

The Book of Daniel

"From 931 B.C. Until A.D. 636 "

In 931b.c. the tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the southern kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as their capital. The remaining ten tribes formed the northern kingdom of Israel and eventually made Samaria their capital. The northern kingdom immediately began to worship idols so in 722 b.c. God allowed the Assyrians to take them captive.

Although the southern kingdom was warned by the prophets of God that they too would go into captivity if they did not repent of their disobedience and idolatry, Judah did not listen. In 605 b.c., just before Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon, he attacked Jerusalem and took the king and some of his nobles captive to Babylon. Among them was Daniel (Daniel 1:1, 2). In 597 b.c. Nebuchadnezzar again attacked Judah, this time taking about 10,000 captives to Babylon, Ezekiel among them. Then in 586 b.c. Babylon, now the predominant world power, conquered Judah and destroyed not only the city of Jerusalem, but the magnificent temple built by Solomon during his reign over Israel.

Separated from Jerusalem and their temple, the exiles established **synagogues** as a mean of preserving their faith. The synagogues became centers of learning and worship where the Jews recited the **Shema** (Deuteronomy 6:4), read from the law and the prophets, prayed, and delivered messages.

Men trained in writing who recorded events and decisions were called **scribes**. They assumed the responsibility of copying, preserving, and even teaching the Word of God in the synagogues. By New Testament times, the scribes were considered experts in interpreting and teaching the law and were referred to as lawyers.

Having experienced firsthand the cursings of disobedience as promised in the book of Deuteronomy, the exiled Jews seemed to gain a new respect and appreciation for the Word of God. They saw that God meant what he said and would not alter it even for his covenant people.

It was sometime after the kingdom divided and Judah went into captivity that the exiles became known as **men of Judah** or **Jews**.

The Persian Period (539 to 331 b.c.)

When the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon in 539 b.c., they became the predominant world power in Babylon's stead. Daniel 5 records this invasion.

Approximately 175 years before Cyrus (the king of Persia) was born, Isaiah prophesied that God would raise up Cyrus to accomplish all that he pleased (Isaiah 44:28). Second Chronicles 36:22, 23 records the fulfilling of God's plan: Cyrus issued a proclamation allowing the exiles of Judah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Just as Jeremiah had prophesied (Jeremiah 29:10; Daniel 9:2), exactly 70 years from the time of Babylon's first attack on Jerusalem, the Israelites were allowed to return to their land.

The group that returned is referred to in Scripture as the **remnant**. **Diaspora**, the Greek word for scattering, became the term used to describe the Jews who remained in exile among the nations.

The book of Ezra records the return of the remnant and the building of the **second temple** during the time of Haggai and Zechariah. The book of Nehemiah records the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah and Ezra were contemporaries. Ezra is referred to as a **scribe**.

The book of Malachi records the last Old Testament prophecy given by God. After

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this prophecy God did not inspire canonical Scripture again for 400 years.

This 400 years of silence which followed the book of Malachi is called the **intertestament period**. Although God was silent in that he did not speak through his prophets during this time, the events of these 400 years testify to the fulfillment of much that was written by Daniel the prophet.

These years could be divided into three periods: Greek, the Maccabean, and the beginning of the Roman period.

The Greek Period (331 to 63 b.c.)

The Greek period encompasses four different rulerships over Jerusalem, which includes the Maccabean rule.

***Under Alexander the Great* (331 to 323 b.c.)**

As the Persian Empire grew and threatened the security of the city-states of Greece, Phillip of Macedonia sought to consolidate Greece into an effort to resist attack from Persia.

In 336 b.c. Phillip was murdered, and his son, Alexander, who was about 20 years old, became king over the Greek Empire. Within two years Alexander set out to conquer Persia, whose empire now extended westward as far as Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

Over the next two years Alexander conquered the territory from Asia minor to Pakistan and to Egypt, which included the land of the Jews. Although the account is not universally accepted by other historians, Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived about a.d.37-100, wrote that as Alexander marched into Jerusalem he was met by Jaddua and other Jewish priests dressed in their priestly garments and by the people of Jerusalem wearing white robes.

In a dream Jaddua had been told to put wreaths on the city walls in order to greet Alexander. Alexander also had a dream, which coincided with this event. When Alexander was escorted into Jerusalem and shown the prophecy in Daniel 8 which described the destruction of the Medo-Persian Empire by a large horn on a goat (which probably represented Greece), Alexander felt the prophecy pertained to him and offered the Jews whatever they wanted. Alexander treated the Jews well and did not harm Jerusalem or their rebuilt temple.

When Alexander built the city of Alexandria in Egypt, he encouraged many Jews to settle there in order to help populate the city. Whenever Alexander conquered an area he established Greek cities and colonies, bringing in his Greek culture, ideas, and language. His goal was to consolidate his empire through a common way of life and thinking which became known as **Hellenization**. **Koine Greek** became the common language in the countries ruled by Greece and continued to be the primary language of civilization through the time of Christ. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek.

By 331 b.c. Alexander had conquered Persia. He and his war-weary army returned to Babylon in 323 b.c. When Alexander, one of the greatest military leaders in history, returned to Babylon, history tells us he sat down and wept because there were no more territories to conquer. He died in Babylon in 323 b.c., at the age of 33.

Because Alexander the Great died without an appointed heir, his kingdom fell into

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chaos. After 22 years of struggle among his generals, it was divided among four of them: Lysimachus, Cassander, Ptolemy I Soter, and Seleucus I Nicator. (See chart below)

The Division of Alexander the Great's Empire

Lysimachus Took Thrace and Bithynia	Cassander Took Macedonia	Ptolemy I Soter Took Egypt	Seleucus I Nicator Took Syria
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Ptolemy I Soter and Seleucus I Nicator began a succession of competing dynasties for which the land of Israel became a pawn.

Under the Ptolemies of Egypt (323 to 204 b.c.)

Ptolemy I Soter, who took Egypt, was given Jerusalem and Judea. The Jews fared well; they were allowed to govern themselves and practice their religion without interference. Under his leadership Jews were permitted to go to Egypt. Some Jews were invited to go to Alexandria and become scholars. The Ptolemies moved Egypt's capital from Memphis to Alexandria and made it the center of learning and commerce. There the Jews were encouraged to use the Greek library, at that time the most extensive and best in the world. As a result many were caught up in philosophy and logic and drank deeply from the cup of Hellenism.

It is believed that Ptolemy II Philadelphus commissioned the translation of the Pentateuch into the Koine Greek. The Greek translation of the entire Old Testament, eventually completed about 100 b.c., was referred to as the **Septuagint** (meaning 70), or abbreviated as the **LXX**. Many of the New Testament writers quoted from the Septuagint.

Other writings produced during this intertestament period are the **Apocrypha**, the **Pseudoepigrapha**, and the **Qumran Scrolls** (also called the **Dead Sea Scrolls**). The **Apocrypha** are composed of a variety of writings, including apocalyptic, wisdom, and historical literature. It is from the apocryphal book of First Maccabees that historians gained insight into the period from the Maccabean revolt through the time of John Hyrcanus. The Apocrypha were included in the Septuagint, although they were not part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The **Pseudoepigrapha** are a collection of writings even more extensive than the Apocrypha, but scholars cannot entirely agree on which writings comprise this group. These writings are attributed to noted people such as Adam, Abraham, Enoch, Ezra, and Baruch -- but scholars agree that these claims are not authentic.

The **Qumran** or **Dead Sea Scrolls** were manuscripts apparently written or copied between 200 b.c. and a.d. 70 by a Jewish religious sect called **Essenes**. The particular community of Essenes who lived close to the Dead Sea seem to have practiced celibacy and a strictly disciplined communal lifestyle, separating themselves from others. The Dead Sea Scrolls describe the lives and beliefs of this group that lived in the last two centuries before Christ; they also include the oldest known manuscripts of the Old Testament. The scrolls are

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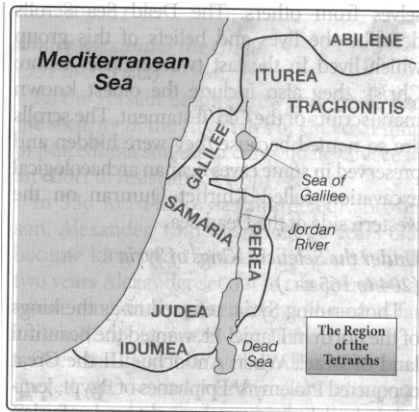
so named because they were hidden and preserved in some caves near an archaeological excavation called Khirbet Qumran on the western side of the Dead Sea.

Under the Seleucid Kings of Syria

(204

in

Judea,
map of



to 165 b.c.)

Those ruling Syria, referred to as the kings of the north Daniel 11, wanted the beautiful land of Israel. When Antiochus III the Great conquered Ptolemy V Epiphanes of Egypt, Jerusalem and Judea were brought under Syrian dominance.

During this period the land of Israel was sectorized into Samaria, Galilee, Perea, and Trachonitis (Refer to the Palestine during this period in the previous column.)

After gaining dominance over the Jews, Antiochus was defeated by the Romans and ended up having to pay a large sum of money for a period of years. To make

Rome

sure he complied, Rome held his son, Antiochus IV, hostage in Rome.

Antiochus III the Great was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV Philopator, who ruled from 187- 175 b.c. In 175 b.c. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (the son who had been held hostage in Rome) usurped the throne by killing his brother. He ruled until 163 b.c. He was called *Epiphanes*, which means "manifest" or "splendid".

Until this period in Israel's history, the priesthood had been a matter of birthright and the office was held for life. However, during his reign Antiochus IV Epiphanes sold the priesthood to Jason, the brother of the high priest. Jason also paid Antiochus a high price in order to build a Greek gymnasium near the temple. During this time many Jews were lured into a Hellenistic way of life. All this brought a great conflict among the orthodox Jews and the "Hellenistic" Jews.

The conflict was heightened when Antiochus IV Epiphanes sought to take the throne of Egypt but was rebuffed by Rome. Because of that and because of what he surmised as a revolt in the priesthood, Antiochus unleashed his anger on those Jews who wouldn't curry his favor or fully adopt Hellenism. He was determined to destroy Judaism. Circumcision was forbidden; those who disobeyed were put to death. Copies of the law were desecrated with heathen symbols or burned, while anyone found with a copy of the law was to be put to death. The Jews were also forbidden to celebrate the Sabbath. Then Antiochus sacrificed a pig on the altar in the temple and erected a statue of Zeus, the abomination that causes desolation, in the holy place (Daniel 11:31).

Finally, Antiochus sent his officers throughout the land to compel Jews to make sacrifices to Zeus.

The Maccabean Period

(165 to 63 b.c.)

When Antiochus IV Epiphanes' officer arrived in the village of Modein (which lies halfway between Jerusalem and Joppa) and commanded the aged priest Mattathias to make a sacrifice to Zeus, the officer didn't know it was the last official duty he would perform in his life. As Mattathias refused, a younger Jew stepped forward to take his place. When he did, a furious Mattathias plunged his knife not only into the Jewish volunteer but also into the

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Syrian officer. Mattathias fled with his five sons to the hills ... and the Maccabean revolt, led by Mattathias's third son, nicknamed Maccabeus (the Hammerer) began.

Three years after Antiochus IV Epiphanes defiled the temple, the Jews recaptured Jerusalem. They removed the statue of Zeus and refurbished the temple and re-instituted Jewish sacrifices. On December 25 the Jews celebrated the Feast of the Dedication (John 10:22), which from then on became the annual Feast of Lights or Hanukkah.

Thus began what is referred to as the **Hasmonean Dynasty** as the descendants of Mattathias ruled Israel until Rome conquered Jerusalem in 63 b.c.

When Simon, the last surviving son of Mattathias, was murdered, Simon's son, John Hyrcanus, named himself priest and king. He ruled from 134-104 b.c. He destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, and from that time on the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. After that, Hyrcanus moved southeast and conquered the land of the Idumeans, who came from the ancient kingdom of Edom. The peoples of this land were given the choice of emigrating or converting to Judaism. This was the land of Herod the Great, who would someday become Rome's appointed king of the Jews.

During the reign of John Hyrcanus, the **Pharisees**, a religious sect of the Jews, arose from the **Hasidim**, a militant religious community dedicated to the obedience of the law and the worship of God, began around 168 b.c. and was active during the Maccabean revolt. The word *Pharisee* means "separated one" and was probably used to describe these men because they separated themselves from the strong influence of Hellenism. During New Testament times the majority of the scribes were Pharisees.

Doctrinally, the Pharisees viewed the entire Old Testament as authoritative; however, they also accepted the oral tradition as equally authoritative. To the Pharisee, to study the law was true worship. They believed in life after death, the resurrection, and the existence of angels and demons. Although the Pharisees taught that the way to God was through keeping the law, they were more liberal in their interpretation of the law than were the Sadducees. The Pharisees represented the largest religious sect, but their numbers declined when they fell into John Hyrcanus' disfavor.

The **Saducees**, a smaller religious sect comprised mostly of the upper classes, were often of the priestly line and were usually more wealthy than the Pharisees. For the most part the Pharisees were of the middle-class merchants and tradesmen. The Saducees accepted only the **Torah** (the first five books of the Old Testament) as authoritative. While they were rigid in the observance of the law and held to its literal interpretation, they denied divine providence, the resurrection, life after death, the existence of angels and demons, and any reward or punishment after death. They opposed the oral law as obligatory or binding and were materialistic.

The Sadducees controlled the temple and its services. However, because the Sadducees leaned toward Hellenism, they were unpopular with the majority of the Jewish populace.

Aristobulus I, who succeeded his father, John Hyrcanus, married Salome Alexandra. However, when Aristobulus died, Salome married his brother Alexander Jannaeus, who became high priest and king in 103 b.c. This marriage created many enemies for Alexander Jannaeus because the high priest was to marry only a virgin.

When he died in 76 b.c., his wife, Salome Alexandra, took the throne, but as a woman she could not hold the office of high priest, so her oldest son, Hyrcanus II, assumed that

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position.

Civil war broke out when Salome died, because her younger son, Aristobulus II who was supported by the Sadducees, sought to take the throne from Hyrcanus II. He was willing to give up that position, but Antipater (an Idumean and father of Herod the Great) befriended Hyrcanus and persuaded him to seek outside help in order to regain his position as the rightful heir. Hyrcanus' forces came against Aristobulus and defeated him. He had to flee and made the temple in Jerusalem his fortress, but Hyrcanus' forces besieged him.

Early in this period the Hasmoneans had made a treaty with Rome in order to keep Syria, their northern neighbors, in check. Now the Roman army under Scaurus was in Syria because Seleucid rule had collapsed. Scaurus heard about the civil war in Judea and went there. Both Aristobulus and Hyrcanus sought his help. Scaurus sided with Aristobulus and had the siege lifted from Jerusalem, but the fighting continued. An appeal was made to the Roman general Pompey, who said he would settle the dispute and urged them to keep peace until he arrived. However, Aristobulus went back to Jerusalem to prepare resistance, which caused Rome's support to turn to Hyrcanus. Pompey arrived and took Aristobulus and his family captive, besieging the city for three months.

The Period of Roman Rule (63 b.c. to a.d. 70)

In 63 b.c. Pompey conquered Jerusalem and with some of his soldiers walked into the Most Holy Place. Although they didn't touch any of the furnishings, they alienated the Jews, who never forgave Pompey. About 12,000 Jews died during this Roman siege of Jerusalem, a supposed attempt to settle a civil war.

Rome broke up the Hasmonean dynasty and their territory. Judea was now reduced to smaller borders and its independence lost. It was now a territory of Rome. Hyrcanus II could be the rightful priest but not king. He was now under the governor of Syria, a Roman province. Scaurus was appointed governor. Aristobulus and many Jews were taken to Rome. Not much later Gabinius, a Roman governor of Syria, took control. He entrusted the temple to Hyrcanus and changed the government of Judea.

The Jewish state was divided into five districts governed by a council that remained under the jurisdiction of the governor of Syria; Hyrcanus, the high priest was made ruler over Jerusalem. Antipater was his chief magistrate.

The high priest presided over the **Sanhedrin**, a 71-member council comprised of both Sadducees and Pharisees, which governed the Jews under the authority of Rome. Although the Sanhedrin seemed to have autonomy in the matters of the civil and criminal government of the Jews, apparently the Sanhedrin was not allowed to put people to death without the permission of the Roman procurator. The Sanhedrin is often referred to as "the council" in the Gospels and Acts.

In 55 b.c. three men --Pompey, Crassus (the governor of Syria), and Julius Caesar--controlled Rome. Crassus, considering himself another Alexander the Great, set out to conquer the world. However, just before this he stole the treasures from the temple in Jerusalem. Crassus and his army were later destroyed by the Parthians.

Parthia, southeast of the Caspian Sea and part of the Persian Empire, had been conquered by Alexander the Great. But Rome would not conquer them until a.d. 114.

After Crassus' death, Julius Caesar took Italy and then set out to destroy Pompey.

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Pompey fled to Egypt, where he was assassinated. During this time Antipater supported Caesar, so out of gratitude Caesar gave him the official title of Procurator of Judea.

Antipater made his son Phasael governor of Judea and his son Herod governor of Galilee. Hyrcanus II remained high priest, although Antipater and his two sons robbed him of his authority.

In 44 b.c. Caesar was murdered by Brutus and Cassius. Civil war broke out in Rome. Cassius took control of the east. Because of the instability of Rome, Hyrcanus' rivals made a bid for power.

Antipater was murdered in 43 b.c. Antigonus, Aristobulus' son (who was supported by the Parthians), invaded the country.

At that time Herod came to the aid of Hyrcanus, who out of gratitude gave Herod a beautiful woman named Miriam. They were not married until five years later.

After that Brutus and Cassius were defeated by Mark Anthony and Caesar's nephew Octavian (who would later become Caesar Augustus). Mark Anthony became ruler of the east. In 40 b.c., when the Parthians invaded Palestine, Herod fled to Rome.

That year, at the urging of Anthony and Octavian, Herod was made king of the Jews. It took him three years to rid the area of the Parthians and establish his rule in Judea. Just before laying siege to Jerusalem, Herod married Miriam (also called Mariamne), hoping that his marriage into the Hasmonean family would make him more acceptable to the Jews.

In 20 b.c. Herod began rebuilding the temple. The one built by Zerubbabel after the Babylonian exile was so pitifully small in comparison to the first temple that Herod was determined to make it larger and more magnificent than Solomon's. Although the temple itself was completed in a year-and-a-half, the construction and decoration of its outer courts continued for years, so in a.d. 26 the Jews would say, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple" (John 2:20).

Herod, whose people (the Idumeans) had been forced to convert to Judaism under John Hyrcanus, was only a Jew in practice when he lived in Judea. Although Rome gave Herod the title "King of the Jews," he was never accepted by those he ruled over.

Then, "during the time of King Herod, magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?'" (Matthew 2:1,2).

The true King had come...the Ruler who would shepherd God's people Israel (Matthew 2:6).

Herod died in 4 b.c. But those living in Judea and Galilee saw a great light and heard with their own ears the voice of God, the King of kings.

The 400 years of silence had been broken.

From Christ to Modern Times

Many Jewish leaders were religious, but they did not know God. When Jesus came to explain the Father, they rejected Him. They rejected God's precious cornerstone. Consequently, once again they would be banished from their land.

Jesus warned, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:20, 23, 24).

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God had spoken. Had the people listened, they wouldn't have been caught unawares-- but they refused to hear.

The Destruction of Jerusalem (a.d. 70)

The conflict between the Jews and their roman ruler intensified. Tacitus, the Roman historian, said the Jews put up with things until the procuratorship of Gessius Florus. When the Jew rose up against Florus' army, war became inevitable. Nero commanded R. Flavius Vespasian to subdue the Jews. Vespasian reduced northern Palestine and secured the rest of the country, except for Jerusalem, Masada, and two other fortresses.

During this time, Nero committed suicide and civil war broke out in Rome. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius succeeded one another as emperor. Then the eastern legions of Rome proclaimed Vespasian emperor, and Vitellius was murdered. Vespasian put his son Titus in charge of the war and sailed for Rome. In a.d. 70 Titus besieged Jerusalem. Over one million Jews died in five months. On August 6, roman forces invaded the temple and, just as Jesus prophesied, not one stone was left upon the other. Jerusalem was burned. Titus went to Rome to celebrate his victory with his father.

Although some of the Jews fled to Masada, the Jewish state no longer existed. Sometime between a.d. 72-74 Masada fell to the Roman governor Flavius Silva.

Hadrian and Aelia Capitolina

In 132 the Emperor Hadrian banned circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath. He also made plans to build a temple to Zeus. These actions spurred Simon bar Kochba to lead another revolt. After Hadrian crushed the Bar Kochba revolt, Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem in a.d. 136, named it Aelia Capitolina, and forbade the Jews entrance to the city on pain for death. That edict was enforced for about 500 years.

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