

Between the Testaments

"It shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them."—Micah 3:6

The period we shall consider roughly corresponds with Daniel's 70 weeks (9:24-27), which were the 490 years from about 455 BC to 35 AD. There were tremendous changes from what we see as the O.T. ends, to what we find as the N.T. begins. It seems almost like a different world. But there is a chain of events leading step by step from one to the other.

All human records are unreliable. We need read very little of man's history to realize this. Only the Bible is wholly dependable. Our current news magazines, with all modern communications and facilities, cannot get present things straight, and often disagree, so what can we expect of the past? However, the general broad outline of events, as pieced together from various sources, seems reasonably sure.

430 to 330 BC

The O.T. record closes about 430 BC (just about 100 years after the first return from Babylon), with Nehemiah coming back to Jerusalem after a brief absence, and finding all his good work reversed, and all the old corruption flourishing again. This sets the sordid pattern for all subsequent times. After Nehemiah, the local rulership of Judea, under the Persian overrule, fell to the High Priests.

As the O.T. closes, the entire Bible world is under the Persian Empire. And it had been this way for nearly 100 years—through the times of Zerubbabel, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah--and was to continue so for another 100 years: until 330 BC, and the coming of Alexander the Great.

ROME: At this time (430BC), Rome was just a small city-state of which the Greeks and Persians heard or thought very little. Some Greeks had helped Rome throw off the Etruscan yoke about 500 BC; but it was still a small local entity, surrounded by more powerful neighbors.

GREECE: Greece goes back much further. For 300 years before the O.T.'s end—back to the time of the early kings of Israel—it had extensive colonies: all around the Black Sea, all around the coasts of Asia Minor, the Mediterranean coasts of Spain and France, the E. Mediterranean coast of Africa, Sicily, the coasts of Italy, and had possessed the southernmost part of Italy.

As the O.T. closes, Greece was at the peak of its artistic and intellectual culture—its so-called 'Golden Age'—but materially it was poor and weak and divided. The vast ranging Greek colonies were largely independent, and added little to the homeland's wealth or strength. The colonies around the coast of Asia Minor were happy and prosperous under the mild and beneficent Persian rule.

The rival city-states of Athens and Sparta—Greece's two main power centers—were always fighting, and the Persians financed and supported one or the other against each other, to keep both weak.

JUDEA: As the O.T. closes, Judea was a very small territory of not more than 15 miles radius around Jerusalem, probably under 100,000 inhabitants. It is likely most Jews were still in Assyria and Babylon, though doubtless, during the 100 years of the Persian Empire that had already passed, many had traveled far and wide and settled throughout the known world—by force or freely—as traders, slaves, soldiers, or prisoners, etc. They would go where they could prosper. Those who scattered would be the more worldly and enterprising ones: those who returned to the land, the more faithful and religious ones. This trend would continue through the 400-year period between the Testaments.

In N.T. times we find Palestine thickly populated with Jews, even far up into Galilee. And we find (Acts 2) Jews assembling at Jerusalem for the feasts from all over the known world, as far west as Rome, and as far east as Media.

PERSIA: The Persian Empire, as the O.T. closes, was highly organized. Travel and communication were fully developed, and equal to anything anywhere in the world up to 150 years ago: a fine system of roads and posts, a common law code, coinage, weights and measures, etc. And Aramaic (the 'Chaldee' or

'Syriac' of the Bible) was the official common language everywhere.

The Persian Empire was the model for the Greek and Roman Empires that followed it. It was a new beginning. The first world powers—Sumeria (in Mesopotamia) and Egypt—were Hamitic. This agrees with Gen. 10. The next—Assyria and Babylon—were Semitic. The subsequent ones—Persia, Greece and Rome—were Japhetic (in modern terms, Indo-European). The Persian policy with its subject peoples was relatively mild and enlightened, and there was a large degree of freedom and self-rule, and many benefits from the common imperial organization.

Though Persia gradually declined in vigor, she was not seriously challenged for another 100 years, until 330 BC, and there appears little new to report for that period. The Greeks had a disastrous 30-year civil war, that ended (404 BC) with the destruction of Athens, Greek bankruptcy and consequent total Persian naval control of the Aegean Sea well into the next century, into the high 300's.

PHILIP: The change began to come when Philip became king of Macedonia in 359 BC*. He was as great a genius as his more famous son Alexander, and he did all the preparatory work for Alexander.

The Macedonians, to the north of Greece, were a related people, but more mixed, primitive, and warlike. The Greeks considered them barbarians. The ruling family, however, was—or claimed to be—Greek, and was so considered by the Greeks.

In 358 BC, Philip seized the site of what became Philippi, in adjacent Thrace, with its rich gold mines; and the wealth of these mines was a major aspect of his and Alexander's accomplishments. It bought their weapons and paid their armies, and was also very useful where bribery could influence the fortunes of war.

Philip forged the Macedonian tribes into a tight and disciplined unity, and—by 338 BC—subdued all Thrace and Greece; and formed the entire area into the 'League of Corinth' (a euphemism for his own dictatorship) for the purpose of taking vengeance on Persia.

In this 20-year period up to 338, he was developing the best and most efficient fighting force the world had seen to that time: best in weapons, training and tactics, all of which were new and revolutionary. Breakthroughs in methods of warfare have often decided the course of history. In our own day we have seen this in tanks, blitz-krieg, radar, jets, nuclear bombs, guided missiles, satellites, and—on the horizon—lasers.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

In 337, Philip proposed war on Persia, but in the midst of preparation he was assassinated, and his son Alexander succeeded him, aged 19. He was already an experienced and accomplished general.

He crossed the Hellespont into Asia Minor in 334, and totally defeated the Persian army that met him at the border (at the river Granicus). He pursued them, and defeated them again at Issus (near Tarsus) on the Mediterranean coast where Asia Minor joins Syria. All the cities around the Asia Minor coasts had been Greek for 500 years, so Alexander came as a liberator to them, and soon had all Asia Minor under his rule.

He continued down the Syrian coast, and all submitted except Tyre and Gaza. This was when he built the causeway to the island of Tyre, and destroyed the city, killing or enslaving the inhabitants.

Josephus says that at Jerusalem the High Priest met him in his robes, followed by all the white-clad priests, and showed him the prophecies of Daniel concerning himself, and Alexander was so impressed that he worshipped God there. This may well be legend, but it is certain he did greatly favor the Jews thereafter.

He went on to Egypt, and founded the city of Alexandria at the Nile's mouth, inviting Jews to settle

¹This note applies to ALL DATES: Even down to N.T. times, all dates can vary: sometimes up to 5 or 10 years, or even more. Man's history is very indefinite, despite claims to the contrary. This is shown by differing (though often very positive) 'authorities.' All dates herein must be taken as approximate. Generally, they are probably correct to within 2 or 3 years.

there, giving them equal status with the Greeks. Alexandria soon became and remained the world-center of Jewish learning. Jews comprised one third of the population in N.T. times. Alexandria replaced the destroyed Tyre as a great eastern emporium of trade, in which the Jews played a major part.

The Jews have always been a unique people. They were prominent in both the Greek and Roman Empires, with special place and privilege. We have Daniel ruling in Babylon, and Mordecai in Persia—of God, of course—but the pattern persists. It is not especially unusual to find two or three Jews in a U.S. President's Cabinet of ten: the highest council in the land--or two or three Jews in the nine-man Supreme Court. How prominent Jews are in present high U.S. politics, far beyond their relative numbers!

Alexander returned northeast from Egypt, and in 331BC met the forces of the Persian king Darius near Nineveh on the northern Tigris (battle of Arbela or Gaugamela), totally defeating him again for the third and final time, ending the Persian Empire, beginning the Greek (Dan. 11:2). He pushed on to the far northeast into central Asia, and then down to the borders of India.

THE DIVIDED EMPIRE

He died at Babylon in 323 BC, aged 33; and immediately his generals fell to fighting over possession of the Empire (Dan. 11:4). They killed his mother, brother, wife and son to eliminate heirs. The contest lasted until the battle of Ipsus (central Asia Minor) in 301, settling into 4 parts—

1. Macedonia and Greece to Cassander.
2. Thrace and most of Asia Minor to Lysimachus.
3. Syria, Mesopotamia, and the Far East to Seleucus.
4. Libya, Egypt and PALESTINE to Ptolemy.

We are only concerned thereafter with the last 2--

The Seleucids in Syria, King of the North.

The Ptolemies in Egypt, King of the South (Dan. 11:5).

Seleucus founded Antioch about 300 BC as his capital, naming it for his father. Its seaport was called Seleucia, after himself (Acts 13:1,4). Antioch was Paul's headquarters for his missionary journeys, and one of the major cities of N.T. work. It became the third largest and most important city in the Roman Empire (after Rome and Alexandria). Seleucus (like Alexander) favored the Jews, and invited them to Antioch, and they became a large proportion of the population there, just as in Alexandria. At the first, both the King of the North and the King of the South favored the Jews, and sought their favor.

300 to 200 BC

For the first 100 years after the division of Alexander's empire (300 to 200 BC), Palestine was part of the King of the South's dominions. Ptolemy II, known as Philadelphus, began to reign in 285 BC.

SEPTUAGINT: It was in his reign, according to all evidence and tradition, that the Septuagint version was translated at Alexandria, or at least begun. This is the Hebrew Scriptures in Greek (plus a lot of material that was never in the Hebrew Scriptures). It is on the whole a poor, undependable translation, but it is quoted generally in the N.T. where it is suitable, as it was the common version that most could read, being in Greek, the then common language.

Certainly the rabbis did not teach from it. And anyone who was a devout and serious student—while using it as we do the AV—wouldn't depend upon it as a finality. They'd go to the Hebrew. But it did serve to carry the Word of God to the world. Greek had, by N.T. times, become the universal language as a result of Alexander's conquests and the subsequent Greek rule for over 200 years. The Romans, a more primitive people, adopted much that was Greek as they developed.

ROME BECOMES A WORLD FACTOR

We are still considering the period of 300 to 200 BC. During this time, though under Egyptian (Ptolemaic) over-rule, Judah was not much bothered or interfered with. The High Priest and the priesthood would be the local rulership.

It was during this period that Rome began to come into the world picture, with—generally—poor results for Israel. A hard, iron master is on the horizon. Rome gained control of all Italy by 270 BC.

CARTHAGE DESTROYED: Carthage (on the north African coast opposite Italy, founded by the Phoenicians of Tyre around 500 years earlier, a little after the time of Ahab and Jezebel) at this time controlled the western Mediterranean coasts of Africa and Spain, and the western Mediterranean islands: Corsica, Sardinia, part of Sicily, etc.

This was Rome's first great rival and enemy outside of Italy; and by the year 200 BC Rome had totally crushed Carthage in a series of wars (the Punic Wars: Hannibal, etc.) over a period of 60 years. Rome now fully controlled the Western Mediterranean, and could turn her attention to the East. Actually, however, her advance that way seems to have been—at least at first—more by invitation and by reaction to attack, rather than deliberate expansion. Certainly she was appealed to for help by warring factions within Palestine for 100 years before she came and took over there.

From earliest times, Rome seems closely associated with the more highly developed Greeks, whom the Romans admired and copied, and who provided their teachers in many things.

200 BC: SELEUCIDS TAKE PALESTINE: ROME ENTERS

The Seleucid king of Syria*, Antiochus III, was ambitious, and sought conquest. In 200 BC he took Palestine away from Egypt (Dan. 11:15), with the Jews' help, for relations were good, and he made great promises to them. He then sought to extend his power to Greece (Dan. 11:18). Greece called on the Romans, and this brought war with Rome. The Seleucids were defeated and driven out of Greece. They also lost all of Asia Minor (190 BC) and had to pay an enormous indemnity to Rome over a long period of years (Dan. 11:19).

The need both to raise money and to unify the Syrian territories for strength against Rome soon led to a complete change from the easy-going days that Israel had hitherto enjoyed. The Syrians began plundering temples, and other oppressive measures. This was Israel's first experience related to Rome.

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES, 175-163 BC

In 175 BC, Antiochus IV came to the Seleucid or Syrian throne. He was the famous Antiochus Epiphanes whose measures led to the Maccabean revolt. He decided his Empire needed unification and standardization (like Russia today), and that Jewish separation and differences must be totally stamped out. He also coveted the Temple treasures.

HELLENIZATION: Now enters the issue of Hellenization: the total enforcing of Greek culture and ways. The Jews were deeply divided on this. Many—probably the majority (of the upper and influential classes, at least)—were quite happy with the new, modern, 'advanced,' flesh-pleasing Greek ways. The appeal was more tempting and deceiving (and more apparently 'logical') than the old idolatries had been.

The Greeks were the world's intellectual leaders. They symbolized modernness and civilization. They set the pattern for music, art, athletics, theater, building, physical and mental

²By 250 BC, the Seleucids had already lost much of the Far East (from Mesopotamia to India) to the growing PARTHIAN EMPIRE. Then, during the period of the early Maccabees—from 170 BC—the Parthians took Babylonia, Media, Elam and Persia, reducing the Seleucids to little more than Syria. The Parthian pressure on the Seleucid kingdom greatly facilitated the Maccabean struggle, and was doubtless providential. The Parthians seem to have been an Iranian tribe, and the Parthian Empire really a resurgence of the old Persian power. It became Rome's permanent antagonist in the East, and a constant barrier to Roman expansion eastward.

development, the pursuit of 'beauty,' etc. They combined great intelligence and ability with total moral corruption and degradation. They were the flesh at its best and worst: brilliant, inquisitive, innovative, frivolous, skeptical, carnal.

The more powerful and wealthy Jews had long since Hellenized, for it was the pleasant, popular, profitable thing to do, in keeping with the tide and times.

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Antiochus got his first opportunity when Jason, the younger brother of the High Priest Onias, offered Antiochus a huge sum from the Temple receipts, and promised to promote Hellenization, if Antiochus would remove his brother Onias, and make him High Priest. Many influential Jews assured Antiochus that Hellenization was the way to go, and would be an easy matter. So Onias was ousted: and Jason got the job. This appears to be the first outright bartering and politicization of the High Priesthood, which subsequently became standard practice. This was 174 BC. Jason built a Greek gymnasium by the Temple for the priests.

Antiochus learned all too fast. In 171 he deposed Jason and sold the High Priesthood to a higher bidder who was not even a Levite. Jason³ led a revolt which brought Antiochus to Jerusalem, where he desecrated and plundered the Temple and slew many.

In 168, Antiochus issued a sweeping decree totally abolishing Judaism, forbidding circumcision, worship of God, or possession of the Scriptures; and ordaining idolatrous rites in the Temple and all throughout the land—all on the pain of death (Dan. 11:31).

THE MACCABEES

Many Jews submitted, but many resisted (Dan. 11:32). An old priest, Mattathias, of the house of Hasmon (or Asmon), with his five sons, raised a revolt and fled to the hills with many followers. The five sons were, in descending order of age—

- JOHN -Killed in an ambush, 156 BC.
- SIMON -3rd leader 143-135 BC. Murdered by son-in-law.
- JUDAS -1st leader 166-160 BC. Died in battle.
- ELEAZAR -Died in battle (crushed by war elephant) 162 BC.
- JONATHAN-2nd leader 160-143 BC. Captured by treachery and killed.

JUDAS—166-160 BC

On his death-bed soon after, in 166 BC, Mattathias appointed his third son Judas as leader to succeed him. Judas' appellation was 'Maccabeus' (the Hammer), from his dreadful lightning blows in warfare, and so the movement became known as the 'Maccabees'; and also as the 'Hasmoneans,' from the family name. And the subsequent line of rulers was the Hasmonean dynasty, ruling until the time of Herod the Great. They are popularly regarded as 'Maccabees' in the early history (father and five brothers, to 135 BC) and 'Hasmoneans' (or Asmoneans) thereafter.

Though Judas' forces were always small, they were fanatical and fearless, and he was an extremely able general: considered one of the very best Israel ever produced. This, again, would be providential. He was totally successful in driving out the Syrian forces, and he re-established Jewish rule throughout the land. In 164, he took Jerusalem, and cleansed the Temple (Dan. 11:34). This was the historical beginning of the annual Hanukkah festival, still kept. 'Hanukkah' means 'Dedication.' It occurs in John 10:22.

The Syrians came back with a large army, and 32 war elephants. For the first time, the Jews now appealed to Rome for help. They received promises, but no help came. In 162, the fourth

³Jason's Hebrew name was Joshua, but he Hellenized it to the Greek 'Jason'.

brother, Eleazar, was crushed to death in a battle by the fall of an elephant he had crawled under to stab. In 160, Judas died in battle against tremendous odds, for many had lost heart and left him, in the face of huge Syrian forces. Three brothers were now left: Jonathan, Simon, and John.

JONATHAN—160-143 BC

Jonathan (the youngest) now became the leader. But the Syrians were too powerful, and the Maccabees fled again to the hills, and the Syrians re-took Jerusalem. In 156, John (the oldest) was ambushed and killed. Just two were now left.

Under Jonathan the struggle began to change from a holy war to a political movement for the power of the Hasmonean dynasty. Jonathan was not a very religious man, nor were most of his successors. Most were out-and-out wicked men. After its first burst of zealous glory under Judas, the Maccabee movement became more and more sordid and tarnished, and merely self-serving and political.

PHARISEES, SADDUCEES, SCRIBES: At this time, the names of Pharisee and Sadducee appear in Jewish history. The Sadducees were mainly the worldly, priestly, ruling class, favoring Hellenism. Most of the priests were Sadducees; and nearly all Sadducees were priests, especially of the powerful ruling priestly families. We must bear in mind hereafter the 'High Priest' had become a purely political title of power, though still technically spiritual leader and head of the national worship.

The Pharisees were the faithful who wished to maintain the strictness and purity of the Mosaic Law. They were closely allied with the Maccabees at the beginning. But the Pharisees were content with religious freedom; the Maccabees wanted to fight on to total freedom.

The 'scribes' or 'lawyers' or 'doctors of the Law' that we find in the N.T. were generally related to the Pharisees, but were a more restricted and specialized class. Anyone could be a Pharisee: it was just a way of life. But to be a scribe (or lawyer) required long training, and then official acceptance. They were the legal experts, the professional students, the recognized authorities who interpreted the Law. They were the 'Rabbis' (Masters), and were a proud, haughty, honor-seeking class in N.T. times, regarding the 'common people' with contempt.

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Civil war and rival claimants in Syria now changed the picture (155 BC). Both sides sought the Jews' support. Jonathan backed, and fought for one side, and in return was appointed High Priest (153 BC) by the Syrian ruler. From here on, until Herod came to power over 100 years later, the Maccabean ruler was also High Priest—without regard for the scriptural succession. This further alienated the Pharisees.

Syrian politics changed again, and the struggle was renewed. For the second time (144 BC), the Jews appealed to Rome for help. But again, none came. Jonathan was captured (143) by treachery by the Syrians, under guise of friendship, and later murdered. Simon alone remained.

SIMON 143-135 BC

Simon, like Judas at the beginning, was supremely successful. By 142 he had driven the Syrians completely out of the land, taking their last stronghold, Accra on the coast. In 141, complete Jewish independence was recognized by treaty with Syria. The Jews in gratitude appointed Simon's family as hereditary rulers and High Priests, and an official new era, with new dating and new coinage, began for Israel.

Simon was very popular and capable, and his short reign was marked by greatly renewed prosperity. He sent a present of great value to Rome, and the Romans recognized his authority and government, and sent letters to the rulers of a score of Mediterranean countries to demand the

safety and fair treatment of Jews in their territories. This illustrates both how widely the Jews were scattered, and how Rome now claimed to be, and was recognized as, the over-all adjudicator.

In 135 BC, Simon and two of his sons were treacherously murdered by his own son-in-law (who planned to seize the rulership), at a banquet that the son-in-law held in Simon's honor.

JOHN HYRCANUS--135-104 BC

A third son of Simon, John Hyrcanus, was also slated for murder, but he was warned, and he rushed to Jerusalem and was made High Priest and ruler, succeeding his father. He was a bad, but very able, man. He conquered the Edomites (now called the Idumeans, the Greek form of the name) about 125 BC, terminating their national existence, forcing them to adopt circumcision and become Jews. (The Edomites, some time after the Jews were taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, had left—or had been driven from—Edom, and had moved into the southern part of now vacant Judah, up as far as Hebron).

John Hyrcanus also conquered Samaria^{*}, destroying both the capital city, and the temple on Mt. Gerizim. The territory of Israel was now bigger than it had ever been since the collapse of Solomon's empire, but it was to expand yet further. The Syrian power was sinking, and Israel increasingly strong. John, like his father Simon, made a defensive alliance with Rome. He went completely over to the worldly Sadducees and fully adopted Greek ways. He changed his three sons' Jewish names to Greek ones.

ARISTOBULUS I—104 BC

Hyrcanus died in 104 BC. He had designated his wife as ruler, and his son Aristobulus as High Priest, dividing the office he himself held. But Aristobulus seized power, murdered his mother and eldest brother, and imprisoned three younger brothers. He was the first Maccabee to assume the title and state of 'King of the Jews.' He just reigned one year, but in that time he added Galilee to Judea's dominions.

ALEXANDER JANNEUS—103-76 BC

At Aristobulus' death, his wife married his brother, Alexander Janneus, and she made him both King and High Priest. He again was capable, but ruthless. He advanced Hellenism, persecuted the Pharisees, murdered his own brother, and on one occasion slaughtered 50,000 Jews

⁴THE SAMARITANS: The 10-Tribe northern Kingdom of Israel was carried away captive between 740 and 710 BC, by the Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser (Pul), Shalmaneser, and Sargon (2 Kings 15:29; 17:3-6). In their place, the Assyrians brought people from the East (2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2,9-10). Ezra names Esarhaddon (680-668 BC) and Ashurbanipal ('Asnapper,' 668-626) as having brought them, but doubtless the preceding kings (Sargon & Sennacherib) did also.

These became the 'Samaritans.' By the time of the return from Babylon under Zerubbabel by Cyrus' decree (about 538 BC), they had been there about 150 years, and had adopted the Jewish religion, but accepting only the 5 books of Moses.

They came professing to want to join with Zerubbabel in building up Jerusalem, but being a hybrid people of mixed worship, rejecting all prophets and Scripture after Moses, they were 'adversaries' even before they make their rejected offer (Ezra 4:1-2). But this refusal by the Jews would certainly deepen and confirm the enmity. They were deadly enemies to Nehemiah, and did all they possibly could to frustrate his work, though unfaithful Jews made alliance with them.

Their temple and center of worship was on Mt. Gerizim, by Shechem (John 4:20). At the time of the Gospels and most of the Acts (except briefly, 41-44 AD, under Agrippa I), Samaria was under direct Roman rule. The Roman governor's headquarters was at Caesarea on the coast.

in suppressing a revolt.

He further extended the land, adding several Greek cities up the Mediterranean coast, and considerable territory east of the Jordan. Under him the Hasmonean dominions reached their greatest extent. He reigned 27 years, to 76 BC.

ALEXANDRA—76-69 BC

Alexander left his widow Alexandra as ruler, advising her to make peace with the Pharisees, realizing their popularity, and that she would not be able to rule without them. She installed her son, Hyrcanus II (a man of very weak character), as figurehead High Priest, while she wielded the power.

ARISTOBULUS II—69-63 BC

At Alexandra's death in 69 BC, her other son, Aristobulus, seized power, deposing Hyrcanus II, who had briefly succeeded her. The end is now near, both for the Maccabees and for Israel's freedom.

When John Hyrcanus had conquered Idumea about 125 BC, he had appointed an Idumean as deputy. This deputy's son, Antipater, was now governor of Idumea, and was a friend of the deposed Hyrcanus II. He persuaded him to seek help from Aretas III, king of the Nabateans, promising the latter the return of territory earlier taken from him.

NABATEANS: This brings the Nabateans into the picture: a very remarkable and interesting people, many of whose archeological remains have been discovered in recent years. In their days the Negev desert was intensely irrigated and fruitful, and was very populous. Many of the dams and reservoirs they constructed are still usable.

They first appear in history about the time of Alexander the Great, a little before 300 BC. They either drove the Edomites into the then vacant south part of Judah, or they took over the abandoned Edomite territory after some other power—probably Babylon or Persia—had driven Edom out (in fulfillment of prophecy—Mal. 1:4). The Nabateans made Petra, or Sela (the old Edomite capital) their capital. It was they who did all the striking architecture there of temples cut into the rock.

It is not certain who they were, or where they came from, but they appear to have been Ishmaelite Arabs. Ishmael's firstborn son was Nebajoth, from whom they may have possibly gotten their name.

Beside intensive irrigated agriculture, they controlled the trade routes between the West and Arabia, and also those to India and China, and by this means they became wealthy and powerful.

They show up in the N.T. in their king Aretas IV, whose deputy attempted to trap Paul in Damascus (2 Cor. 11:32). In N.T. times their territory surrounded Judea, from the Mediterranean in the south around and up to Damascus and beyond in the north.

They are involved in Israel's affairs over a long period. The High Priest Jason fled to Aretas I in 171 BC, after he was ousted by Antiochus. The Nabateans were (as rivals of Syria) favorable to the early Maccabees. But later—when the Maccabees became power- and land-hungry—they were antagonists. The Maccabees at their zenith seized Nabatean territory east of the Jordan, on the same Bible-based arguments that the Jews use today.

Herod Antipas (king at the time of John's and Jesus' ministries) divorced Aretas' daughter to marry Herodias, and this led to war.

Aretas IV (this N.T. one) sided with the Romans against the Jews. The Nabateans assisted the Roman armies against Jerusalem in 70 AD.

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Returning to the current history, it was Aretas III who helped Hyrcanus (at Antipater's urging) against his usurping brother Aristobulus. He came with an army of 50,000 and besieged Jerusalem in 65 BC.

At the same time, the Romans had decided that the right moment had come to extend their Empire⁵ to the East. In 66 BC they completed the annexation of Asia Minor. In 64 they captured Damascus, and annexed Syria, and the Seleucid Kingdom came to an end.

ROMAN RULE—63 BC

Judea was already their ally, and whether they intended to add it to the Empire at this time is not certain. But the Jews brought the Roman yoke upon themselves. Both rival brothers appealed to the Roman general Pompey, who was subduing the East, and who at this time shared power with Julius Caesar (who was in the West).

So Pompey came to Palestine in 63 BC. Due largely to the persuasions and ability of the Idumean Antipater, Pompey decided for Hyrcanus. But, at the same time, he incorporated Judea into the Roman Empire, took from Jewish control all the non-Jewish areas, including Samaria, the Greek coastal cities, and the Greek cities east of the Jordan.

DECAPOLIS: This is where Decapolis enters the picture. Alexander started the practice of founding self-governing Greek cities throughout his Empire, as centers of Greek trade, control, and culture. The practice continued after him. There were several such in Palestine at the beginning of the Maccabean period. As the Maccabean power grew, it absorbed these cities, and imposed Jewish law and rule on them.

When Pompey set them free from Jewish control in 63 BC, ten of them formed into a league for defense and trade, naming it Decapolis (meaning 'Ten Cities'). They were mostly in the area east and south-east of the Sea of Galilee, and they controlled that whole territory.

This was the scene of the feeding of the 4000; and also of the demoniac and the destroyed swine (which Jews did not keep). When the Roman army attacked Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Christians—in obedience to Christ's warning (Luke 21:20)—fled to Pella, which was one of these independent Gentile cities, and therefore a safe haven. These cities were never on good terms with the Jews. They were splendid and prosperous and worldly, and have left very impressive ruins. The original 10 were: Scythopolis, Hippos, Gadara, Pella, Philadelphia, Gerasa, Dion, Canatha, Damascus, and Raphana. Others joined the alliance later.

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So in 63 BC, Pompey made Hyrcanus the High Priest and 'ethnarch' (tribal head) of the Jewish people. But Antipater was obviously the brains and moving spirit behind the puppet Hyrcanus. A Roman garrison was stationed at Jerusalem, and Jewish independence ended until 1948—just a little over 2000 years.

Other members of the Hasmonean family continued to scheme for revolt and independence.

⁵Rome began, visibly, to be an 'empire' in the modern sense (one nation ruling a group of nations) some time between 300 and 200 BC. But for 200 more years it was technically a 'republic.' It did not officially become an 'empire' until 27 BC, when Octavian became Imperator (Commander, Leader, Chief), from impero, 'to command' (compare English 'imperative'). And even then, his power was ostensibly temporary and special (and certainly not hereditary) and his declared mission was to 'restore the Republic.' The original meaning of 'emperor' (as the Romans used it) was a supreme dictatorial ruler (whether of one country or many). The present common meaning is a ruler over many countries, whether dictatorial or largely figurehead (as the British king over the British Empire). We should distinguish the two meanings.

As a result, in 57 the Roman governor in Syria stripped Hyrcanus of all remaining vestiges of political power, and added Judea to the Roman province of Syria.

When Pompey and Julius Caesar fell out, Antipater was shrewd enough to read the signs aright, and sided with Caesar, and was very helpful to Caesar in Egypt and Palestine. The Jews of Alexandria also gave Caesar help against Pompey and Cleopatra, and Caesar gave them Roman citizenship. Antipater had the opportunity, with his soldiers, to rescue Caesar from a perilous position in Egypt. In gratitude, Caesar, when he became triumphant in 48 BC, made Antipater a Roman citizen, and appointed him governor of Judea.

Now another famous name appears. Antipater made his son Phasael ruler of Jerusalem, and his younger son Herod ruler of Galilee. Antipater was also able to persuade Caesar to give the Jews more favorable arrangements than any other subject people in the Empire.

Herod, at the age of 25, distinguished himself with great skill in suppressing the robber bands in Galilee, and earned the people's gratitude.

In 44 BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated. In 43 BC Antipater was murdered by a rival. There was confusion both at Rome and in Judea. Another member of the Hasmonean family, Antigonus, with Parthian support, seized power in Judea, imprisoning Hyrcanus and Phasael.

But Herod escaped, and fled to Rome. Because of his own proven ability and loyalty, and because of the past services of his father Antipater to Julius Caesar, Herod was received with great friendship in Rome by Mark Antony and Octavian (Caesar's nephew and heir, who was later to become Augustus, first Roman Emperor). When Antony and Octavian fell out, Herod—like his father—was clever (or fortunate) enough to support the winning side. Octavian prevailed; Herod was entrenched.

HEROD—37-4 BC

But the Octavian-Antony showdown came later (34-31 BC). At this time, in 40 BC, the Roman Senate appointed Herod King of Judea. In 37, with a Roman army, he overthrew Antigonus, the last of the Hasmonean line, and took the land as King. He was now 33 or 34 years old. His territory (some of which was added later by the Romans) included Idumea, Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea (the area east of the Jordan), and a considerable region east and northeast of Galilee, almost to Damascus.

During his reign, he murdered all who remained of the Hasmonean house, including finally his own wife Mariamne⁶ and his two sons by her. He murdered also many others of his own relatives and sons. He was a very capable, but thoroughly evil, man. A writer says of him—

"His personality was impressive, and he was possessed of great physical strength. His intellectual powers were far beyond the ordinary; his will was indomitable; he was possessed of great tact when he saw fit to employ it. In the great crises of his life he was never at a loss what to do. No one has ever accused him of cowardice. He won the warmest friendship of Roman Emperors. But he was the incarnation of brute lust. The demons of his life were jealousy of power, and its necessary companion, suspicion. He became a Jewish Nero, who bathed his own house and his own people in blood."

—a fitting, divinely-appointed master for a people laden with sins, and ripe for judgment. As a foreigner—and a despised Edomite at that—the Jews never accepted him, though he did everything he could to ingratiate himself with them. He became increasingly bitter and suspicious.

⁶Granddaughter of Aristobulus II, whom Herod married to help legitimize his claim to the throne.

At the beginning of his reign, he brought a priest of the Aaronic line from Babylon, and made him High Priest. This was Ananel. Between him and Caiaphas there were twelve High Priests. Herod changed them at will, and so did the Romans later. They were mere political pawns. But in consideration for religious feelings, they were always from priestly families.

THE TEMPLE: His greatest effort to please the Jews was the rebuilding of the Temple. A great area was cleared, raised and leveled, about ¼-mile each way. The area was paved with huge stones, and surrounded by a wall. All around inside the wall was a roofed colonnade 50 to 100 feet wide, which gave protection from the sun and rain for open-air teaching and discussion. Here too the merchants and money changers had their stalls. The portion of the colonnade all along the ¼ mile east side was called 'Solomon's Porch' (John 10:32; Acts 5:12). Between these colonnades, in the south portion of the Temple area, was the 'Court of the Gentiles,' a huge open space about 500 by 800 feet. The Temple complex was toward the northern end, though the Court of the Gentiles went all around it, though much narrower on the east, west and north.

It was an ideal area in the crowded city for assembly and concourse and teaching. Christ, and later the apostles, used it for that purpose. The various schools of the Scribes were here, and this is where public events occurred.

The Temple was begun by Herod in 19 BC, and mainly finished in 10 years, but construction and embellishment continued even until 64 AD, just a few years before it was all destroyed. The Temple itself was patterned after Solomon's, with the same basic dimensions, but it was surrounded by elaborate courts and buildings. It was officially a 'House of Prayer,' and was so used by the faithful throughout the Gospel and Acts period, but actually this glorious, beautiful building was a 'Den of Thieves,' and had to be utterly destroyed in the Divine wrath of 70 AD.

The basic area still exists, surrounded by a wall, at the NE corner of the old City, as any map or aerial view of modern Jerusalem will show. Exactly on the Temple site stands the 'Abomination of Desolation:' the Moslem 'Dome of the Rock' (Mosque of Omar).

THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD: The High Priesthood appears to have remained in the line of Eleazar from Zadok until Onias, whom Antiochus deposed in 174 BC. From 153 BC, when Jonathan Maccabeus was made High Priest by the Syrian ruler, to 37 BC, when Herod took power, the reigning Maccabee was also High Priest.

There were seven High Priests during Herod's reign, all appointed (and deposed) by him. Archelaus appointed two before he was removed by the Romans in 6 AD. In 6 AD, Quirinius, the Roman governor of Syria, appointed Annas.

Between 14 and 18 AD, the Roman governor of Judea appointed three High Priests, including a son of Annas. Then he appointed Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law, who held the office from 18 to 36 AD. Annas appears in the N.T. as joint High Priest with Caiaphas (Luke 3:2). Annas, though not officially High Priest, appears to have been the real power behind his sons and his son-in-law. His power and influence is attributed to his great wealth. He was head of the priestly party, and dominated the hierarchy, and was its real 'High Priest' throughout the whole N.T. period.

His wealth appears to have come from a more or less monopolistic control of the sale of the sacrifices and supplies needed by the Temple worshipers. He was the heart of the system denounced by Christ as a 'den of thieves.' He was clearly the moving spirit behind the trial and condemnation of Christ. John 18:13 reveals the whole picture—

"They led him (Jesus) away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the High Priest that same year."

He takes the leadership here, as he does in the trial of the apostles later (Acts 4:6), although he was not the legal High Priest on either occasion. The picture is very much like that of a Mafia Chief. His family was proverbial for its rapacity and greed. After the time of Christ, four more of his sons were High Priests: two by Roman appointment, one by Agrippa I, one by Agrippa II. He

appears to have had a very cozy arrangement with the Romans.

There were a total of 28 High Priests, all political appointees, from Herod's accession in 37 BC to the destruction of the Temple, 70 AD.

HEROD'S SUCCESSORS

Herod's will divided his dominions among three of his sons—

 ARCHELAUS – Judea and Samaria

 PHILIP – Iturea and Trachonitis (east and north of Galilee)

 ANTIPAS – Galilee and Perea (east side of Jordan)

ARCHELAUS in Judea was why Joseph and Mary were told to go to Nazareth (Matt. 2:22). After ten years of misrule, he was removed by the Romans; and thereafter (except for three years under Agrippa I, 41-44 AD), Samaria and Judea were directly under Roman governors, with headquarters at Caesarea on the coast. Of these, three appear in the N.T.—Pilate in relation to Christ; Felix and Festus in relation to Paul.

PHILIP, ruling in the far north, does not enter the N.T. picture. He died in 34 AD, and his territory went to Agrippa I.

ANTIPAS, in Galilee and Perea, was the Herod of John's and Jesus' ministries. He was 'Herod the tetrarch' (tetrarch originally meant ruler of a fourth part of a land, but it had come to mean simply 'ruler of part'). Herodias, whom he married (and for which John condemned him), not only was his brother's wife, but his own niece also. She was an evil influence, and brought his ruin. When Caligula became Emperor in 37, he made his companion and favorite*, Herod Agrippa I (who was Antipas' nephew), 'king' of a large part of the land. Herodias got Antipas to go to Rome to seek a similar title, but Agrippa I denounced him to Caligula, and Antipas was banished, and his territory added to Agrippa's.

HEROD AGRIPPA I

When Caligula was assassinated in 41 AD, Agrippa worked for the cause of Claudias, and helped persuade him to seek the Emperorship. For this, Samaria and Judea were given him, and for his last three years he was king of the whole land, with all the old glory of Herod the Great.

He was the one who put James to death (Acts 12:2), and planned to do the same to Peter. Assuming the divine glory, he was smitten by God, and died of worms, 44 AD (Acts 12:23). This cleared the deck of local rulers, and for a few years there was direct Roman administration of the whole land. Samaria and Judea never returned to local rulership.

HEROD AGRIPPA II

At Agrippa I's death, his son (later Agrippa II) was only 17. Four years later, in 48, Claudius made him ruler of Calchis (north of Galilee). He added Iturea and Trachonitis to him in 52. Later, in 55, the new Emperor Nero gave him Galilee and Perea, so his dominion now embraced all except Judea and Samaria. This was the Agrippa whom Paul faced at Caesarea. He was regarded as 'king,' and that is how Paul addressed him (Acts 26:2). He ruled until the Jewish kingdom was destroyed in 70 AD. He sided with the Romans, and fought with them against the rebellion.

⁷The Herodian family lived largely at Rome, mingling closely with the rulers and potential rulers.

Thus there were four Herods in the N.T. (not counting Archelaus), representing four generations of the family (though not a direct line)—

- HEROD THE GREAT, 37-4 BC – Birth of Christ; killed babies
- HEROD ANTIPAS, 4 BC-39 AD – John & Christ ministries; killed John
Son of Herod the Great
- HEROD AGRIPPA I, 37-44 AD – Killed James; smitten, died of worms
Grandson of Herod the Great; nephew of Antipas
- HEROD AGRIPPA II, 48-70 AD – Judged Paul
Son of Herod Agrippa I

There were five Roman Emperors during the New Testament period—

- AUGUSTUS, 27 BC-14 AD – Nephew of Julius Caesar
- TIBERIUS, 14-37 AD – Stepson of Augustus
- CALIGULA, 37-41 AD – Tiberius' brother's grandson
- CLAUDIUS, 41-54 AD – Caligula's uncle
- NERO, 54-68 AD – Claudius' adopted son, and son-in-law

The first three are named in the N.T., and the last is referred to—

- AUGUSTUS: Decree for enrolment and taxation (Luke 2:1)
- TIBERIUS: Begin John ministry (Luke 3:1); Caesar tribute? (Mt. 22:17)
- CLAUDIUS: Famine (Acts 11:28); banish Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2)
- NERO: Paul's appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11)

THE MACCABEES OR HASMONEANS – 167-37 BC

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