

WEEK 9

OLD TESTAMENT

INTERTESTAMENTAL HISTORY

OLD TESTAMENT



- The time between the last writings of the Old Testament and the appearance of Christ is known as the “intertestamental” (or “between the testaments”) period.
- It lasted from the prophet Malachi's time (about 400 BC) to the preaching of John the Baptist (about AD 25).
- The political, religious, and social atmosphere of Israel changed significantly during this period.
- Israel was under the control of the Persian Empire about 539–332 BC. The Persians allowed the Jews to practice their religion with little interference. They were even allowed to rebuild and worship at the temple (2 Chronicles 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4).
- This span of time included the last 100 years of the Old Testament period and about the first 100 years of the intertestamental period. This time of relative peace and contentment was just the calm before the storm.

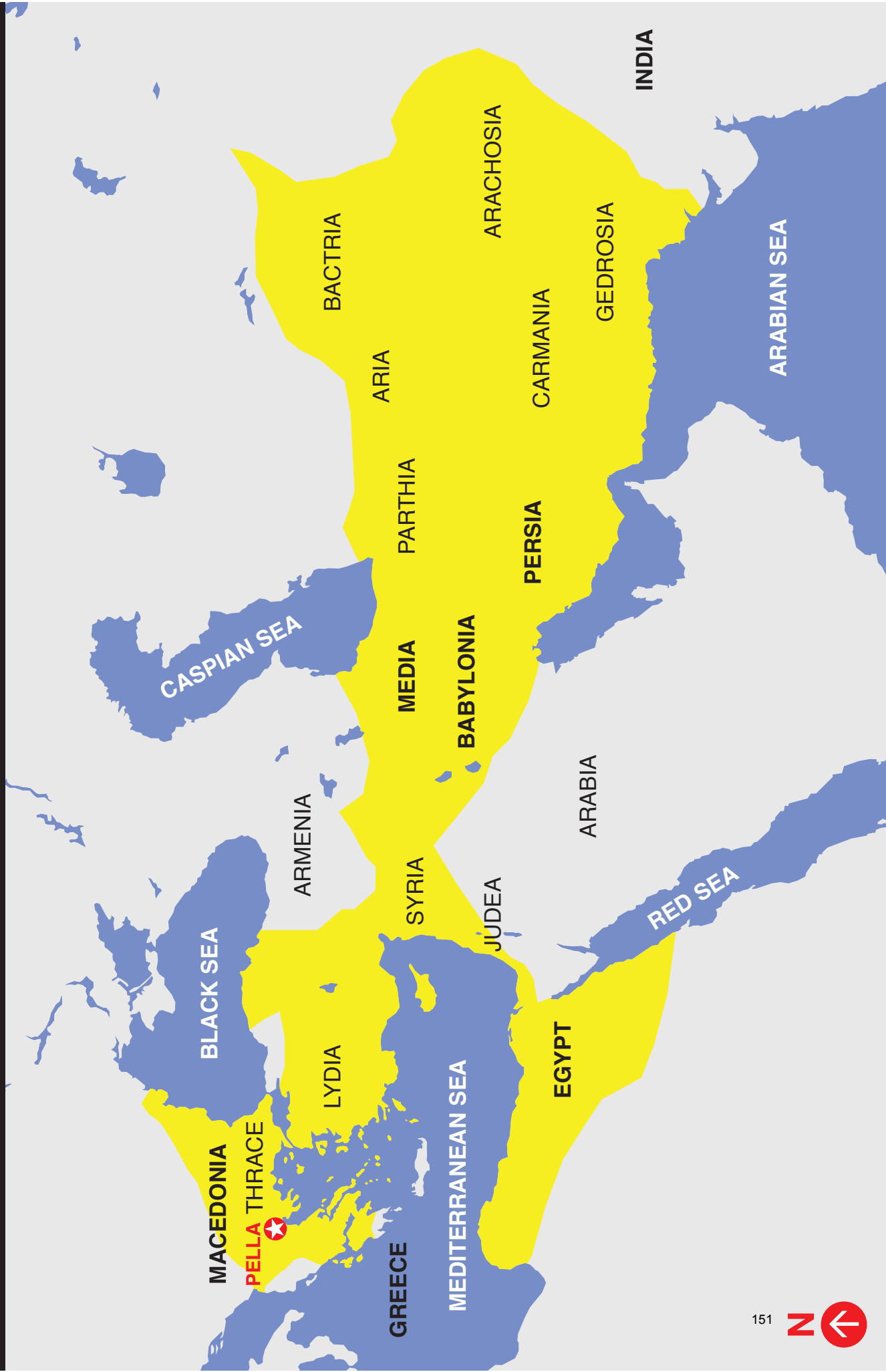
GREEK EMPIRE

- During the intertestamental period, Alexander the Great defeated Darius of Persia, bringing Greek rule to the world.
- Alexander was a student of Aristotle and was well-educated in Greek philosophy and politics. Alexander required that Greek culture be promoted in every land that he conquered.



THE GREEK EMPIRE 4TH CENTURY B.C.

© Mark Barry 2015 | visualunit.me | Please do not republish without permission, but feel free to copy for personal use.



Intertestamental Events Timeline

334–330 B.C.	Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) sweeps through Asia Minor and conquers the Persian Empire, including Egypt and Mesopotamia (see notes on Dan. 7:3; 7:6; 8:5; 8:8; 8:20–22; 11:3 ; cf. <i>1 Macc.</i> 1:1–7). Alexander imposes the Greek language and culture on all the nations he conquers, marking the beginning of the Hellenistic Age (ranging approximately from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 to the establishment of Roman Imperial rule around 30 B.C.). As a result of Alexander’s imposition of the Greek language on conquered kingdoms, the entire NT will later be written in Greek, and will be understandable throughout the ancient world.
333	Alexander the Great passes through Palestine (comprised of Judea and Galilee), extending the influence of Greek thought and culture throughout the region and also into the Judaism of the period. (“Palestine” derives from a Latin name the conquering Romans later gave to this province [c. 63 B.C.] on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, comprising parts of modern Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.)
323–281	In the absence of legitimate heirs, following Alexander the Great’s death in 323 B.C. (cf. <i>1 Macc.</i> 1:5–9) four of his generals (called the <i>Diadochoi</i> , “successors”) divide the conquered territory of his empire into fourths (which then included most of the known world throughout Europe and Asia Minor; see notes on Dan. 7:6; 8:8; 8:20–22; 11:4): (1) Antipater (and later Cassander and then Antigonos I Monophthalmus) ruled in Greece and Macedon; (2) Lysimachus took control in Thrace and much of Asia Minor; (3) Seleucus I Nicator assumed power in Mesopotamia and Persia; and (4) Ptolemy I Lagi Soter became sovereign of Egypt and Palestine.
	Zeno of Citium (c. 334–262 B.C.) founds Stoicism in Athens, a philosophy

310*	which prizes logic, reason, and indifference toward pleasure and pain alike. Paul later encounters Stoics and Epicureans in Athens (see Acts 17:18).
307*	Epicurus (c. 341–270 B.C.) founds the Garden, an egalitarian community based upon friendship, in Athens (see Acts 17:18). The philosophical system of Epicureans stands somewhat opposite Stoicism in its pursuit of pleasure, especially emphasizing the importance of friendships and the luxurious enjoyment of eating, drinking, and other comforts.
277	By 277 B.C. three Hellenistic kingdoms stabilize out of the four divisions of Alexander the Great's kingdom: (1) the Antigonid dynasty in Macedonia (issuing from Alexander's general Antigonus I Monophthalmus, 382–301, and beginning with his son Demetrius I Poliorcetes in 294/293); (2) the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt (issuing from the general Ptolemy I Lagi Soter, 367–283); and (3) the Seleucid dynasty in Syria (issuing from the general Seleucus I Nicator, c. 358–281), the latter which also ruled much of Asia Minor from 312 to 64 (see Dan. 11:4–35 and notes there). Though Judea will later become controlled by the Seleucids in 198 B.C., it is initially under Ptolemaic (Egyptian) rule, with little disturbance.
198	The Seleucids gain control over Judea from the Ptolemies after the battle at Panium (see note on Dan. 11:15–16). They are led in victory by their king, Antiochus III the Great (reigned 223–187 B.C.; see notes on Dan. 11:10 ; 11:11–12 ; 11:13 ; 11:15–16 ; 11:17–19), the father of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175–164/163; see notes on Dan. 8:9–10 ; 8:23 ; 8:25 ; 9:24–27 ; 11:21–23 ; 11:24 ; 11:25–27 ; 11:29–30 ; 11:33–35 ; 11:37–38).
190	Antiochus III the Great and the Seleucids are defeated by the Romans at the Battle of Magnesia (fought on the plains of Lydia, in modern Turkey) and forced to pay an indemnity in 12 annual payments. The Seleucids continue to rule over Judea, however.
176*	The Teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Qumran community (perhaps the Essenes) which produced many of the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls, becomes active.

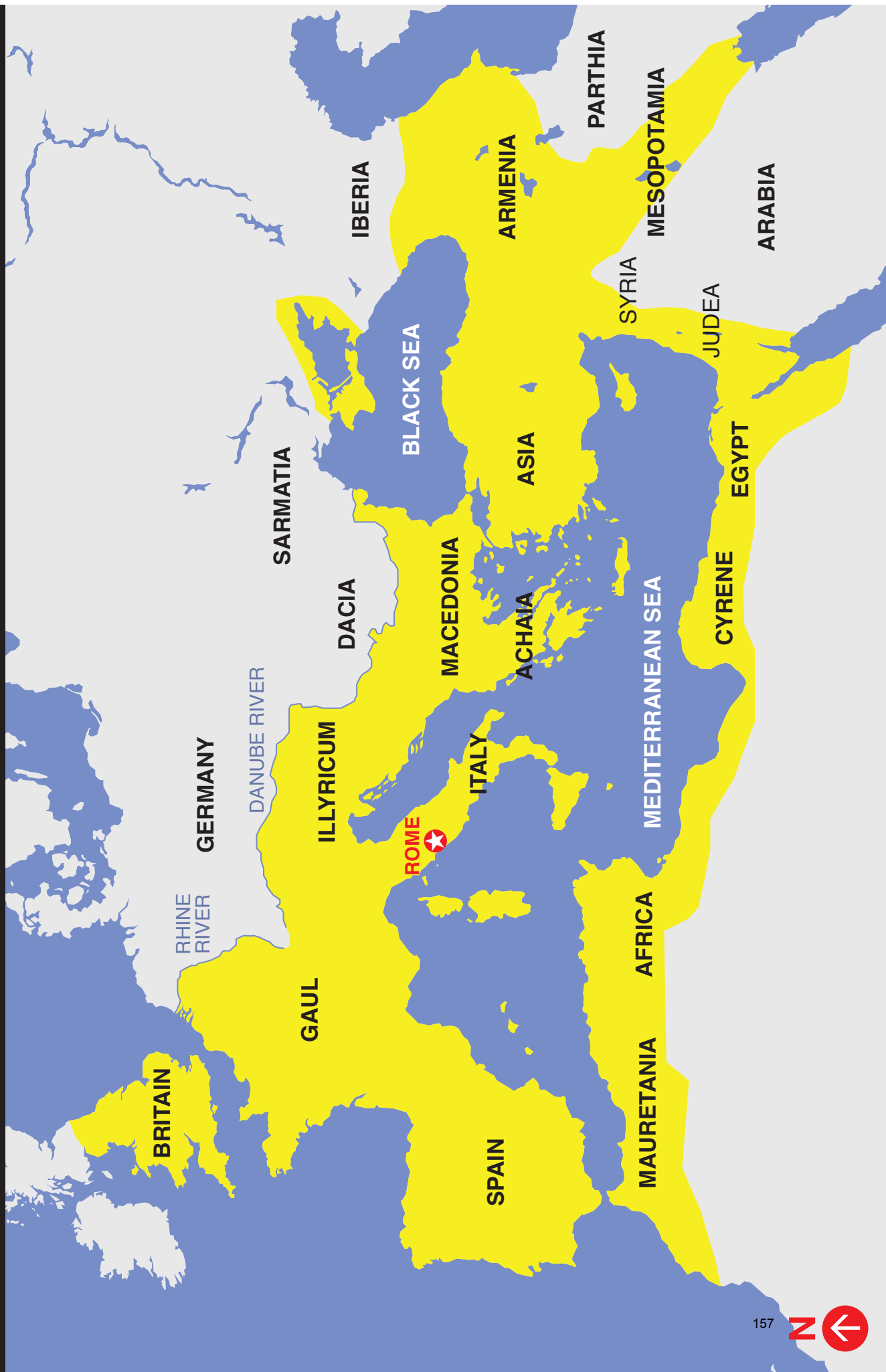
174	<p>The Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (who reigned from 175 to 164/163 B.C. and was the son of Antiochus III the Great and brother of Seleucus IV Philopator) deposes the Zadokite high priest Onias III (<i>2 Macc.</i> 3:1–4:6), the son of Simon the Just (cf. <i>Sir.</i> 50:1–21). Onias III, who had functioned as the effective head of state for the Jewish people to that time, was replaced with his brother Jason (<i>2 Macc.</i> 4:7–22; see also note on Dan. 8:9–10). Jason in turn would be supplanted by Menelaus (<i>2 Macc.</i> 4:23–26), who was eventually put to death about 162 B.C. following a 10-year reign (<i>2 Macc.</i> 13:1–8). (“Zadokite” refers to the descendants of Zadok, a high priest during King David’s reign. Zadokites held a monopoly on the Jerusalem priesthood from the time of Solomon forward.) Antiochus IV takes on the name “Epiphanes,” meaning “[god] manifest” (cf. <i>1 Macc.</i> 1:10), however his enemies would call him “Epimanes,” meaning “madman.”</p>
168/167	<p>Antiochus IV Epiphanes, led into the sanctuary by the high priest Menelaus, loots and desecrates the temple in Jerusalem (<i>1 Macc.</i> 1:20–24; 1:37–64; <i>2 Macc.</i> 5:11–26; 6:2–5; see also notes on Dan. 11:28; 11:31–32). On Kislev (Nov.–Dec.) 25, 167 B.C. (<i>1 Macc.</i> 1:59), an idol devoted to Zeus (Jupiter) was erected in the temple (“the abomination that makes desolate”; cf. Dan. 11:31; 12:11) and shortly afterwards sacrifices (likely swine) were offered up on the altar in the “Most Holy Place.”</p>
167/166	<p>Mattathias, father of Judas and his brothers, leads the Maccabean Revolt against Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. <i>1 Macc.</i> 2:1–48; see also notes on Dan. 11:28; 11:31–32; 11:33–35), and dies (<i>1 Macc.</i> 2:49–70). See Rulers Foretold in Daniel 11.</p>
164	<p>Judas “Maccabeus,” third son of Mattathias and second leader of the revolt and later the Jewish government during 166/165–161/160 B.C. (<i>1 Macc.</i> 3:1–5:68; 6:18–54; 7:26–9:22; cf. <i>2 Maccabees</i> 8; 10:14–38; 11:1–15; 12; 13:9–22; 14–15) purifies the temple—an event still remembered by Jews at Hanukkah (<i>1 Macc.</i> 4:36–61; see also notes on Dan. 8:12–14; 9:24).</p>
161*	<p>The Zadokite priest Onias IV migrates to Egypt and founds a rival temple at Leontopolis.</p>

152	Jonathan (assumed leadership during 160–143/142 B.C.; cf. <i>1 Maccabees</i> 9–12), brother of Judas Maccabeus, fifth son of Mattathias, and third leader of the revolt, accepts the high priesthood as a gift from Alexander Epiphanes (Balas) (<i>1 Macc.</i> 10:1–21), the son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and pretender to the Seleucid throne. Three distinct sects within Judaism become active at this time: the Essenes (or perhaps Qumran community—the sect with which the Dead Sea Scrolls are most closely connected), the Pharisees (see note on John 1:24), and the Sadducees (see note on Matt. 3:7). See also Jewish Groups at the Time of the New Testament .
142	Jewish independence is recognized by Seleucid king Demetrius II Nicator (d. 125 B.C.; cf. <i>1 Macc.</i> 13:31–42). Simon, brother of Judas Maccabeus and second son of Mattathias, is named “high priest and commander and leader” of the Judeans (<i>1 Macc.</i> 13:42; cf. 14:35, 41), effectively establishing the Hasmonean Dynasty. Simon rules 142–135 B.C. (cf. <i>1 Maccabees</i> 13–16). (“Hasmonean” is derived from the name of Hashman [see Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i> 12.265], great-grandfather of Mattathias.)
135/134–104	John Hyrcanus I, son of Simon, rules following his father’s murder (cf. <i>1 Macc.</i> 16:11–24).
113	The Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus I destroys the Samaritan temple.
104–103	Judah Aristobulus I, oldest son of John Hyrcanus I, rules.
103–76	Alexander Jannaeus, youngest son of John Hyrcanus I, rules.
88	The Seleucid king Demetrius III Eukairos (son of Antiochus VIII Grypus) is invited by the opponents of Alexander Jannaeus to invade Palestine.
76–67	Salome Alexandra, wife of Alexander Jannaeus, rules.
73–71	Spartacus, a gladiator-slave, leads an ultimately unsuccessful slave revolt (known as the Third Servile War) against the Roman Republic.
	Civil war breaks out in Judea between supporters of Hyrcanus II and

67	Aristobulus II, Hasmonean brothers. Hyrcanus II, older son of Alexander Jannaeus, rules from 67 to 63 B.C. Aristobulus II, younger son of Alexander Jannaeus, rules from 63 to 40 B.C. Herod the Great would eventually marry into the Hasmonean Dynasty through his union with the granddaughter of Aristobulus II, Mariamne I.
64	Syria becomes a Roman province, effectively establishing Roman rule on Palestine's northern boundaries.
63	Aemilius Scaurus leads Pompey's armies into Palestine, leading to Roman control over Palestine and thus marking the definitive end of Jewish political independence.
47	The Library of Alexandria is burned. Once the largest library in the world, probably containing half a million scrolls or volumes, it suffers the loss of many primary sources of ancient Greek literary texts, as well as translations or adaptations of important works written in other languages. According to the <i>Letter of Aristeas</i> , the Greek translation of the OT called the Septuagint (LXX) was begun for the needs of this library. No works housed in this once great library survived antiquity.
44 (March 15)	Julius Caesar is murdered.
43-40	Parthian invasion and interregnum: Phasael, Herod's brother and tetrarch of Judea ("tetrarch" is a ruler of one of four divisions of a Roman country or province), is killed when the last Hasmonean, Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II and nephew of Hyrcanus II, gains the support of the Parthians to the east and invades Judea.
40-37	Mattathias Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, rules from Jerusalem.
40	The Roman Senate declares Herod the Great "King of the Jews," giving him vassal rulership over Palestine (comprised of the provinces Judea and Galilee). His rule does not truly begin until 37 B.C., however, when he is able to

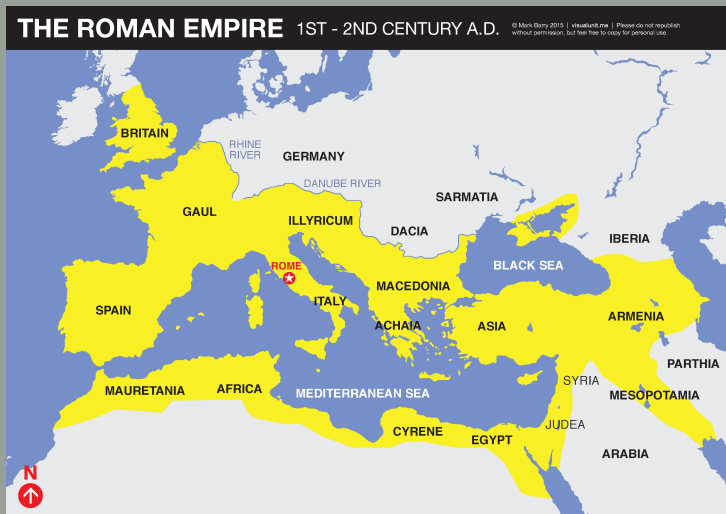
THE ROMAN EMPIRE 1ST - 2ND CENTURY A.D.

© Mark Barry 2015 | visualunit.me | Please do not republish without permission, but feel free to copy for personal use.



ROMAN EMPIRE

- Around 63 BC, Pompey of Rome conquered Israel, putting all of Judea under control of the Caesars. This eventually led to Herod being made king of Judea by the Roman emperor and senate. This is the nation that taxed and controlled the Jews and eventually executed the Messiah on a Roman cross. Roman, Greek, and Hebrew cultures were now mixed together in Judea.



ROMAN EMPIRE

- During the span of the Greek and Roman occupations, two important political/religious groups emerged in Israel. The Pharisees added to the Law of Moses through oral tradition and eventually considered their own laws more important than God's (see Mark 7:1–23).
- While Christ's teachings often agreed with the Pharisees, He railed against their hollow legalism and lack of compassion. The Sadducees represented the aristocrats and the wealthy. The Sadducees, who wielded power through the Sanhedrin, rejected all but the Mosaic books of the Old Testament. They refused to believe in resurrection and were generally shadows of the Greeks, whom they greatly admired.

	recapture Jerusalem from Antigonus.
37-4	Herod the Great rules from 37 to 4 B.C. and is the “legitimate” successor to the Hasmonean Dynasty through his marriage to Mariamne I, granddaughter of both Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II (her parents were first cousins). Herod recaptures Jerusalem from Antigonus and the Parthians in 37 B.C. through the help of Roman forces, to whom he had fled for help three years earlier.
37-31	Herod the Great fortifies Masada, a mountaintop fortress in southeast Israel on the southwest shore of the Dead Sea, as a refuge in case of revolt. (Masada would be the site of the last stand of the Zealot Jewish community against the Romans during the revolt of A.D. 66-73. After a two-year siege, the Zealots chose to commit mass suicide rather than surrender to the Romans.)
31	Octavian (later called Caesar Augustus) defeats Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium, effectively consolidating his de facto power as the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. His reign lasted until his death in A.D. 14, with Tiberius assuming power after him.
30	Egypt becomes a Roman province.
20/19	Herod the Great begins rebuilding the temple proper in Jerusalem.
5*	Jesus of Nazareth is born within the province of Judea in the town of Bethlehem during the final years of the reign of Herod the Great (cf. notes on Matt. 2:1 ; Luke 1:5-7 ; 2:2).
4	Herod the Great dies, and his kingdom is divided between his three surviving sons: (1) Herod Archelaus (“Herod the Ethnarch”) became ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (or Edom; ruled 4 B.C.-A.D. 6; “ethnarch” refers to ruler of a people under the Roman Empire); (2) Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (ruled 4 B.C.-A.D. 39); and (3) Herod Philip II became tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (ruled 4 B.C.-A.D. 34).

The Time between the Testaments

Most of the writers of the NT grew up in the world of “Second Temple Judaism,” the time between the temple’s reconstruction (516 B.C.) and its final destruction (A.D. 70). This period introduced changes into the political structure, culture, and religion of the OT world.

Sources of Information

Among the many resources about Second Temple Judaism, the most substantial are the Apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha of the OT, the writings of Josephus (c. A.D. 37–100), and the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo (c. 20 B.C.–A.D. 50). The 1946–1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls not only provided new documents from the Second Temple era but also led to different ways of reading and understanding previously known material. The Targums (Aramaic translations and paraphrases of the Bible) and rabbinic literature (which developed over centuries but attained its current written form after the time of the NT) also provide some indirect evidence of this period. Because Second Temple Judaism overlaps with the first century, the NT itself is a primary source of information about the life, thought, conditions, and situations of that time.

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

The Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha are collections of Jewish writings from the period of Second Temple Judaism. Most of the 15 (or 14) books of the Apocrypha are included in the canon of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions, and excerpts from them are still read regularly in some Anglican churches. (For more information, see [The Apocrypha](#).)

The word “pseudepigrapha” means “false inscription” or “false title” (referring to the name of the supposed “author” attached to each one). “False” is more a judgment of the names with which the writings are traditionally associated than of their content. Most of these writings represent the beliefs of distinctive groups or schools (or in some cases just

individuals) connecting themselves with the name of a notable person of antiquity, such as Enoch, Noah, Moses, or Ezra. Modern collections of the pseudepigrapha contain more than 60 titles.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Thousands of documents and fragments make up the Dead Sea Scrolls. They contain parts of all OT books except Esther, as well as parts of some apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings. “Sectarian documents” are related to the organization, worship, and thought of the group that collected and wrote them.

History

Major Periods within Second Temple Judaism

Second Temple Judaism developed as political authority changed hands from the Persians to the Greeks, to the Jewish Hasmoneans, and finally to the Romans.

539–331 B.C.	331–164 B.C.	164–63 B.C.	63 B.C.–A.D. 70
The Persian Period	The Hellenistic Period Ptolemaic (Egyptian) Period (320–198) Seleucid (Syrian) Period (198–164)	The Hasmonean (Maccabean) Period	The Roman Period

Second Temple Judaism emerged in the fifth century B.C. during the Persian Empire, which was the dominant power at the end of OT history. The Hebrews, both living in their own land and scattered elsewhere, seem to have had a fairly ordinary existence, apart from events such as rebuilding the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. The book of Esther, however, demonstrates how quickly serious crises could develop for the Jews.

The Hellenistic Period (331–164 B.C.)

In the 330s B.C. the Persians were supplanted by the Greeks under Alexander the Great (ruled 334–323). In addition to military conquest and political control, Alexander was intent to spread Greek (Hellenistic) culture, including use of the Greek language.

The Jews simply shifted allegiance to Alexander and, at first, were generally left alone. Following Alexander's death and the ensuing struggles, his empire was divided among four of his generals.

From 320 to 198 B.C., the Jews were controlled by the Egyptian Ptolemaic Empire. A sizable Jewish community also grew in Egypt, and a large Jewish colony in Alexandria was influential well past the time of Christ (cf. Apollos, [Acts 18:24](#)). A Greek translation of the Pentateuch was made in Egypt c. 250 B.C., and of the rest of the OT by about 130 B.C. (together commonly called the Septuagint). Most of Palestine's countryside, outside Jerusalem, adopted Greek culture (Hellenism).

In about 198 B.C., the Seleucid (Syrian) Empire to the north of Palestine gained control over the Jews. The Seleucids attempted to spread Hellenism throughout their empire. The Jews were forbidden, on pain of death, to practice their traditional way of life, including their religion. The Jerusalem temple was turned into a pagan shrine, and persecution became prevalent.

Mattathias, an aged priest, along with his five sons, led a revolt. After Mattathias's death, leadership fell to one of his sons, Judas (called "Maccabeus"). Judas and his successors eventually won independence. In 164 B.C. the temple was cleansed, and the daily burnt offering and other religious ceremonies resumed. The event is still commemorated by Jews each December as Hanukkah, the "Feast of Lights."

The Hasmonean (Maccabean) Period (164–63 B.C.)

During the Maccabean period (164–63 B.C.) all rulers were from the same family of Jewish priests (also called the "Hasmonean" family after the Hebrew name of Simon, an early Maccabean leader). Nine rulers followed Judas Maccabeus to the throne, including two of his brothers. From the second generation onward, the Maccabean rulers became progressively dictatorial, corrupt, immoral, and even pagan. Internal strife led Jewish leaders to ask the Roman general Pompey to come and restore order. Pompey did so, but he also brought Roman rule, which began in 63 B.C. and lasted into the fourth century A.D.

The Roman Period (63 B.C.–A.D. 135)

When Pompey took Jerusalem, he entered the temple and even the Most Holy Place. To the Jews, this was the ultimate insult and sacrilege. The Romans could not understand why the Jews resented the various exercises of privilege and control by their conqueror. Hence, deep suspicion and ill will began growing, lasting over a century until the Jews rebelled and the Romans destroyed the Jewish state. The NT reader must remain aware of this seething undercurrent that colors much of what takes place, even during the ministry of Jesus.

In the centuries before this, Greece had conquered the ancient world and left its intellectual and cultural mark. The Romans built on this through political achievements. Paul and other travelers made good use of the vast system of Roman roads. Roman government, organization, law, money, taxation, culture, religion, army, and demands were everywhere. “Roman Peace” (*Pax Romana*) was enforced by arms but brought a measure of security and stability to the empire. The levels of its society were clearly understood, and the higher levels often oppressed the lowest. In most strata of society, morals were degenerate. Some captured peoples were restless, yearning to be free from Rome—none more than the Jews. Many, like the prophetess Anna, were patiently “waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem” ([Luke 2:38](#)).

Roman influence, good and bad, was an ever-present reality in the NT world. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prayed for a salvation that combined deliverance “from our enemies” with increased religious fervor, “that we might . . . serve him [the Lord] without fear, in holiness and righteousness” ([Luke 1:70–75](#)). One Jewish group, the Zealots, sought violent, armed rebellion for religious reasons. The dominion of the Romans over the land where Jesus lived was most evident through the governmental structures they established, the rulers they appointed, and the actions they carried out. The Jewish Sanhedrin, or Council (a combination civil-religious body), predated the coming of the Romans. It retained broad authority, but always under the watchful eye of Rome. The high priest was the head of these 70 (or 72), but rulers under the Romans removed and appointed high priests at will (in spite of the OT provision that the high priesthood was for life). Tax collectors collected taxes for Rome. They were given, and many used, wide freedom in the amount they collected. The Jews hated them for collaborating with the Romans; they suspected that these tax collectors collected enough to satisfy not only their Roman masters but also their own greed.

In 37 B.C. the Roman senate appointed Herod the Great to be “king” of all Palestine. Until his

death in 4 B.C., he maintained this position by cooperating with whatever Roman group or emperor happened to be in power. He was king when Jesus was born (c. 5 B.C.). It was Herod who killed the boy babies in Bethlehem ([Matt. 2:16–18](#)), an unsurprising atrocity, similar in character to his treatment of friends and family.

Herod carried out great building projects. About 20/19 B.C. he began enlarging and reconstructing the temple in Jerusalem. The main work was completed fairly quickly, but additional improvements continued until A.D. 64 (cf. [John 2:20](#)).

Herod's will divided his kingdom between three sons. After changing and ratifying Herod's will, Roman authorities made Archelaus the ethnarch (ruler of half a "kingdom") of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. Mismanagement led to his banishment in A.D. 6 (see [Matt. 2:22](#)). He was succeeded by governors, the best known being Pontius Pilate, who ruled from A.D. 26 to 36. Pilate was governor during (1) the ministry of Jesus (c. A.D. 27–30 or 30–33), (2) Pentecost, (3) the earliest days of the church, (4) Stephen's speech and death, and (5) the beginnings of Christian missions.

The second of Herod's sons, Philip, ruled as tetrarch (ruler of a fourth of a "kingdom") over Ituraea and Trachonitis, areas northeast of Galilee ([Luke 3:1](#)). At his death (A.D. 34) his territory was briefly assigned to the governors who also ruled Judea. Agrippa I (Herod the Great's grandson) was given this territory, with the title "king," in A.D. 37.

The third of Herod the Great's sons, Herod Antipas (often simply called "Herod" or "Herod the tetrarch" in the Gospels and Acts; see [chart of Herodian Dynasty](#)) was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. until A.D. 39. While visiting his half brother Herod Philip (not the tetrarch), Antipas became infatuated with Philip's wife, Herodias, daughter of another half brother, Aristobulus, and mother of Philip's daughter Salome (cf. [Mark 6:22ff.](#)). Contrary to OT law ([Lev. 18:16; 20:21](#)), Antipas married her. The denunciation of this union precipitated Herodias's anger against John the Baptist and eventually his imprisonment and death ([Matt. 14:4](#); [Mark 6:17–19](#); [Luke 3:19–20](#)).

Antipas (at Herodias's request) asked Emperor Gaius to give him the title of "king," the same as that given to Herodias's brother, Agrippa I. Agrippa charged Herod Antipas with plotting insurrection. Antipas, accompanied by Herodias, was exiled to Gaul (modern France) in A.D. 39. Antipas's former territory was then given to Agrippa.

In A.D. 41 the former territory of Archelaus was added to that of Agrippa, thus giving him the

same title and virtually the same territory that his grandfather (Herod the Great) had held. During his kingship James, the brother of John, was beheaded ([Acts 12:2](#)), and Peter was imprisoned but freed by an angel ([Acts 12:3-19](#)). Agrippa was struck by an angel and died in Caesarea in A.D. 44 ([Acts 12:23](#)). Roman governors again ruled after this time. In A.D. 53 Herod Agrippa II (son of Agrippa I) became “king” of Iturea and Trachonitis. Galilee and Perea were added to his domain in A.D. 56 or 61.

Two other Roman governors, Felix (A.D. 52-60) and Festus (60-62), appear in the biblical account. Paul was held prisoner and given judicial hearings by both ([Acts 24:10-27](#); [25:8](#)). While King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice were visiting Festus, Paul was again called on to make a defense ([Acts 25:13-26:31](#)). Festus transferred Paul to Rome for trial ([Acts 26:32-28:16](#)).

Adjustment after 586 B.C.

With the Babylonian victory of 586 B.C., the Hebrews faced loss of land, monarchy, the city of Jerusalem, and their temple. They lived under the direct control of foreign rulers, without national identity. Bereft of their own rulers, the Jews found their religious system without political support for protection, implementation, or financial backing.

From this date onward, the majority of the Hebrews were scattered throughout the world. This scattering—the Diaspora, or “Dispersion”—presented a continual threat to racial, ethnic, and cultural identity. The latter included problems related to their distinctive religious outlook, including its ceremonial, dietary, and other practices pertaining to ritual purity. Wherever they lived immediately after 586 B.C. the Hebrews faced a “theological crisis.” Why had the Lord permitted his people to be conquered? Was he still good, loving, caring, and able to protect them?

By the mid-300s B.C., the Hebrews had been back in their own land for two centuries. The second temple was functioning. But then the arrival of Hellenism, with the coming of Alexander the Great in 333 B.C. and the subsequent reign of his successors, intensified the crisis and introduced new threats.

The OT law, the Torah, had established twin foundational pillars for the proper response to the Lord with whom the Hebrews were in covenant relationship. These were (1) the *temple-centered, ceremonial* pillar and (2) the pillar of *observance of ethical and moral instructions*.

Before the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C. Hebrew religion had been largely temple-centered and ceremonial; it was denounced by the OT prophets when not combined with a proper effect on life and behavior. The prophets insisted on obedience to God and condemned false trust in the temple and abuses of external forms. Unless the people showed the type of repentance that resulted in a godly life and a true relationship with God, the prophets warned that they would experience God's judgment, marked by the loss of their nation and land.

With the captivity of Judah (586 B.C.) the prophets had been vindicated. The corporate life of the nation was gone, and the temple was in rubble and ashes. Ceremonial worship was all but impossible. Under similar circumstances, most other ancient religions simply disappeared.

After the return from captivity (538 B.C.) the temple was rebuilt (516) and the priest-led ceremonial worship was reestablished in Jerusalem. But some Hebrews had decided that their religion could survive without it. At the moment, they most needed an inspired message from the Lord, yet the prophets were silent (*1 Macc.* 4:44–46; 9:27; 14:41–42; Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.38–42; Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 11a; *Prayer of Azariah* 15; Dead Sea Scrolls, *Rule of the Community* 11). Even so, the Hebrew religion had begun a remarkable adjustment.

Though the Jewish people retained both the ceremonial pillar of their response to God and the moral-ethical pillar as well, the primary emphasis shifted away from the ceremonial to the moral-ethical. But to obey the law, one needed to know its content, which required study. As a result, the center of worship was no longer exclusively the temple with its liturgy but also the place of learning, the assembly, the local synagogue. The major religious leader was no longer only the priest but also the teacher-rabbi. Such adjustments required careful, detailed study. This resulted in new and different forms of interpretation and the birth of traditions, often additional laws, which supposedly expanded and clarified the written Torah. During the NT period these additional laws were taught and passed on both orally and in written form (note the frequent mention of “scribes” in the NT). Many people regarded these rabbinic traditions as having a divine origin, equal to the laws in the written Scriptures, but Jesus pronounced them “the tradition of men” ([Mark 7:1–23](#), esp. v. 8).

Divisions grew within the Judaism of the Second Temple era. Some Jews lived in their ancestral land, others did not; some adopted Hellenistic culture, while others clung to the Hebraic one. (Such culturally oriented conflicts are behind the complaint of [Acts 6:1](#).) The

new interpretative methods and the additional traditions increasingly became the subject of disagreement. Groups competed for religious prestige and authority, political power, recognition as being wise, wealth, the satisfaction that they were really in the “right,” etc. Thus arose numerous parties, denominations, or sects. The best known are the Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and Essenes. (See the article on [Jewish Groups at the Time of the NT](#).) Most of their differences resulted from their distinctive traditions. One example of such differences is seen in the tensions between the Sadducees and Pharisees in [Acts 23:6–9](#) and elsewhere.

Most people in the land of Israel belonged to none of these groups, being too busy earning a living and caring for their families. According to Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 18.11–17), the Pharisees were the most influential on the general public; the Sadducees came from aristocratic priestly families and were not generally popular. Most ordinary Jews were devoted to their nation and religion, and some (it is hard to know how many) were genuinely devoted to God (such as Zechariah and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, Simeon, and Anna; see [Luke 1–2](#)). From such as these came most of Jesus’ early followers. With contempt, the Jewish leaders regarded them as “this crowd that does not know the law” ([John 7:49](#)).

Conclusion

The Jews revolted against the Romans in A.D. 66. Before the overthrow of the city and temple in A.D. 70, Jerusalem Christians fled to the Decapolis city of Pella (probably in response to Jesus’ warning and instruction, [Matt. 24:15–16](#); [Mark 13:14](#); [Luke 21:20–24](#); cf. [19:43](#)). Afterward, Jewish Christian activity during the first century in Jerusalem was limited, but seems to have continued in Galilee.

Roman victory over this Jewish revolt brought “The Time between the Testaments” to its end. The third era of Hebrew history, Rabbinic Judaism, began about A.D. 90, under Roman rule, and continues to this day. (See the article on [The Bible and Contemporary Judaism](#).)

From the second century on, Jerusalem was a Gentile city, and Christianity became largely a Gentile movement.