

# **Survey of the Old Testament**

## **Part 3**

### **Exile & Return The Inter-Testamental Period**

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## **Part 3 - The Inter-Testamental Period**

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## Introduction

Many Christians shy away from the Old Testament, or look only at a few well known passages. Much of the OT seems obscure, and difficult to place into a historical and theological context. The result of such neglect is that much of the richness of the New Testament is lost.

This Survey is designed to ease Christians into the Old Testament. It covers most of the OT books in a roughly chronological order so as to give the historical context, and where possible points forward to the New Testament.

However, it is not a heavy study. I want to encourage the participants to find treasures, not to frighten them away.

The Survey is divided into three parts, each containing several studies.

1. Genesis to Judges
2. Kings & Prophets
3. Exile & Return; The Inter-Testamental Period

I have planned each part to be studied in about twelve to fifteen weeks, with two studies each week. Each study should take about twenty minutes, so two studies can be completed in a one hour Adult Sunday School or Bible Class. However, each group may feel free to use the material as they like.

The purpose of each study is two-fold.

The participants' weekly reading and the introductory comments at the beginning of each class are intended to help participants to gain an overview of the Old Testament in its historical context. The summaries should also guide the participants to see relevance to the New Testament.

However, such study on its own could prove academic and sterile. God's Word should touch our lives and draw us closer to Him. The studies themselves, therefore, in a gentle way, draw out theology and principals, and seek to encourage application.

## How to use these study guides

You may use these guides in any way you find will encourage Christians to dig into the Old Testament. Below I outline how I use them as you may find it profitable to follow a similar approach.

I recognise that many Christians are fairly busy, so the studies are designed so as not to require a lot of preparation. For each study I give the participants several chapters to skim during the week, and a few chapters to read. Then during the class I give a brief talk (usually no more than three minutes) to put the study into context. After this I hand out the study questions and give each group of about five persons around ten minutes to discuss and answer them. Finally I draw the groups back together for about five minutes of summary and to highlight important points.

This approach requires minimal preparation from the participants, and I have found my class attendees very faithful in at least reading the required chapters. Many have read all of the suggested chapters, and some have done a fair bit of research each week as well. Such responsiveness has been very rewarding.

However, the approach does require a fair bit of work from the class presenter. The introduction I have provided for each study is about the right amount to present to the class, but the person leading the class must have a much better grasp of the material than is presented here. There are many good aids available, including Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, and books surveying both Old Testament history, and the OT books themselves. I would recommend that the presenter spend at least 30 minutes preparing for each study in addition to reading all of the suggested chapters.

Most of the material below is organised so that two lessons are printed on one A4 sized sheet. If the lessons are then printed or photocopied onto both sides of A4 sheets, they may be cut into A5 sized sheets, each containing one lesson on each side of the sheet. Some of the introductory material is organised to fill two sides of an A4 sheet which may then be folded in half.

## Exile & Return and the Inter-Testamental Period Outline of Studies (Rough Chronological Order)

### Review & Introduction

1	Genesis to Judges
1	Kings & Prophets
1	Preview

### The Exile

2	Nebuchadnezzar
2	Daniel 1 - 4 In Nebuchadnezzar's Court
3	Cyrus the Great
3	Daniel 5 - 12 The end of the Exile and beyond

### The Return

4	Ezra 1 - 4 The first Return
4	Haggai Encouragement to rebuild
5	Cambyses; Darius I
5	Zech 1 - 8 Three messages from the Lord
6	Ezra 5, 6 The Temple completed
6	Zech 9 - 14 Zion's King
7	Xerxes I
7	Esther The Jews preserved

8		Artaxexes I
8	Ezra 7 - 10	The second Return
8	Neh 1 - 6	Fortifying Jerusalem
9	Neh 7 - 13	Covenant and Separation
9	Malachi	A Message for the times

### The Inter-Testamental Period

10		The Synagogue
10		Alexander the Great
10		Hellenism
10		Changes in Language
10		The Septuagint
11		Ptolemies & Seleucids
11		The Maccabees & the Hasmoneans
11		Apocalyptic Literature
11	Joel	The Day of the Lord (Not in chronological order)
12		Jewish Sects
12		The Romans
12		Herod the Great
12		Roman Rulers

## Old Testament Survey Review

### Genesis to Judges

Genesis - the Book of Origins: The Universe; Sin; The Nation of Israel

Exodus - Escape from Egypt, and the Sinai Covenant

Leviticus - various laws and festivals

Numbers - Preparing to enter the Promised Land

Deuteronomy - The Law reiterated before the Israelites entered the Promised Land

Joshua - Possessing the Land

Judges - centuries of back-sliding and renewal

### Kings & Prophets

Samuel - the last of the Judges

Saul - the first King - good start, but went off the rails

David - a King after God's heart

Solomon - the wisest & the most foolish

The divided Kingdom

Northern Kingdom (Israel)

mostly evil kings

conquered by Assyria in 722 BC

Southern Kingdom (Judah)

some good kings; some evil

conquered by Babylon in 597 & 587 BC

Message of the Prophets

Repent & Return to God

Punishment will surely come

God will restore a remnant

The beginning of the Exile

### Preview

Daniel in Exile

Babylonians & Persians

Return and Rebuilding

Changes in Religion, Culture, & Society

Greeks & Romans

Preparing the way for Christ

**Homework**

**Read Daniel 1-4**

## The Exile

### Nebuchadnezzar (Ruled 605 - 562 BC)

Toward the end of the seventh century BC, Assyria had declined and Egypt was the world power. Nebuchadnezzar, the brilliant son of King Nabopolassar was hindered by the Egyptians in his desire to expand the Babylonian Kingdom through military conquests. Eventually, however, he defeated the Egyptians in 605 BC at the Battle of Carchemish, and Babylon took over as the power of the day.

With the defeat of Egypt, Babylon took over Egypt's territories, including the little kingdom of Judah. As it was Nebuchadnezzar's policy to take bright young men from the defeated nations to serve in his civil service, Daniel and some of his friends were taken to Babylon.

Later in 605 BC Nabopolassar died, and Nebuchadnezzar rushed back to Babylon to be crowned king. Soon afterwards (597 BC) he was again in Judah to crush a Judean revolt, after which he took away the Temple vessels and treasures along with many people, and established control over a succession of puppet kings in Jerusalem.

In 588 BC Judah again revolted under King Zedekiah, so Nebuchadnezzar besieged and finally destroyed Jerusalem. All but the poorest people of the land were taken to Babylon, and rather than being mixed with other conquered peoples, were settled in their own territory.

Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest of the Babylonian kings, defeating, as well as Judah, Syria, Moab, and Ammon. He also attacked and defeated Egypt, but did not assume control over that nation.

In his 43 year reign he built an elaborate system of fortifications, as well as streets, canals, and temples, including the Grand Ziggurat. His hanging gardens were considered one of the seven wonders of the world.

Daniel 4 records a seven year period of madness, not corroborated by extra-Biblical evidence, at the end of which Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged God and was restored to his former glory.

There are several references to Nebuchadnezzar in II Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

## Daniel 1 - 4 In Nebuchadnezzar's Court

(c 605 BC)

1. What do we learn of Daniel's character from these chapters?
2. Which of these characteristics should we seek to emulate, and how?
3. What lessons of faith do we learn from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

### Notes on the Statue of Daniel 2

The various parts of the statue appear to represent a number of kingdoms. The head of gold is identified as being the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar. However, what the other parts represent is not clear.

Several attempts have been made to identify the other parts, variously, with the Persian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires, but none seems entirely satisfactory. Perhaps we are intended to focus, not upon the details, but rather upon the symbolism, i.e. that other empires would arise, but ultimately they would not be able to stand when God ushered in His Kingdom.

**Homework Skim Daniel 5 - 12; Read Daniel 6; 7:13,14; 9:1-19**

## The Exile (continued)

### Cyrus the Great (Ruled 559 BC to 530 BC)

After Nebuchadnezzar died he was succeeded by a series of weak kings, culminating in 556 to 539 BC with Nabonidus (also called Belshazzar). With the rise of the Median Kingdom, Nabonidus appealed to the Persians, under Cyrus, for help.

Cyrus defeated the Medes, and the Median Kingdom then became allied with the Persian Kingdom (rather than subjugated) to form the Medo-Persian Empire.

Over time Cyrus extended his empire from the edge of the Aegean Sea in the west to the borders of India in the East - the largest Empire ever, up to that time. In 538 BC he conquered the Babylonian Empire and took over control of subject peoples.

It is likely that in his dealings with the Jewish people in Babylon he was influenced by Daniel, and thus decreed that the peoples subject to Babylon could return home, taking their treasures with them (see 2 Chron 36). It is known from archeology that Cyrus made the same provisions for other conquered peoples, using similar language and terms.

Cyrus was a gentle, but firm ruler who was admired by friend and foe alike.

One puzzle in the book of Daniel is the identity of Darius the Mede (5:31 and following) who is not known outside of this book. Some commentators believe that Darius and Cyrus were the same person, with two different names. It may be that he was originally called Darius, but when crowned king, changed his name to Cyrus. Thus 6:28 would read: "... Darius, ... that is ... Cyrus".

### Homework Read Ezra 1 - 4; Haggai

## Daniel 5 - 12 The end of the Exile and beyond (538 BC)

1. Dan 6 - Discuss the value of setting committee decisions in concrete (cf the Law of the Medes & Persians) vs flexibility to continually review issues.
2. What things prevent us as individuals from reviewing and changing bad courses of action?
3. Dan 7:13, 14 - Who was this person "like a son of man" whom Daniel saw?
4. Why do you think Jesus used this title of himself?
5. Dan 9 - Analyse the main points of Daniel's prayer. What is there here for us to emulate?

## The Return

### Ezra 1 - 4      The first Return      (538 BC)

In our last study we saw that in response to Daniel's prayer, God moved Cyrus to allow the Jews to return home (see Ezra 1). Consequently over 42,000 of the exiles prepared to return to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. They were supported both by Cyrus who returned to them the wealth taken from the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, and by other exiles who gave gifts for the restoration work.

When they arrived back in Jerusalem the returnees erected an altar, recommenced the sacrifices, and began work on the Temple. When the foundations were laid many shouted for joy, but some, who had seen the glory of the former Temple, wept when they realized how much smaller and less grand this Temple would be.

1. What was the significance of the renewed worship in Jerusalem?
2. Were the old people right to weep? Why or why not?
3. Ezra 4 records the beginning of opposition to the rebuilding (as well as 2 later incidents which we shall examine later). What was the result of this opposition?
4. How do we react in the face of opposition?
5. How should we react?

## Haggai      Encouragement to rebuild      (520 BC)

6. How long had work on the Temple stopped?
7. What had happened in the meantime?
8. What is one reason why God allows adversity?
9. Share examples from your own experience.
10. What is the alternative?
11. Hag 2:10 - 14 What causes defilement? (cf Mark 7:1 - 23)

### Homework      Read Zechariah 1 - 8

## The Return (continued)

### Cambyses (Ruled 530 to 522 BC)

After Cyrus died his son Cambyses secretly murdered his brother and rival, Bardiya (also called Smerdis), and ascended the throne.

Following this he spent a number of years in north Africa where he defeated and subjugated Egypt, and attempted to push his empire even further west and south, but with only limited success.

Eventually unrest in Persia caused Cambyses to set out for home, but while on route he learned that one Gaumata had seized the throne, claiming to be Bardiya. Shortly after this Cambyses stabbed himself (accident or suicide), and one of his officers, Darius, also of royal blood, assumed command of the army.

### Darius I (Ruled 522 to 486 BC)

Darius marched back to the capital, defeated Gaumata, and seized the throne. However, he did so at a time when the empire was falling apart through the neglect of Cambyses, and fought hard for 2 long years to bring everything back under control. He commemorated his success with a huge bill-board, 17 m long, carved into the side of a mountain, with pictures and a description in three languages.

He was a fierce ruler who dealt harshly with opposition. However, he was also a good organiser, who rearranged the boundaries of his satrapies, and appointed circuit judges to administer them. He also repaired the major roads and instituted an efficient postal service to enable rapid communication with the capital.

During his lifetime he extended the Persian Empire into northern India in the east, and northern Greece in the west, but his harsh rule fostered unrest and revolt, and the empire began to decay near the end of his rule.

It was during the second year of his reign that Haggai and Zechariah began to encourage the Jews to continue the Temple reconstruction they had begun 16 years earlier. When Governor Tattenai enquired of Darius whether or not the Jews had permission to rebuild the Temple, he commissioned a search of the official records. He found that Cyrus had authorised the work, and so he not only honoured the commitment, but also contributed both to construction and toward sacrifices to the God of the Jews.

## Zech 1 - 8      Three messages from the LORD      (520 BC)

1. 1:1 - 6 What had the people learned that their ancestors had ignored? Have we learned the same lesson?

1:7 - 6:15 - This section contains a series of visions to encourage the people to trust in God and to return to rebuilding the Temple. Many seem obscure to us, but the general thrust is clear.

2. What is God promising to Jerusalem? 1:16f; 2:4f, 10-13; 3:10; 4:9f; 6:15

3. What is the significance of the word about Joshua, the High Priest? 3:1-9; 9:9-13.

4. Whom did Joshua prefigure, and in what way?

7:1 - 8:23 The people bring a question. Should they continue to fast in the fifth month, as they did while in exile praying to return to Jerusalem?

5. In reply, what does God reveal that He desires?

6. What does God promise to do for them?

## Homework      Read Ezra 5, 6; Zechariah 9 - 14



## The Return (continued)

### Ezra 5, 6      The Temple completed      (520 to 516 BC)

As Haggai & Zechariah began to encourage the people, they turned again to the reconstruction of the Temple, after a break of about 16 years. However, it appeared that opposition would again arise, as governor Tattenai began to question by what authority the Jews were performing this work.

1. Note how the people dealt with opposition this time.
2. Is there a lesson here for us?
3. Contrast the results now compared with 4:24.

When Tattenai requested direction from King Darius, the latter searched and found that Cyrus had authorised the Temple reconstruction. In turn, therefore, Darius honoured the original decree, and also provided financial assistance and animals for sacrifice.

4. Under what circumstances might it be right or wrong to accept assistance from non-believers?

## Zech 9 - 14    Zion's King

Chapters 9 - 14 present a number of glimpses both of Israel's past and of the future. They also introduce the idea of a coming king, long thought to be Messianic.

5. 9:9 What use did Matthew (21:7) and John (12:15) make of this verse?
6. 11:4 - 17 An allegory is presented concerning two shepherds. How did the people treat the good shepherd, and what was the result?
7. How is the Good Shepherd treated today?
8. 11:12, 13 Compare Matthew 26:14 - 16; 27:1 - 10.
9. 13 & 14 - Jerusalem was to be cleansed & purified. What was to be the ultimate result?

**Homework    Read Esther**

## The Return (continued)

### Xerxes I (Ruled 486 to 464 BC)

When Darius died his son, Xerxes (Ahasuerus, in Hebrew), ascended the throne.

Darius had left the empire in a state of turmoil and unrest, and Xerxes first task was to restore order. He immediately travelled to Egypt to quell the unrest there, and upon his return put down the fomenting rebellion in Babylon. In the latter province he destroyed the temples, and terminated the Babylonian kingship by melting down the idols on which the Babylonian kings depended for their power.

His next task was to execute revenge on the Greeks for the humiliating defeat that Darius had suffered a few years earlier at the battle of Marathon. He made extensive preparations over a three year period, and attacked with thousands of men on land, and hundreds of ships. He succeeded in advancing as far as Athens, where he destroyed the temples on the Acropolis hill. By now, however, the Greeks realised that surrender to this conqueror would mean the end to the Greek ideals of culture and democracy, and so they fought fiercely against him, eventually driving Xerxes and his armies out of their country.

Xerxes then gave up on military campaigns and concentrated on a vigorous building campaign at home.

There are two references to Xerxes in the Bible. The first is in Ezra 4:6, which refers to opposition to the Jews in Jerusalem during his reign.

The second is the book of Esther, where Xerxes, unhappy with his queen, deposes her and holds a beauty contest to select a replacement. From history, Xerxes is reputed to have had the character of a spoilt child, and this is entirely consistent with his behaviour in this book.

## Esther The Jews preserved

The Book of Esther describes how Xerxes' advisor, Haman, brooded because the Jew, Mordecai, refused to bow whenever he passed. Eventually Haman plotted to get even, not only with Mordecai, but also with the whole Jewish race. To decide the day of their extermination, he cast lots (or *pur*).

However, Mordecai's niece, Esther, being elevated to the position of Xerxes' Queen, was able to effect measures to overturn the plot. In the end, Haman was executed, and Mordecai was honoured with a high position in the King's court.

Today, Jews celebrate the feast of Purim in Feb/March as a memorial of their deliverance. (Purim is the plural of the word *pur*.)

1. God is not mentioned by name in the book of Esther. Find evidence, however, that shows His presence and providence as events unfold.

**Homework Read Ezra 7 - 10; Nehemiah 1 - 6**

## The Return (continued)

### Artaxerxes I (Ruled 464 to 423 BC)

Artaxerxes I succeeded his father, Xerxes, and also had the difficult task of trying to quell rebellion in the empire, however, with only limited success. In fact, the crumbling of the Persian Empire is usually dated from his reign.

In the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign, Ezra the priest (probably Minister for Jewish Affairs in the King's court), obtained permission to return to Jerusalem, and took with him about 1600 men and their families.

### Ezra 7 - 10 The Second Return (458 BC)

1. What can we learn of Ezra's character from these chapters?  
What aspects should we emulate?

2. What can we learn about prayer from 9:6-15?

3. What are some of the problems of dealing with sin?

## Neh 1 - 6 Fortifying Jerusalem

(445 BC)

A second event recorded in Scripture (Ezra 4:7 - 23) during Artaxerxes' rule was the opposition that occurred when the Jews began to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in 450 BC. Apparently the Samaritans overstepped the mark at the time and burned down the walls and gates (Neh 1:3). This event in turn initiated Nehemiah's desire to return to Jerusalem to help his countrymen.

4. What else do we learn about prayer from 1:4 - 2:5; 4:9?

5. What characteristics of a good administrator can we learn from these chapters?

6. Trace the growth of opposition to the rebuilding of the walls, and note how Nehemiah handled it.

**Homework Skim Nehemiah 7 - 13; Read Malachi**

## The Return (continued)

### Neh 7 - 13 Covenant and Separation (c 430 BC)

Last lesson we learned how, in spite of fierce opposition from the neighbouring Samaritans, Nehemiah had led the Israelites in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

After the wall was completed the people wanted a break from the intense activity and pressure. For the last 13 years Ezra the priest had been teaching in Jerusalem, and had established quite a reputation as a Bible teacher, so the people called Ezra to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, and to teach them. They had a week of holiday devoted to Bible study and prayer.

1. What were the results when the people fed on God's word? (Neh 8 - 10)
2. After 12 years service as Governor of Judah, Nehemiah returned to the court of King Artaxerxes for some time. While he was away, many of the people stopped feeding regularly on God's word. What was the result? (Neh 13)
3. How did Nehemiah deal with the problems when he returned?
4. What do you think of the style of leadership displayed in Neh 13?

## Malachi A Message for the times

It was probably during the time when Nehemiah was back in the Persian court that Malachi identified a number of problems that had begun to occur in Judah.

5. What were the problems that Malachi identified, and what were his recommended solutions?

**Homework** Look up at least one of the following in an encyclopædia or a Bible dictionary: Aramaic; Synagogue; Alexander the Great; Hellenism; The Septuagint.

## The Inter-Testamental Period

### The Synagogue

During the Exile the Jews felt keenly the loss of the Temple. To compensate, they began to gather together on the Sabbath to read the Torah (or Law), and to be taught by the priests & scribes. Both the meeting and the building in which they met became known as the Synagogue.

There was no altar in the Synagogue, and hence no sacrifices. Instead the focus was on prayer, and the reading and teaching of God's word.

In time the Synagogue became the communal centre, not only for worship, but also for civil government and for education.

### Alexander the Great (Ruled 336 to 323 BC)

As the Persian Empire crumbled, Philip of Macedon united the Greeks under the Hellenic League with the intention of dealing a death blow to the Persians. However, Philip was murdered before being able to carry out his plans, and his son Alexander took up his father's mantle.

Alexander, educated by Aristotle, believed strongly in the Greek way of life, and determined to propagate it to the surrounding countries.

At first ignored by the Persians, he was able to win easy victories in Asia Minor against the Persian armies. However, rather than pursuing them in their retreat, he consolidated his victories in Syria and Judea, before conquering Egypt. Finally he went on to liberate Babylon from Persian rule, and to capture Susa, the Persian capital. From there he pressed on into northern India and Russian Turkestan before his troops became weary of battle and began to return home.

Shortly afterwards, Alexander died of a fever, and was unable to consolidate his huge empire.

### Hellenism

Although Alexander did not live long enough to consolidate his empire, he did succeed in his desire to spread the Greek language and culture throughout much of the then known world.

## Changes in Language

Before the Exile, the Jews all spoke Hebrew, and almost all of Scripture up to that time was written in Hebrew.

However, during the Exile the people began to speak the language of Babylon, that is, Aramaic. And indeed, many of them lost the ability to read and to speak Hebrew. Consequently, by the time of Christ, most Jews would have spoken Aramaic at home and among friends, and only the priests would have read Hebrew. Consequently, when the Scriptures were read in the synagogues there would usually follow a free paraphrase in Aramaic, and then some teaching in Aramaic.

Following Alexander's conquest, Greek became the common language of culture and trade, and so most Jews would also have spoken Greek in the market place.

There were also many Jews dispersed during and after the Exile, and many of these lost their Aramaic as well as their Hebrew, and spoke only Greek.

## The Septuagint

It was in response to the need for Scriptures in Greek for these Greek speaking Jews, or Hellenists, that the OT was translated into Greek. Legend has it that the translation was done by 70 scholars at Alexandria in 70 days, each coming up with the same translation. Hence the name, Septuagint (LXX for short).

In reality, the LXX is a composite of many translations into Greek over a period of a few hundred years. Some are fairly free paraphrases, while others are very stilted, literalistic translations of the Hebrew. It is likely that the Pentateuch itself was translated in Alexandria around 275 BC by possibly 72 scholars, working together as a team.

The accuracy of the translation varies greatly, depending on the source of the translation, and much extra-Biblical material is included.

It is interesting to note that many of the OT quotations in the NT are taken from the LXX, presumably because the Greek versions would have been more widely recognised by the readers of the NT letters.

**Homework** Look up at least one of the following in a Bible dictionary: Seleucids & Ptolemies; Maccabees; Hasmoneans; Apocalyptic literature.

**Read Joel**

## The Inter-Testamental Period (continued)

### Ptolemies & Seleucids

After Alexander's death, because he had no clear heir, his empire was eventually divided among four of his generals. The one we are most interested in (because he ruled Palestine) is Ptolemy, who had himself crowned King of Egypt. He allowed and encouraged the Egyptians to continue their religion, but ensured that they adopted the Greek language, culture, and law.

In 301 BC, Seleucus, one of Ptolemy's generals, succeeded in gaining control over Babylon and then Syria. Rather than handing over the territory to Ptolemy, he claimed it for himself, and established his capital at Antioch, thus beginning a long line of Seleucid kings. For decades the Ptolemies and the Seleucids fought over the intervening territory, and in 198 BC Antiochus III managed to capture Palestine.

While the Ptolemies had allowed the Jews a great deal of religious freedom, the Seleucids were determined to civilise (i.e. Hellenize) them. Antiochus, thinking of the High Priesthood as a political office, had the strict orthodox High Priest, Onias, replaced by the Hellenist, Jason, thus enraging the pious Jews who saw this as a sin against God.

### The Maccabees & the Hasmoneans

To make matters worse, Antiochus set up pagan altars in many towns, and expected the Jews to show their loyalty by sacrificing pigs on these altars, and eating the pork. In the town of Modin, the aged priest Mattathias refused, and when a more timid Jew complied, Mattathias & his sons slew the man as well as the emissary of Antiochus.

From the hills Mattathias & his sons waged a guerrilla warfare upon the Syrian overlords, and under his son Judas Maccabee (the hammer), succeeded in cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem (commemorated in Hanukkah), and in gaining a promise of religious freedom. Sadly the promise was short lived, and Judas died in a subsequent battle.

Eventually, however, Judas' brother, Jonathan, obtained diplomatic concessions, and became High Priest and governor of Judea. Following his death many years later his brother Simon became High Priest, and was recognised by the Jews as the first in a line of hereditary High Priests who also took on the role of King.

This dynasty is known in history as the Hasmoneans. At their peak they regained & ruled all the territory that was under King David, but declined and fell apart about 100 years later.

## Apocalyptic Literature

The term "apocalypse" (or revelation) means an unveiling, and is used to describe a lot of literature written from about 200 BC to about 100 AD. There is also some amount of apocalyptic literature in the OT including parts of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, & Zechariah. In the NT the book of Revelation is the paramount example.

Characteristics of apocalyptic include much symbolism (beasts, horns, heads, colours, numbers, angels, portents in the heavens, etc), and prophecy of a distant Day of the Lord and the coming of the Messiah. As an example we shall examine Joel.

### Joel (about 400 BC)                      The Day of the Lord

1. A plague of locusts besets Judah. What does Joel see as the cause and the solution? (1:13, 14; 2:12 - 17)
  
2. What does the image of locusts bring to mind, and what ultimate triumph? (2:28 - 32)
  
3. What is promised to the surrounding evil nations, and what blessings to Judah? (3:1 - 21)

**Homework** Look up at least one of the following in an encyclopædia or a Bible dictionary: Pharisees; Sadducees; Roman Empire; Herod the Great.

## The Inter-Testamental Period (continued)

### Jewish Sects

Little is known about the origins of the Sadducees. They appear to have been mainly aristocratic, political, and Hellenistic priests. They accepted the authority of only the Pentateuch, and rejected such concepts as angels and a resurrection from the dead.

In contrast, the Pharisees had their origins in the Hasidim (or pious ones) who followed in the footsteps of Ezra, with a high regard for all of Scripture, and a zeal to please God. Unfortunately, their zeal led to an extreme legalism, and by the time of Christ, more of a desire to be seen to be pious than an actual heart reverence.

The Essenes may have originally been Pharisees who withdrew from the world into monastic communities to await the coming of “The Teacher of Righteousness”, and there may have been several such communities with varying degrees of seclusion. The most famous of these, because of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, was the Qumran community.

Also probably with Pharisaic origin were the Zealots. However their zeal for God led them to strive for violent overthrow of the governing powers.

### The Romans

In the line of Hasmonean kings a dispute arose between two brothers over succession to the Jewish throne which threatened to disturb the peace at the fringe of the growing Roman Empire. At first Rome favoured Aristobulus thinking that he would pay the bigger bribe for support. However, when the Roman general Pompey investigated, he found evidence that Aristobulus planned to revolt against Rome, and so supported his brother Hyrcanus instead.

With the defeat of Aristobulus, Judea was made a part of the Roman province of Syria, and Hyrcanus was appointed Ethnarch of Judea (including Galilee, Idumea, and Perea).

Meanwhile, Antipas, the governor of Idumea, took a great interest in Judea, and backed Hyrcanus. It appears that he may even have been the real power behind the throne in Jerusalem. In turn, the Jews hated Antipas (an Idumean, or Edomite) almost as much as they hated the Romans.

### Herod the Great

After Julius Caesar was murdered, Antipas and his sons, Phasael and Herod, quickly supported first Cassius, and then Mark Anthony after he had defeated Cassius and Brutus. In return, Herod was given the title “Procurator of Judea” by Cassius, and eventually the title of “King of the Jews” by Anthony.

Herod ruled from 37 BC to 4 BC, and was an astute politician, quickly identifying and moving to the winning side. When Octavian defeated Anthony, Herod boasted to Octavian how loyal he had been to Anthony, and assured Octavian that he would also find him equally loyal to him!

Because he was an Idumean, Herod was hated by the Jews. Although he could be ruthless with open dissent, he tried to gain the favour of his subjects through a massive building program. Many cities were extensively rebuilt or renovated with elaborate baths, parks, gymnasiums, marketplaces, etc.

In 20 BC he even began a massive and beautiful replacement for the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple proper was completed within a year and a half, but many years were required to complete the court yards, and work on surrounding buildings was still going on during Jesus’ ministry. The work was finally completed around 63 AD, only 7 years before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.

Herod was also an intensely jealous person. When he was away from Jerusalem he left orders that his wife should be murdered if he should die so that no one else could have her, and when he heard that a new king had been born in Bethlehem, he had all the boys under two years old put to death in order to rid himself of any rival.

### Roman Rulers

After Herod’s death, his kingdom was divided among his three sons who ruled as puppet kings, but later Roman governors took over Judea.

AD	<u>Judea, Samaria, Idumea</u>	<u>Galilee, Perea</u>	<u>Batania, etc</u>
- 4	Archelaus	Herod Antipas	Herod Philip
6	Roman Governors Pontius Pilate		
35			Herod Agrippa I
37		Herod Agrippa I	
40	Herod Agrippa I		
45	Roman Governors		
48		Herod Agrippa II	Herod Agrippa II