls.
 - a. The Old Testament manuscripts antedate our previous earliest extant Hebrew Text (the Masoretic text) by about 1,000 to 1,200 years. This confirms the accuracy of our extant manuscripts.
 - b. Provides new knowledge of the history, literature and religion of the intertestamental period.
4. Brief Bibliography on the Scrolls:
 - a. Two inexpensive English translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls are available (Gaster; Vermes).
 - b. Books about the scrolls and the Dead Sea sect: Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls*; Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*; Fitzmyer, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Dead Sea Scrolls*; Pfeiffer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible*.

E. Alexandrian Allegorism.

1. "With no intention to abandon their ancestral faith, Alexandrian Jews followed their gentile neighbors in subscribing to a school of Greek philosophy. This resulted in that attempt to harmonize Scripture with Greek thinking which produced the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture. Aristobulus and Philo were the great allegorizers. To them the literal meaning of the Bible was vulgar, misleading, and insufficient. A hidden, deeper meaning must be sought. By reading into the Bible their pagan philosophy, they were able to consider themselves enlightened Hellenists and orthodox Hebrews at one and the same time.

Some of them adopted Greek names to help in the process of assimilation.

“The allegorist regards the literal sense of Scripture as the vehicle for a secondary sense which is regarded as more spiritual and profound” (Pfeiffer 87).

- a. An Alexandrian Jew named Aristobulus (ca. 160 BC) taught that the Greek philosophers had borrowed much of their thought from the Mosaic law.
- b. Philo (ca. 20 BC to AD 50) was the most famous Jewish allegorist. He mentioned 64 Greek writers in his literature and considered them as men of God on a par with the prophets of Israel.
2. This type of allegorism actually influenced the church more than it did Judaism. Origen (AD 185 to 254/5) advanced this type of interpretation of Scripture. It dominated Roman Catholic thinking.
 - a. Theodore of Mopsuestia, of Syrian Antioch, opposed allegorism and insisted on the literal interpretation of Scripture.
 - b. “The Reformation brought a renewed emphasis on the literal, historical interpretation of Scripture” (Pfeiffer 90).
 - c. The allegorical influence is seen today in the approach to interpretation which finds extreme typology in Scripture.

Conclusion:

It is hoped that this brief outline will assist each one who studies it to come to a clearer understanding of the period between the testaments. One should see the providential preparations to bring about the “fulness of times,” when Jesus would come and the church would be introduced to the world. This study should provide a good background for a survey of the New Testament.

Selected Bibliography

This list includes some books and articles which we believe will be helpful in your continuing study of the intertestamental period. Many additional articles can be found in the good Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias such as *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (revised, 1979ff.), *The New Bible Dictionary*, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, et al.

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