

The Inter-Testament Period

Historic World Empires

Babylon – 626 BC – 539 BC

Nabopolasser - 626 BC – 605 BC

This Babylonian ruler rebelled against the Assyrians and joined forces with the Medes to defeat Nineveh in 614 BC.

Nebuchadnezzar – 605 BC – 562 BC

Is center stage in the Bible. He is the son of Nabopolasser.



Nabonidus – 555 BC – 539 BC

Married into the royal family. His son is Belteshazzar.

Three kings in the gap between Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus.
Evil-Marodach – 1 year. (Jeremiah 52:31)
Neriglissar – 3 years.
Labosoarchad – 1 year.

Belteshazzar – 552 BC – 539 BC

Was co-regent with his father. He was left in charge of Babylon while his father was in Tema.

This explains why Daniel would be named third ruler in charge. (**Daniel 5:16**)

After the 70 years of captivity the nation of Israel returned not as a sovereign nation, but ruled and controlled still by the Persians and the Medes, referred to as the Mede/Persian Empire.

The results from the captivity brought about **the rise of the Synagogue** and **the necessity of the Scribe**. In addition, Israel would be **cured of pagan idolatry**. It was during this time that the Old Testament was defined into its three Jewish subdivisions: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. The transmission and preservation of these were accomplished by Scribes.

It must be noted also that not all of the Jews returned to Jerusalem, this is referred to as the Diaspora. (Also referred to as the pre-roman diaspora.) In 70 AD, after the destruction of Jerusalem, many Jews were again transplanted elsewhere (another Diaspora).

Medo/Persian 539 BC - 331

Cyrus the Great (Cyrus II) 555 BC – 529 BC – It was this Cyrus that conquered Babylon and also this Cyrus that allowed Israel to return and build their Temple.

Cambyses – 529 BC – 522 BC – Was Cyrus' son. Cambyses is most well-known for defeating Egypt and adding to the Medo-Persian Empire.

Darius the Great (Darius I) – 522 BC – 486 BC – Darius ruled for 40 years. This Darius confirmed the decree given by Cyrus and allowed the Jews to resume building the Temple.

Xerxes (Ahaserus of Esther) – 486 BC – 464 BC – Xerxes continued a campaign against Greece (one Darius had begun) and was defeated at the Battle of Salamis. This would lead to the latter uprising of Alexander the Great and his campaign against the Mede/Persian Empire.

Artaxerxes – Was the last of the Mede/Persian kings. He saw the empire decline and was eventually conquered by Alexander the Great.

Though there is prophesy concerning the Greek Empire and subsequent fracture of the Greek Empire, as well as the Roman Empire and beyond, we move into the inter-testament period **after the fall of the Medes and the Persians.**

Greece – 333 BC – 62 BC

Philip of Macedon – 359 BC – 336 BC – Was really the founder of the Greek Empire, pulling together all of the Greek City-States. His son was Alexander the Great.

Alexander the Great – 336 BC – 323 BC – Was the greatest conqueror of all time. He is said to have conquered 2.2 million square miles. (Results from Alexander’s conquest: Greek became the common language, Hellenization of conquered lands, The Construction of the Alexandrian Library, East and West brought together in Science, Philosophy and Art.)

Upon the death of Alexander the Great, his empire is split into four factions (Daniel 8:8).

Lysimachus – Thrace and Asia Minor

Antigonus – Northern Syria and Babylon

Ptolemy – Egypt and Syria

Cassander – Macedonia

Antigonus would be succeeded by his general Seleucus which would begin the Seleucid dynasty. This is important because a series of wars as outlined in Daniel 11:5-20 take place between the Seleucid’s and Ptolemies. This is known as **the Seleucid and Ptolemaic wars**. (275 BC – 198 BC). According to tradition, it was during this time that Judah under the rule of the Ptolemies, produced the LXX (Septuagint) [Ptolemy II Philadelphus]

In the Scriptures the “king of the north” is the Seleucid king (Syria), and the “king of the south” is the Ptolemaic king (Egypt).

From the wars outlined in Daniel chapter 11 a Seleucid by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes arises. He attempted to Hellenize the Jews. In 167 BC he slaughtered a pig in the Temple. During this time it became unlawful to observe the Torah and was a capital offense. Gymnasiums were built and Jews were displayed in a humiliating manor. Jewish names were changed to Greek names and sacrifices to pagan deities became public. Those who refused to participate were martyred. This ushered in what is known as the Maccabean wars. Mattathias, who was the father of the Maccabean “clan” was a priest. He had served at the Temple for a time and had moved outside of Jerusalem. One of Antiochus’ soldiers came to his city demanding a sacrifice to a pagan deity. Mattathias refused and then killed a fellow Jew who had stepped forward to be complicit. He also destroyed the altar and his sons killed the Greek officials. His words, “Let everyone who has zeal for the Torah and who stand by the covenant follow me...”

The family name Maccabeus (Surname) means “the hammer.” His son Judah conducted guerilla warfare against the Greeks succeeding his father when he died. During this time, his son was able to reinstitute the Ceremonial system in Jerusalem and Hanukkah is instituted. This was to commemorate the eight-day cleansing of the Temple. Upon Antiochus’ death Lysias, his successor and Judah make a treaty. This treaty made Judaism the dominant religion in the Palestine area. When Judah dies, his brother Jonathan takes up the mantle and rules. Jonathan buys himself the job of high priest and

corruption ensues. He attempts to Hellenize the Jewish law to fit the political climate of the day. After Jonathan dies (143 BC) his brother Simon leads. Simon then dies (134 BC) and his son John Hyrcanus leads the people.

It is significant to note that during the time Hyrcanus is in charge, two political parties really emerged. One is called the Separatist's group which became the Pharisees. The other is the Hellenizers, which became the Sadducees. It is also at this time that Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan temple at Mt. Gerizim. Hyrcanus dies (104 BC) and his son Alexander Jannaeus reigns.

In 76 BC Jannaeus on his deathbed transfers rule to his wife Salome Alexandra. In 67 BC Alexandra dies and two brothers Aristobulus and Hyrcanus II fight for control. Hyrcanus (65 BC) lays siege to Jerusalem aided by Antipater, **the father of Herod the Great**. Just two years later the Romans enter into Jerusalem led by Pompey (63 BC). Pompey occupies Jerusalem **which ends the independent rule for Judah until 1948**. Pompey was murdered during his conquest of Egypt and because Antipater assisted Rome's conquest of Egypt, Julius Caesar made Antipater **the Procurator of Judea** in return. From there, Julius Caesar is murdered by Brutus and the Roman Empire is ruled by Octavius and Marc Antony. Octavius defeats Brutus and Antony in 31 BC and claims the title of Caesar **Augustus**.

At this point we enter into New Testament times. From this we can understand better the social and political climate of the day. There were only two types of "provinces" in the Roman Empire. Imperial provinces were areas needed to be kept by a strong army. **They also used Procurators selected by the Emperor. Senatorial areas**, were peaceful and were ruled by Proconsuls that the Senate appointed.

Rome

Caesars

Augustus 30 BC – 14 AD (Luke 2:1)

Tiberius 14 AD – 37 AD (Luke 3:1)

Caligula 37 AD – 41 AD

Claudius 41 AD – 54 AD (Acts 11:28; 18:2)

Nero 54 AD – 68 AD (Acts 25:10; 28:19)

Galba 68 AD

Otho 69 AD

Vitellius 69 AD

Vespian 69 AD – 79 AD

Titus 79 AD – 81 AD

Domitian 81 AD – 96 AD

Nerva 96 AD – 98 AD

Trajan 98 AD – 117 AD

Procurators in the NT

Coponius 6 AD – 10 AD

Ambivius 10 AD – 13 AD

Annius Rufus 13 AD – 15 AD

Valerus Gratus 15 AD – 26 AD

Pontius Pilate 26 AD – 36 AD (Luke 3:1; 23:1)

Marcellus 36 AD – 38 AD

Maryllus 38 AD – 41 AD

Cuspius Fadus 44 AD – 46 AD

Tiberius Alexander 46 AD – 48 AD

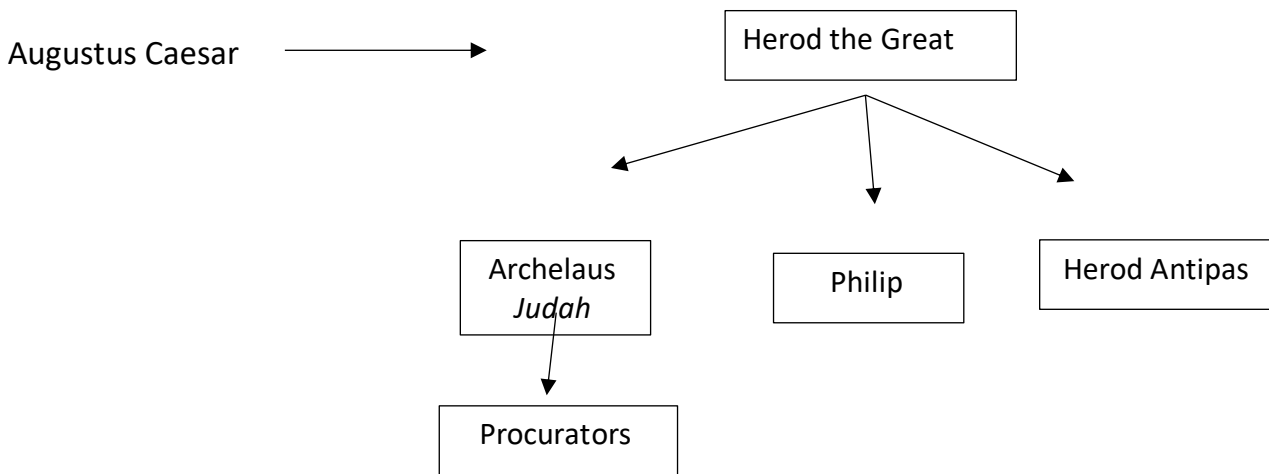
Ventidius Cumanus 48 AD – 52 AD

Antonius Felix 52 AD – 59 AD (Acts 23-24)

Porcius Festus 59 AD – 61 AD (Acts 24-27)

Albinus 61 AD – 65 AD

How did the Herod's fit in this ruling scheme?



Languages of the Day (Roman Empire)

Latin – Was the language used in the Western part of the Roman Empire.

Greek – Was the most common language of the day. Greek was spoken and read throughout the Empire.

Aramaic – Was the everyday commercial language for those in Palestine.

Hebrew – Was only spoken by orthodox Jews and was used in the reading of the Torah.

Education (Roman Empire)

Education was not a public event but was accomplished in private. Wealthy families hired individuals to teach their children. Few schools existed, however there were three main learning centers: Alexandria, Athens and Tarsus.

Jews were taught the Torah. Most young Jewish men were exposed to the Torah in a large way. Many would be able to recite even large portions of Scripture.

Religions (Roman Empire)

Different religions must be legalized by the Roman Empire to be legal. Judaism was legal and hence protected. Initially, Christianity was considered to be a sect of Judaism. Romans were polytheistic. They worshipped many gods that were taken from Greek Mythology and given Roman names. There were also many “mystery” religions. These mystery religions had rites and ceremonies that were secretive unless you were an initiate. Some of the notable religions and philosophies of the day include: Gnosticism, Stoicism and Epicureans.

The Jew's religion was monotheistic. They revered the Old Testament (The Law, The Prophets, and the Writings). They established synagogues throughout the Romans Empire. A synagogue could exist if there were 12 men in a given location.

There were six feasts and several holy days important to the Jews: Passover (Exodus 12:1-20; Leviticus 23:5), Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-8), Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-21), Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25), Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32), Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-44), Dedication (John 10:22), and Purim (Esther 9:26-28).