**The Inter-Testamental Period**

The Greek/Macedonian Empire (under Alexander the great) overtook the Persian Empire (the ex-captors of the Jews). The Greek rule brought enculturation: Greek language, Greek philosophy, and Greek religion. The Greeks were very inclusive—but this is a “post-modern” double-edged sword.

After the death of Alexander the Great, there was a power struggle between the survivors. Ptolemy ruled over Egypt; Seleucus ruled over Judea. Their descendants continued to fight…and the most significant event of this fighting was the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes IV.

As AE4 fought with Egypt, the Jews heard rumor that he died. They responded in celebration by throwing all of the Seleucid soldiers off the walls of Jerusalem. When AE4, who was very much not dead heard about this, he was very much not happy. He sent an attack that killed 80,000 Jews in three days. He enslaved an equal number, and set up antagonistic rules, and sacrificed hogs and priests on the temple altar.

Antiochus decided that Judaism was not very good at keeping these people in line, so he forbade

* Meeting for a prayer assembly
* Honoring the Sabbath (i.e., you must go to work on the Sabbath)
* Circumcision
* The possession of scriptures
* Abstinence from worship of the AE4 statue.

The penalty for any of these offenses was death.

While AE4 was off fighting the Ptolemies in Egypt in 166 BC, a Selucid officer was making rounds to small towns to build and dedicate temples to Zeus, in the name of AE4. The town’s leader, Mattathias, refused to participate in the sacrifice. A villager volunteered to make the sacrifice for AE4’s general; this infuriated Mattathias who then “sacrificed” the villager and the whole garrison of troops in the town. This ignited a guerilla warfare-style revolt that worked with great success.

Mattathias eventually died of illness, and his son, Judas took over leadership of the rebellion. The family had now picked up the nickname “Maccabee” which was short for “hammer” – because of the strength, precision, and impact (pun) of their leadership.

Judas was very successful: he defeated AE4’s number one general and several rounds of reinforcements. He re-captured Jerusalem, cleaned out, and re-dedicated the temple. The Feast of Hanukah celebrates that milestone. After AE4 died in 163, Judas decided to attack one more garrison of his men: this was a bad idea—it struck a nerve with the new general who sent a front line of troops and war elephants. War elephants beat guerillas. ☹ Judas died in this battle.

Jonathan, his brother, continued the family legacy. He fought and continued to win small battles, until he was in a situation from which he could negotiate a peace treaty for amnesty, return of POW’s, and the re-establishment of religious freedoms. Unfortunately, a new one of AE4’s sons took control of the region. This political turmoil gave Jonathan an opportunity to become governor of the region…until a new head honcho took over AE4’s son’s role.

Simon was the last surviving Maccabbean brother. In 142 BC, he negotiated a free Jerusalem—again. It was during this time period that the rulers of the Jews became complacent, ritualistic, and greedy. Simon’s son-in-law murdered him by 135. The division between Sadducees and Pharisees had already begun. When the Greeks first took over the area, some folks immediately became enamored with Greek (Aristotelian) philosophy, which led to denials of the resurrection and miracles under a “scholarly” and “academic” worldview. These people eventually became the Sadducees. Others who were similarly influenced gave up on Jewish traditions altogether, but didn’t really adopt Greek philosophy either. These apathetic folks intermarried and assimilated into nearby Greek culture, becoming the Samaritans.

The persecution and difficulty of the times, in addition to the doctrinal betrayal of the Sadducees, led to polarization of the surviving Jews. The “hasids” were dedicated, and believed that the only hope for Israel’s full restoration came from faithful, total obedience to the Torah. They elevated teachings about the Torah to the level of scripture and enforced rules stringently. They became the “thought police” who tried to keep more people from falling away to the heresies of the Sadducees. This group came to be known as the Pharisees.

Other folks saw all of these difficulties and immediately fled to the hills to practice Judaism. They felt that their only hope was to form a separatist movement that was undefiled by the actions of the others in mainstream Judaism. These people were “Torah-only” followers, and they were serious about it. They came to be known as the Essenes.

Meanwhile, after the death of Simon Maccabees, Hyrcanus became the High Priest (a role that functioned much like a king—which the people weren’t allowed to have.) He ruled for 31 years and continued the polarization of Judaism. He was willing to bend any rule for the survival of the people: he raided David’s tomb for gold so that he could afford foreign mercenaries who could help them fight liberation battles.

The next High Priest was Aristobuls. He took an extra step beyond Hyrcanus; he crowned himself king. He didn’t last long. After him was Alexander Jannieus who gave an offering to himself during the Feast of Tabernacles (Feast of Booths) and ignited a civil war. He was pelted with fruit as he spoke. He responded by executing 6,000 Jews who disagreed with his methods. His reign led to more civil war, but also extended the borders of Jewish pseudo-supremacy all the way to Egypt.

Alexander’s wife, Salome Alexandra became the next “queen.” Since a woman couldn’t serve as high priest, she appointed her older son (a Pharisee) High Priest, and her younger son (a Sadducee) as chief general. Her rule was a 9-year golden age for Israel that brought about a public school system. Literacy was virtually universal in Jerusalem—a real accomplishment for its day! As fate would have it, after her death, her sons fought back and forth for years.

Aristobulus II became the next King and High Priest. He ran off his little brother Hyrcanus. While Hyrcanus was fleeing, he met a prince named Antipater who encouraged him to become king by supplying him with troops.

MEANWHILE, as this is happening, the Roman empire has risen to power. Emperor Pompey is marching to secure his hold of the region. Both Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus send him good will messengers, pleading for support of their rightful rule of the kingdom. Antipater went to represent Hyrcanus; a guy named Nicodemus represented Aristobulus. Because of Nicodemus’s behavior, Pompey believed Antipater, and thus, Hyrcanus got to be the new king.

Aristobulus II didn’t particularly appreciate this, so he launched a sneak attack and usurped the throne. Pompey ordered the revolt to stop—and supported Hyrcanus when he finally marched into Jerusalem. When Pompey marched in, he came to the Jewish temple—and ordered its restoration before annexing Judea into the Roman Empire. Hyrcanus was demoted from king back to High Priest…but it was effectively the same.

In 49BC Rome fell into a Civil War between Pompey and Julius Caesar. Israel sided with Pompey. Caesar defeated Pompey, but failed to bring enough troops to “clean up” after the head honchos were killed. Antipater made a friend of Caesar by offering him extra troops, thus Antipater was made “Procurator” of the regin. His sons were promoted to governor of Judea and Galilee. The Galilean governor was named Herod.

Julius Ceasar was murdered (*et tu, Brute?)* at the foot of the statue to Pompey. Cassius became emperor and levied heavy taxes upon all people. Antipater made his son Herod do the dirty tax collection work; Herod did very well, and found a promotion to “King” of Judea. Antipater was then poisoned by his butler, leaving Herod in total control of Judea.

Marc Antony rose to power in Rome, after fighting with Cassius. During this tumult, the Jews talked the Parthians into revolting during the feast of Passover (after all, *nobody* would expect the Jews to revolt during Passover!) Herod managed to escape, went back to Rome, told his sob story, and got promoted fully to King of (over) the Jews.

As a result of Herod’s promotion, he was given an army to march on Palestine in 39 BC. He won all of Israel by 37 BC, and murdered most of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling body) to make a point.

Back in Rome – Mark Antony falls in love (lust) with the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra. Cleopatra would have liked to annex Israel, but she ignores that for the sake of Mark Antony, who likes Herod. Unfortunately for Herod, his best friend, Mark Antony, is defeated by the new emperor Octavius.

Octavius questions Herod about his friendship with Mark Antony, who is viewed as a traitor. Herod spills the beans and admitted totally his friendship and loyalty to Mark Antony, with the addition that he would promise to be equally faithful to Octavius. Mr. O liked this story, confirmed his kingship, and added more land to the territory under his control.

Herod knew that nobody liked him, so he started building to try to win favor and keep the people from revolting…as often! He began a temple clean-up project in 20 BC (wasn’t completed until 63AD – just 7 years before it gets destroyed totally and finally!). This is the same construction project that is mentioned in John 2:20. He builds the Antonia Fortress (named after his friend…) as well as a town called Caesarea—a new harbor town on the Mediterranean.

Unfortunately, no amount of building projects can compensate for the fact that you’re a creep that kills everyone that’s in his way. Herod escaped several assassination attempts and became suspicious and paranoid of everyone, so, doing what any rational person would do in this situation, he murdered his wife.



The popular saying in Greek was: “It is better to be Herod’s HUS (pig) than his HUIOS (son).” Herod followed dietary laws and didn’t eat meat. He ignored lesser laws, like the ones about murdering your children. On his deathbed, he sent messengers for all of the “notable Jews” to be brought to him. Upon their arrival, they were to be killed so someone would be mourning when he died. His plan was (mostly) thwarted, but it serves to show the character of this man. History tells us that he died in the spring of 4 BC—establishing that the birth of Christ likely was more than four years before Christ. ☺

Bibliography

“The Time between the Testaments” – NIV Study Bible pp 1424-1427

<http://www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/15-400sy.html>

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**The Apocrypha**

After the final prophecies of the Old Testament there is a period of “prophetic silence” – in which there is no addition to scripture or universally-recognized prophecy. It is a chaotic time for Israel—a literal fight for survival, fragmentation and polarization of the faith, as well as uncertainty towards the future deliverer. Israel understood that they were promised a “deliverer” who would “restore” them to full glory. It makes sense that their context led them to believe he would be a military ruler who would conquer the enemy.

About the apocrypha:

* These books are and were not generally accepted as inspired writings of God.
* The mainstream Jewish and Christian leaders never accepted these writings as Scripture.
* No apocryphal book is quoted as scripture in the NT. (There is an allusion—just as with poets and modern proverbs).
* Their “writers” (the Qumran community) were never orthodox.
* All patristics (“Christian Fathers”) rejected these books prior to Augustine.
* Jerome, one of the best early scholars vigorously refuted them.
* No church body recognized them for at least 400 years.
* Even Catholics (today’s main defenders) were not united on their use as recently as the Reformation.
* We continue their decisions!
	+ They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms.
	+ They contradict clear doctrines elsewhere.
	+ Some clearly lie about authorship (i.e., Gospel of Judas – written after Judas’ death)
	+ They’re a little bit “too good to be true.”

Here is a brief overview of each of the mainly used book: (in addition to what is in your Bible on pp 1339-1343)

* 1 Esdras – tells about restoration, much duplication, many legends; says that Zerubbabel acknowledged Woman and Truth are more powerful than kings or wine, thus allowed to rebuild the temple
* 2 Esdras – apocalyptic; Martin Luther threw a copy into the river!
* Tobit – short Pharisaic novel; emphasizes law, washings, etc. Claims that almsgiving atones sin. (Uh-oh…)
* Judith – Pharisaic fiction; Judith brings clean food to enemy general, wins him with her beauty and clean food and washings, gets him drunk and beheads him.
* Additions to Esther – adds prayers and letters; basically adds God’s name to the book.
* The Wisdom of Solomon – Ecclesates-like book
* Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) – Like Proverbs, but with “Mrs. Manners”-style advice. Frequently quoted by early church fathers as sermon material.
	+ Act like a man who knows more than he says
	+ Speak concisely; say much in few words
	+ Prepare what you have to say, and then you will be listened to.
* Baruch – claims to be written by Baruch, Jeremiah’s scribe. Problem? Likely written after 70 AD. Warns against idolatry.
* Daniel 13: Susanna – pretty girl falsely tried, Daniel sets court precedent for avoiding witness collusion
* Bel and the Dragon (Dan 14) – shows folly of idolatry; God gives vision to show King Cyrus why Daniel didn’t worship Bel
* Song of the Three Hebrew Children (Daniel 3b): adds extra Psalm about fiery furnace
* Prayer of Manasseh—alleged prayer of Judah’s wicked king. 2 Chron 33:19 refers to Manasseh’s prayer, so a scribe in 2nd Cent BC wrote one!
* 1 Maccabees – most important – describes the 3 Maccabean brothers: Judas, Jonathan, and Simon. Much intertestamental period history.
* 2 Maccabees – parallel story of 1 Macc. Only tells about victories of Judas, more legendary

There are other books as well. These are called the apocrypha (the hidden) by most people who don’t use them. Those who do use them refer to them as the Deuterocanonical Books (the second canon). Others insert other books:

Psalm 151, The Life of Adam and Eve, The Book of Jubilees, 3 & 4 Maccabees, 1 & 2 Enoch; Assumption of Moses, etc.

The New Testament also has some “extra books.” Since these all appear to lie about their authorship, we tend to label them as “Pseudepigraphs.”

**See last week’s material for information about the Genealogies of Jesus and the Differences Between the Gospels.**