Introduction

Good afternoon. We’re continuing a twelve-part series course on the Synoptic Gospels. In our first sessions, which we might call unit one, we looked at the historical Jesus, and it was basically a tour of a very quick sketch of some non-Christian views of Jesus and then of some claimed historical views of Jesus, which basically fill in the category of theological liberalism of one sort or another. Then at the end point where that was headed, we looked a little bit at the arguments used for such a position against the miraculous and tried to respond to those. We now move on to the second unit—which is rather different and also relevant to the whole matter of the Synoptic Gospels—and that’s looking at the Jewish background of the New Testament.

Sources on the Inter-Testament Period

To understand the New Testament, especially the Gospels, it’s helpful to know a good deal about the Old Testament, but it is also helpful to know something of what went on during the four centuries that separate the end of the Old Testament narrative from the beginning of the New Testament narrative. It is this later that we wish to look at here, called in Christian circles, “the Inter-Testament Period,” but understandably in Jewish circles it is not called the Inter-Testament Period; they typical call it “the Second Temple Period.”

So we want to think a little bit first about what information we have about the Inter-Testament Period. We have first of all some predictive passages in the Old Testament, and I’m going to come back in just a couple of minutes and take a look at Daniel’s overlook of the period sketched in terms of the image of Daniel that Daniel sees in Daniel 2 and Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the wild beasts in Daniel chapter 7, I believe that is.

The Apocrypha

Besides that, we have some religious writing of the Jews, mostly during the Inter-Testament Period that we call the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. These have
been accepted by some Christian churches as a part of the Bible. Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches accept the material called the Old Testament Apocrypha, and some of the smaller regional churches, Ethiopic churches and such, have accepted some of the other material that we now call the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. So religious writings of the Jews mostly during the Inter-Testament Period, though we don’t believe they are inspired writings, they do give us some insight into the culture, the religious ideas, some of the sects, and some of the biblical interpretation of the period, and so it would be helpful in that direction.

**Philo and Josephus**

Besides that, we have two individual writers that we know by name and approximate dates that give us information on this period, and that is Philo of Alexandria, born perhaps around 20 BC and lived past 40 AD. He was a Jewish person living in the large Greek city, living in the northern delta of the Nile, called Alexandria. This particular Jew would be what we would call a Hellenistic Jew who had adopted a great deal of the Greek culture. He had studied Greek philosophy, and yet he was trying to be faithful to the Bible as well. So he tried to combine the Old Testament with selected ideas from Greek philosophy. We see some partial accommodation to Hellenism there in his position. He speaks to a people that accommodate it far more strongly than he did. He had a tendency to allegorize a lot of the laws, but he still thought you should obey them; whereas there were other Hellenistic Jews who thought having allegorized the laws, you do not need to obey them literally. So he would be a moderate Hellenist, if you like.

Moving north from him up to the Jerusalem we have the individual Josephus, often known as Flavius Josephus; that’s his Latin name. He was born in 37 AD, and lived to sometime after 100 AD. He would have been less Hellenized. He was a Jew involved on both sides of the Jewish war of 66 to 73 AD: the revolt against Rome, which had rather disastrous consequences. He started out on the Jewish side, although he had visited Rome before that time and perhaps did not feel too optimistic about the chances [of] the Jews against Rome, but when he as a general for the defense of Galilee was surrounded in the city of Jotapata by the Roman army, he and some others hid and drew straws for who would kill who. They were going to commit suicide, and somehow Josephus wound up with the best, or next to the best, straw and convinced the other guy who was still alive at that point that they should give themselves up to
the Romans. When they did that, Josephus said, “I have a message from God for the Roman general Vespasian.” When Vespasian heard him, Josephus said, “God has told me that you are going to be the emperor of Rome.” Well, Vespasian kept Josephus alive to see whether that would turn out to be true or not, and perhaps he was influenced by Josephus’ prediction as well. Lo and behold, he did end up being the emperor in the course of the next 2 or 3 years. So Josephus who had become a slave and being captured and could have been put to death, and would have been put to death otherwise, was now made a freedman and released. In the course of about 10 years after that, he accommodated his patron Vespasian by writing a history of the Jewish war, so writing about 80 something AD, he wrote *The Jewish War*, and then about 25 years after that, he wrote a work called *Antiquities the Jews*.

Josephus’ *Jewish War* starts about the time of Alexander and comes up to the end of the Jewish war. *The Antiquities* goes all the way back to Genesis with some additions here and there and comes up to the outbreak of the Jewish war. So these are two very important writings, both covering the Inter-Testament Period.

**The Dead Sea Scrolls and Rabbinic Writings**

Besides the predictive passages in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Philo and Josephus, we also have the very famous Dead Sea Scrolls, which is literature written or copied by a sect that had headquarters, at least an encampment if you like, in a place we call Qumran, perhaps 20 miles southeast of Jerusalem, or something like that. We think it was probably some of the Essenes, which seemed to match in many, many ways. Of course, a great deal of what we have there is basically copies of Scripture that they had kept. Some of the earliest copies we have are the different books of the Bible in Hebrew [that] are from there, but also some of their own literature, and also some literature which may or may not have been some of their own, [and] some of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Both Enoch and Jubilees have been found fragmentary there in Hebrew. So their own literature at least gives us some information about that sect and how they interpreted the Bible and things of that sort.

From [a] later period, starting perhaps 200 AD and running to maybe 600 AD or so, we have the rabbinic literature, which is the writing down of what we might think of as the
tradition of the rabbis, or the tradition of the Pharisees even. It is the sort of thing that Jesus
speaks about, but which is probably totally all in oral form at Jesus’ own ministry, but came to
be written down in the earliest part. The Mishnah is from about 200 AD, and the Talmuds, one
about 400 AD, one about 550 AD. Those are all compilations, if you like, of the oral tradition
of the rabbis, and then some biblical translation paraphrases commentaries, etc., [called]
Midrashim. So those give us some important information as well.

So those are our basic ancient sources of information on the Inter-Testament Period.

Daniel as an Inter-Testament Biblical Source

Daniel 2

We want to turn next to have a quick look of Daniel's overview of the period because we
will use this as part of our way to structure our discussion on the Inter-Testament Period. In
Daniel chapter 2, Daniel is given a vision in which he sees a strange statue: it’s a statue that in
verse 32 is described as having a head of gold and then it’s breast and arms and upper body, if
you like, in verse 32, is described as being made of silver. Its belly and sides in the same verse
are described as being of bronze. Its legs of iron, verse 33, and then its feet part iron part clay,
verse 33. Then the action that we see, and this after a description of the image, we have one
brief action that a stone cut without hands falls down and smashes the image and then grinds it
to a powder. Then the stone grows to fill the whole earth.

The image is explained in chapter 2, verses 38-45. We’re told in 45 that the image and
the action tell us something that will happen after Daniel’s time. Then in verse 38
Nebuchadnezzar’s universal rule is represented by the golden head. In verse 39 that there will
be another kingdom inferior; maybe that’s what is “lower down,” [that] is actually the word, so
it might just be a physical statement of this is further down, but the fact that you switch from
gold to silver, which has universally been a cheaper metal than gold, may suggest it is inferior
in some way. This suggests then that the head represents not just Nebuchadnezzar personally,
but that empire, if you like.

The successor empire is represented by the silver.

A third kingdom to rule over all the earth, we’re told in verse 39, is represented by the
bronze.
A fourth kingdom is as strong as iron, so that’s the iron legs [that] is going to be following that. Then in verses 41-43 you get a little remark about the feet. Does it suggest that it’s a fifth kingdom? So apparently it’s a continuation of the fourth, which would fit with the iron legs going into iron and clay feet, but not as strong. The iron is part broken; the clay, presumably, which is here presumed to be baked at this point, is not wet clay. The stone falling, smashing the rest and growing, is explained in verse 44. God will set up a permanent kingdom.

**Daniel 7**

Rather parallel to that we have Daniel’s four wild animals in Daniel chapter 7. Here this is actually a dream that Daniel had; the other one, which I didn’t mention, was a dream that actually Nebuchadnezzar had had. Here a group of animals are pictured in chapter 7, verses 3-14, and then a few more details are scattered through the explanation in verses 19, 20, 21, 23. We’re told first of all that there will be diverse beasts that will arise from the sea in verse 3. The first of these is a lion with eagle’s wings, but then the eagle’s wings are plucked; and the animal is lifted up, presumably on its hind feet and is given a human heart (verse 4). Then the second beast is a bear. It’s raised up on one side; and since we’re not there to see it, we don’t know exactly what that looks like. Perhaps it was tilted like that or something. It’s a gnawing on three ribs which are in its mouth. Then in verse 6 we’re told that the third beast is a leopard, but it’s a strange one as it’s got four wings and it’s got four heads. Then in verses 7-8, and then further in the explanation, we’re told of a fourth, dreadful, terrible beast with iron teeth and bronze claws and ten horns, and then an eleventh horn comes up and wars against the saints.

In verses 9-14 we’re told that the Ancient of Days comes, apparently a picture of God, and that thrones are set up. The fourth beast is destroyed, and his dominion is given to one like the Son of Man who comes and presents himself before the Ancient of Days; and he’s given an eternal universal kingdom.

In verses 17-26 the animals are explained, but very quickly. In verse 17 we’re told that the four beasts represent four kings who will arise from the earth. As you go on through the discussion, it’s clear that "kings" and "kingdoms" are being used interchangeably. So the fourth kingdom is pictured as diverse from the others. We’re told that its horns represent kings and that the eleventh horn wears out the saints for three times--time, times, and half a time,
presumably 3.5 times. Then the Son of Man receives the kingdom, etc., where it’s explained
that the saints will take the kingdom and possess it forever.

**Interpretation of Daniel 2 and 7**

Well, those were the two visions, if you like, and chapters 2 and 7 in Daniel. The general
interpretation over the centuries, although it’s been modified some by theological liberalism in
the last couple centuries, is that generally the kingdoms represented are Babylon, which
operates from about 609, when the Babylonians destroy the Assyrian kingdom, down to 539,
when Cyrus takes the Babylonians. He succeeds with his kingdom, which is a combined
kingdom of his own kingdom, Persia, with the Medes, which he had joined with, and they rule
over Israel from 539-331 BC. Then Greece, 331 BC to 30 BC; and then Rome, 30 BC to 476
AD. So in the image, the gold head represents Babylon, the silver arms and breast represent
Medo-Persia, the bronze abdomen represents Greece, [and] the iron legs represent Rome.

In the vision of the beasts, the lion with the wings represents Babylon, and the idea of
standing on its feet and putting the human heart in him may, in fact, connect us with the
incident of Nebuchadnezzar losing his mind, becoming like a beast for a while, and then being
restored.

The bear eating ribs and raised up on one side: some have suggested the raised up on
one side represents that the Persian Empire, in that the Persian side of it is greater than the
Median Empire side of it. I would take that to be pure speculation were it not a later vision in
which we’re told [this] represents Medo-Persia as the animal with a big horn on one side and a
smaller horn on the other side. So the Persian side is the big horn, so I think that’s probably
correct then.

The leopard with the four heads is taken to be Greece. We’ll see from this later
description in Daniel 8, which we’re not going to discuss, that the kingdom there, which we’re
explicitly told is Greece, is an animal with a single horn in its head which is broken and
replaced by four horns. So we presume the four heads and four wings here represent this
fourfold division of the kingdom when the original unified kingdom is damaged, if you like.

That presumably leaves Rome, then, to be the terrible ten-horned, actually eleven-
horned (eventually) beast, and we’re not going to chase that further nor at this point go into the
question the liberals claim that they make the second kingdom Media, replace Greece by Persia, Rome by Greece in order to make it come out in the Maccabean period—but that’s off our subject.

**Civilizations that Dominate over Israel in the Inter-Testament Period**

What we’re going to do is in our discussion now of the Inter-Testament Period we’re going to divide it up into who was in control over Israel at the time of these. Babylon is already off the scene by the time we get to [the] Inter-Testament. Remember the return is pictured in Zechariah and Haggai, actually in Nehemiah, but in the prophets Zechariah and Haggai, so we’ll pick up with Medo-Persia and then Palestine under the Persians, or Medo-Persians, and Palestine under Greece, and then Palestine under Rome except that there's a brief independence period from Greece to Rome under the Hasmoneans, or Maccabees. So we’re going to organize it in Palestine under the Persians, Palestine under the Greeks, Jewish independence under the Hasmoneans and Palestine under Rome. So that’s the way we’re going to go; so let’s take a look at that.

**Palestine under Persian Rule, 539-331 BC**

So, our next category then will be Palestine under the Persians, 539-331 B.C. What should we say? The dominance of [the] Persian Empire starts with the rise of Cyrus. Cyrus was way back in 559 BC. So this is 20 years before he manages to conquer Babylon. He inherits a small kingdom named Anshan, which basically is Persia. Then he defeats the Medes in 550, and that gets the Babylonians very concerned about that. The king at that time was Nabonidas, who had been, what should we say, giving Cyrus some money under the table to support his rebellion against the Medes and trying to weaken the Medes. Suddenly, he realizes that Cyrus, having defeated the Medes, he’s now in bigger danger than the Medes were. But then Cyrus first moves northwest and takes Asia Minor in 546, and then comes back and takes Babylon in 539. So that’s a very quick sketch of the rise of Cyrus. There’s a lot more detail, most of which I don’t now remember.

Several important things happened then with the Persians coming into the empire. First of these is the return of the Jews under Cyrus in 539 to 530 BC. Unlike the Assyrians and the
Babylonians, Cyrus tries to avoid offending other religions. Unlike the Assyrians and the Babylonians, Cyrus decides to end the deportation policy. Both of those two empires had the idea that the best way to keep a subject people down was to deport their people and scatter them among people of other languages, and that way they were less likely to be able to organize a revolt. Well, Cyrus ended that and so allowed the various people to return to their territories if they wished to. So the Jews are allowed to return. You see the sketch for it in Ezra Chapter 1, verses 2 through 4. Not a whole lot of them do, but some of them do. So now we begin to have, for the first time in about what’s been not quite 70 years at this point (about 50 years at this point), Jews are returning now to where what we're calling “Palestine.” I’m not trying to get into the Palestinian-Jewish debate, but basically using that as a generic term for the land and Israel, with the “Jews as a term for the people.

**Rebuilding the Second Temple**

The second important thing that happened then under the Persians is the rebuilding of the temple, or the building of the Second Temple, in Jewish terminology. Solomon’s temple was the first temple and this temple the second temple. Cyrus originally initially allowed the rebuilding to start but then stopped it due to opposition of neighbors - you see a sketch of this in Ezra 6 and in Ezra 4. But then when Cyrus died, there was an interregnum and some fighting back and forth. Eventually Darius, Darius I here, comes to power in 521 and will reign for 46 years, a long time of reign. Because the Jews had showed loyalty to Darius and his succession instead of rebelling as many of the people had, the Jews were allowed to rebuild their temple.

And so they begin to rebuild their temple starting about 520 or so. The temple was completed around 515 under the leadership of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah - you see references to that in both of those, then, under the governor Zerubbabel who was a descendant of David, and high priest Joshua who presumably descended from the high priestly line. So we have the return of the Jews, and they’re back in their land now for the first time in a good many years. It’s actually something like 70 years from the first deportation to the first returns, and seventy years from the destruction of the first temple to the building of the second temple. So that’s basically, I think, why the captivity is treated as 70 years long.
Rebuilding under Ezra and Nehemiah

There is a third event of some significance among the Jews; actually, two events, if you like, are the revival in Judah under Ezra and the rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah. These take place during the reign of Persian King Artaxerxes I. The first of these events is back around when Artaxerxes begins to reign about 465 BC. Ezra around 458 is sent from Babylon back to Jerusalem. He restores the people to observance of the law with the permission of the Persian king. Then some years later, around 445, Nehemiah, who at that point had become the king’s cupbearer, so a pretty intimate officer in the royal court, if you like, was sent by the Persian king as governor to rebuild the walls. Rebuilding the walls was pretty important. We tend to think of a village as a little town and a city as a big town, but in the time before airplanes and major artillery and all that sort of thing, the difference between village and city was not so much size as it was fortification. So a village might be quite large, but if it was unfortified, it’s a village. A city might be quite small, but if it was not just a fort, if it was a place where lots of people lived and it was fortified, it was a city. So, essentially, Jerusalem becomes a city again with the completion of the city walls here in 445 BC. So those are kind of the three major, or should we say, four major, events of the Persian period: allowing the Jews to return, allowing them to rebuild the city, to rebuild the temple, and then the revival in Judah and the rebuilding of the walls.

Rise of the Aramaic Language

Another rather important event and we’re not sure exactly when this occurs and such, since it is much vaguer, is the rise of the Aramaic language as a significant thing in Jewish history. The Aramaic language had been around for a long time before this. It was the old language of the area that has traditionally been called in English, Syria, but that’s pretty confusing with Syria and Assyria. So the Hebrew word “Aram” is being picked up then in some Old Testament circles as well. In any case, it’s the upper Euphrates Valley. The language had been around. You see reference to it when Laban and Jacob part: they build this pile of stones and Jacob gives it the Hebrew word for a pile that serves as a witness, which there’s a technical term for it in Hebrew, called “galeed,” whereas in, apparently, Aramaic there’s not. So there’s a phrase that is used, “Jegar Sahadutha,” [Gen 31:47] or something like that, used to represent
this stone of witness, if you like, this pile, this “Cairn” of witness.

Well, then after Jacob and Laban’s time, that would be, what, 1800 or something like that BC, it becomes the diplomatic language of the Ancient Near East as Assyria conquers the whole of the Fertile Crescent. They basically adopt Aramaic as the trade language through that area, [and] the Babylonians continue it; the Persians continue it, et cetera. Somewhere along the line it was adopted by the Jews, and the best guess is it was during the Babylonian exile that some of the Jews were put in an area where the people around them didn’t speak Hebrew and yet, and obviously a number of them spoke their own native languages, but there was this trade language available and so they learned to speak Aramaic.

In Nehemiah 8, verses 7 and 8, it appears that a lot of the returning Jews from the Babylonian exile at this point, so the sons, grandsons, great grandchildren, etc., of the people who were exiled, didn’t really know Hebrew anymore. So there was some translation being given when Nehemiah reads from the law and the situation there back in Israel. When we get near the end of the Inter-Testament Period, you began to get oral translations of the Old Testament into Aramaic for the benefit of people in the synagogue services who could not understand the Hebrew, and that stayed oral for a while. They were called “Targums,” from a verb meaning “to translate,” basically. They’re still in use at the time of Jesus, and in fact, they become one of the major languages of the Rabbinic Talmuds in 400 AD and 550 AD. So, that is the Aramaic language, and that is important, and that arose sometime around this Persian period.

**Rise of the Synagogue**

Another feature of the Persian period, or the Babylonian into the Persian Period is the rise of the synagogue. The synagogue becomes a place of worship for those unable to attend temple, and it features prayer and Bible study, but no sacrifice; so worship, but a non-sacrificial worship. Date of the origin is obscure. The common view is it is during the Babylonian captivity because that’s when people didn’t have a temple anymore. They couldn’t go there. There’s a couple remarks in the Old Testament that suggest there were a couple of places of worship throughout the land that don’t appear to be high places, and so that may suggest that already, while Israel was still in the land before the captivity, when you were still two or three
days walk from Jerusalem, you could gather at a place. If you wanted to go somewhere for worship, there might be some local place to do something like that. So it may even predate the Babylonian Exile; we don’t know. In any case, we do know that it continued alongside the Second Temple. So the Second Temple stood from 515 BC to 70 AD, and we have this synagogue existing then. One of the rabbinic passages mentions something like there were 100 synagogues in Jerusalem. Well, what’s going on there? Well, obviously local places of fellowship of some sort. We see from various remarks, including the New Testament, that some of those were synagogues of people from particular regions: Synagogue of the Freedmen or synagogue of people from Antioch, or something of that sort.

Inter-testament Temples

Well, with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD, this becomes the only place for Jewish worship and that’s what it remains to this day. So the various Jewish places of worship you see scattered around the world, even though they may be called temples in some places, they are actually synagogues of one sort or another.

Well, we’ve got one more topic to say a word or two about under the Persian period and that is the Inter-Testament temples. The rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple takes place here, and that is called, they say among the Jews, the Second Temple, or the Second Jerusalem Temple, built 515 BC, [and] destroyed by the Romans [in] 70 AD. That was the orthodox temple in the sense, at least, that they seemed to stay with the biblical view of the nature of God and that sort of thing, and continued the Mosaic regulations in one way or another. However, somewhere along the line a temple was developed up in the area we call Samaria, and often called the Mountain Gerizim Temple because it was situated on one of the two mountains on which the Israelites had the covenant renewal ceremony every seven years. One group was to stand on one mountain, and one on another, and one shouts the blessings and the other the curses. The date of its building is uncertain, but suggestions are from 450 BC down to 330 BC, somewhere in that period. It was built by the Samaritans, but they picked up some helped from some priests who were unhappy about what was happening in Jerusalem and came north, etc.

It was destroyed by the Hasmoneans, or Maccabees, 128 BC, but it’s still a holy site in New Testament times. John 4:20: you can see the woman says, “Here on this mountain we
worship,” etc., and that was, perhaps, around 30 AD, or something of that sort; yet it was still viewed as holy then, and it’s still viewed as holy today. There’s a small group of Samaritans that still exist; I don’t know the current numbers. They were down to a few hundred from what I saw in the 1970’s. They still have worship activities there. They actually still have Passover services there and still have sacrifices there. So they had continuing sacrifices, through the Inter-Testament Period. We’re talking one sacrifice a day versus a least two a day in the Jerusalem temple.

Besides these two temples, there’s a temple developed in Egypt, which is usually called the Elephantine Temple, to distinguish it from a temple farther north of Egypt. This seems to have been founded perhaps around 525 BC and last to about 390. We think we have records of this only from papyri that have survived from that period. I think it was built for the benefit of Jewish soldiers who had been hired as mercenaries or, perhaps, enslaved as mercenaries by the Persians when they conquered Egypt. So they lived down, or up, depending on whether you’re thinking about a map. It is south on the map, but up the Nile River at the first cataract on the Nile--the Elephantine Temple. They lived there. They might have been some refugees from the time of Manasseh; we don’t know. There were some hints that they might have been polytheistic, that they’re carrying on some of the troubles that were going on. We see already in Jeremiah where Jeremiah comments that the Jews that had taken him down into Egypt were still worshiping the Queen of Heaven. So apparently it was something of the sort that was going on here.

I mention one of the temples which comes later than the Persian Period, but since we’re discussing temples, we’ll put it in here. That’s the later Leontopolis Temple in Egypt founded in about 160 BC and then destroyed by the Romans in 72 AD. It was built in the Maccabean Period by a high priest named Onias III who had been bumped out of the priesthood by Antiochus Epiphanes; we’ll talk about him later. So this fellow fled to Egypt, and a temple was built down there, probably by the Egyptian Jewish community. But after the Jewish war the Romans didn’t want any places that would function as a center for rebelling against Rome, and so they destroyed it. So that is a very quick tour of Palestine under the Persians.

Palestine under Greek Rule, 331-160 BC
We turn to look at Palestine under the Greeks from about 331 BC to about 160 BC. That’s the period when the Maccabees will eventually get their independence from the remains of the Greek Empire. We start with Alexander, later known as Alexander the Great, who rules from about 336 to 329 BC. He was the son of a Macedonian ruler named Philip. His father Philip was assassinated when Alexander was only 20 years old. (He was not assassinated by Alexander.) Yet Alexander at age 20 already had some experience as a general in Philip’s army, and so within a couple years he was able to establish control of his father’s kingdom.

One of the projects his father still had had was Philip identified himself as a Greek even though he was Macedonian; and so did Alexander. One of Philip’s projects he had in mind was to avenge the Greeks against the Persians who had invaded a century and a half earlier than that. So once Alexander’s got control of Macedon and Greece again, he invades Asia Minor in 334 BC with only 35,000 men. Well, that sounds like a lot of men, but when the Persians had invaded Greece a century and a half before, they had had over a million men according to the historians. So what are you going to do with 35,000 men? Well, certainly one advantage was the Persians themselves were back in their empire a 1000 miles away. They had lots of soldiers in Asia Minor, but they’re all garrison troops scattered over 50 or 100 fortified areas. So it was not easy to collect them. Alexander was able to win a victory that year at the Granicus River in western Asia Minor, and that really opened Asia Minor to his taking control of the area. There were a lot of Greeks living in Asia Minor, and they weren’t happy with the Persians; and there were a lot of other people living there. The Persians were not the native people there. So Alexander was able to get a lot of support once he won this crucial battle. So then he had about a year to consolidate his control in Asia Minor and then head east.

**Alexander's Conquering of the World**

According to Herodotus, I believe it is, the story is that he went to a place at Gordian, there was a chariot with an elaborate knot on the tang of the chariot to hook the yoke the crossbar to it, and there was a legend that whoever could untie this knot would become ruler of the world. Well, Alexander fooled around with it for a few minutes and was clearly having no success. Alexander, who was not a model of patience, whipped out his sword, wacked through the rope and said (I was wondering if he actually said this or not), “Thus I untie all Gordian
knots,” or something of that sort. Well, he does come to conquer the world as understood at [that] time.

So the next battle is at Issus at the east end of Asia Minor. This time the Persians have pulled together a big army and have come over to fight him, and there’s a big battle at Issus. Alexander wins in a spectacular way, and as a result that opens Syria, Palestine, and Egypt to him. The king, the Persian king, barely escapes. His royal family actually do not escape, and they were taken captive, and he has to go all the way back to the capital of Persia to put together another army again. So Alexander’s got a couple of years, and he then comes down and takes Palestine and Egypt and such.

**Josephus and Alexander and the Jews**

The rather interesting incident there which liberals fiercely deny, but Josephus says that really occurred, is that Alexander was not too happy with the Jews because the high priest had refused to send him troops as he was taking northern Syria because the high priest had made a vow to the king of Persia that he would not fight against the king of Persia. So Alexander, not very happy, was headed that way, and the high priest put on his dress robes, we’ll say, and had everyone pray, and he processioned the people who would have to meet Alexander. When Alexander met them, he said he had seen this man in a dream when he was back in Greece and told them he should treat him well, etc. Then, according to Josephus, Alexander was shown the prophesies in Daniel about him. That, of course, is not popular in liberal circles, as they think Daniel wasn’t written for another 100s of years. But in any case, that’s the story. What there isn’t any speculation about is that Alexander, for some reason, treated the Jews very, very well and didn’t treat the people all around them that well. So there we are.

Anyway, Alexander then finally wins after he’s taken Greece, and there’s this story about actually taking Egypt. There’s a story about Egypt as well, that Alexander goes out to Amnun in the desert in Egypt, west of the Nile. There’s an oracle there, and he receives a favorable oracle again that he will control the world. So how many of these stories are true—we don’t have time machines, okay?
More of Alexander's Conquering Persia

So anyway, in 331, he has now moved towards Persia’s center, if you like, and there’s a big battle at Gaugamela. Here Alexander’s army destroys the Persian army. He destroys the Persian Empire, and the Persian king heads for cover east towards the eastern end of his empire. Alexander and his troops follow him. Eventually, just before they catch up with him, the people following the Persian king assassinate him and surrender to Alexander.

Alexander has delusions of an empire—that’s probably not a bad approximation—and he decides to conquer as much land as he can. But his troops finally, when they get into what we now call India, said, “Enough.” They head back to Babylon, and Alexander dies in battle at age 33 having conquered all this territory.

Well, Alexander’s agenda was to conquer as much of the world as he could, but also to mix the eastern and western cultures and to spread Greek ideas and attitudes and such all over his conquered territory, including the Greek language. That’s Alexander.

Struggles for Succession

Well, Alexander is dead now in 323 at age 33, and that brings us to a struggle for succession. Alexander’s son is still a baby. Alexander’s dead. Alexander’s brother is mentally incompetent. So the generals under Alexander band together to try to keep the throne from the son, but they fall to fighting each other. While all this is going on, the brother dies and the baby dies. Once the baby was dead, then there was nothing to stop the winner-takes-all thing if that could possibly be worked out. Well, it never works out that way. There’s not a sufficiently dominant winner to take everything. So eventually the empire was broken into several pieces. These are usually counted as four. Lysimachus took the area of Trace north of Macedon. Cassandra took Macedon, and Seleucus taking a big piece of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. So there is a whole big piece of land there, and Ptolemy takes Syria and Egypt. Well, for Jewish backgrounds, it’s only these latter two: Seleucus in the north and Ptolemy in the south that will be important. It’s only those two that come to dominate Israel at one time and another.

Palestine under the Ptolemaic Dynasty, 301 – 198 BC

Well, that brings us to the Ptolemaic dynasty, which continues to 30 BC when Cleopatra
commits suicide. The Ptolemies had control of Palestine only from 301 BC to 198 BC. While the various generals are fighting for control, there’s one point when a fifth general whom we have not mentioned here, named Antigonus, [who] looks like he might get the whole thing, but the other generals gang up on him. If you’ve ever played the war game *Risk*, you realize that sometimes it’s necessary to do things like that to keep one person from winning the game, and that’s basically what the generals do. While the generals are out fighting Antigonus, Ptolemy sneaks in and grabs all of Palestine. Ptolemy is noted for reasonably favorable treatment of the Jews both in Palestine and also the Jews who have wound up in Egypt because a large number of Jews had settled in Alexandria by this time. So there are still some problems here and there, but that’s basically the situation, and that’s from a little over a century 301-198.

The Seleucid dynasty does not continue as long. It falls to Rome in 63 BC, but it does control Palestine from 198 BC to about 160. The rulers of the Ptolemies are pretty invariably called Ptolemy, and the historians today call them Ptolemy 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, but in antiquity they all had a second nickname: so Ptolemy Soter—Ptolemy the Savior, if you like—but not understood quite in Christian terms. Ptolemy Fatso that was another name, but probably not to his face, but various of those.

The Seleucid rulers tended to have two or three names that you see rotate back and forth. One was "Seleucus" and one was "Antiochus." In the long series of wars between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, the Seleucids finally get Palestine from the Ptolemies.

Then we jump one to the 6th, 8th, 9th ruler of the Seleucids, [and that] is a fellow called Antiochus IV, known better as Antiochus Epiphanies. He viewed himself as a manifestation of the God Zeus. The Jews called him Antiochus Epimanes, “Crack-pot,” or something of that sort: “Mad man.” Anyway, he favored Hellenistic Jews.

Stop and back up for a moment. The Ptolemaic dynasty controlled Egypt, which consisted primarily of Egyptians with some Jews, and others in Alexandria, primarily, and then the Greeks overall. You didn’t have so much ethnic diversity that that was a huge problem. But in the Seleucid dynasty, which covered all these different nationalities from Asia Minor and down the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and almost over to India, you did. So the Seleucids, in trying to unify their empire, tried to push Hellenism on all the people who wanted to cooperate with the empire and become wealthy, and that sort of thing. So when Antiochus IV becomes the
Seleucid ruler, he favors the Hellenistic faction among the Jews in Jerusalem and they, perhaps fawning on him to a certain extent, want to establish Jerusalem as a Hellenistic city, which will be named Antioch. Okay. He permits that. Well, that’s pretty much a disaster to the Orthodox Jews to have that happen.

We will come back to the problem there because that will eventually lead to the Maccabean revolt. Antiochus the IV will later attempt, around 168 BC, to abolish Judaism, and we’re going to discuss that a lot in our next section.

Well, so that’s a little bit of the infighting and such that leads to the spread of Alexander’s empire over almost all the Middle East, and then it is breaking into pieces with his death, and then the pieces fighting it out and particularly the northern piece, the Seleucids, fighting the southern piece, the Ptolemies, for control of Israel/Palestine, whatever you want to call it.

**Hellenism**

A very important feature of this time period then in regard to Israel and Jewish background is Hellenism. Hellenism comes from the Greek word *Hellas*, which is the Greeks' own name for Greece. Our name Greece comes from the Latin and comes from the name that the Romans had given to some Greeks living at the bottom of the Italian boot. They called them *Grikei*. I’m not sure how the ending goes there: *Grikas* I guess. Hellenism means “Greek-like,” and so it is the name for Greek culture as it develops in the east after Alexander.

So an attempt to Grecianize the Syrian culture, the Jewish culture, the Egyptian culture, etc., would be Hellenism, if you like. Well, that obviously had a significant influence on Judaism, so that by New Testament times we see Ptolemy is a pretty thoroughly Hellenized Jew.

Josephus is a slightly Hellenized Jew, and there were guys further over than Philo, if you like. It appears perhaps that Hellenism was somewhat influenced by Judaism, and that’s argued over some. But one of the features of Hellenism was, what should we say, historians of religion call "syncretism." It comes from the verb in Greek meaning “to mix." So syncretism is a place where two, three, four religions come in contact and their ideas get mixed with one another.

Probably the commonest idea right around us in the last decade, or century anyway, has been the New Age movement which is a syncretism between Christianity and, say, Buddhism or Hinduism. Adopting elements from each, if you like, would be an example of that. You see it
very much in the Syrian temple at Baalbek in Lebanon today where I had a chance to visit that just before things fell apart in 1975 or 6, whenever they fell apart. I was there in ‘4. That was a temple that was in the sight of Baal worship, and that’s where the name “Baalbek” comes from: Baal of Beka Valley. But when the Greeks came in, the god Baal had been re-identified as Zeus. And then when the Romans came in, the god Baal- Zeus had been re-identified as Jupiter, etc. And so you had all that sort of thing going on.

That probably even is the explanation for some of the polytheism you see around the world; it's that two cultures come together. One has a chief goddess and the other a chief god, and they do some compromise or something. We don’t know; we weren’t back there and don’t have time machines, but certainly something of that sort has happened in history. Well, that’s obviously going to cause a problem for the Jews then when Hellenism is pushed in a religious way in Palestine, and there’s certainly people willing to do that.

There, of course, are various schools of philosophy back in Greece, and those come to have influence in the East as well; and we of course hear of Paul in Acts speaking at the Aeropagus in Athens and talks among the Epicureans and such, and the Stoics. And Josephus is, excuse me, Philo is influenced by Stoic- and Platonic-type ideas.

The early Christians, particularly early Christian philosopher theologians, are influenced by Stoicism and such as well. I’m not going to give you a tour of these philosophies right here. But much of the impact of Hellenism in the East was the political benefits that when Alexander’s successors took all these areas. They were going to basically re-found a lot of the existing cities as Greek cities, and in a Greek city the people who had the impact were the citizens.

Citizens weren’t just people who lived in the city, people who do that in general; they were people who had the right to vote in some sense, who had the right to hold offices, etc., in the city. There would be lots of other people in the city who were just resident aliens, or slaves, or something of that sort, that were much the lower level, etc. So if you’re a Jewish boy and you want to get ahead, and you’re living in Alexandria, or you’re living in Antioch, or something of that sort, there’ll be a temptation at least to adopt whatever features of Hellenism are needed in order to be acceptable in the society.

So we see that going on. Somehow, for instance, Paul’s family had become Roman
citizens, and they were already citizens of Tarsus. So somewhere back several generations, back up the line, his family had been important enough to get a citizenship in Tarsus and then citizenship in Rome. That may have had to do with the fact that they were tent makers and that the Romans needed tent makers for campaigns. I have no idea just how that might have happened, but the effect was such that Paul was born a citizen of Rome whereas the military officer there in Jerusalem had to buy his citizenship. Obviously not as prestigious at that point. So Hellenism is pretty important, and we see that in connection with the whole Hasmonean Revolt.

Another important feature of the Greek Period here in Israel is the translation of the Bible into Greek: what we call the Septuaginta translation of the Bible into Greek. The version got started probably around 250 BC, so less than a century after Alexander had taken the area. We have a work we call the letter of Aristeus, which comes from probably about a century after that, and it gives us a narrative of the origin of the Septuaginta. We are told here that Ptolemy II, so the second ruler down in Egypt of the Greek people who came to control Egypt after the death of Alexander, wanted to build the biggest library in the world, and so he got this fellow for his librarian, and the librarian told him they were trying to collect all kinds of works to put into the library. And the librarian said, “Well, we should have a copy of the Jewish Law.” Apparently, according to the story at least, it did not exist in Greek at that point, and so Ptolemy funded sending delegates up to Jerusalem to get 72 Jewish elders who had come down to Egypt and translate the Law. So the story goes then that they did come down, and they translated the Law and the result was the Septuaginta translation.

However, the story gets better, if you like. As time goes on, some of the later editions to the story is that the translation covers the whole of the Old Testament though, in fact, as the letter of Aristeus goes, it calls it the Jewish Law, and that’s a little tricky because the term "law" could mean whole Old Testament, or it could mean the Torah—the Pentateuch—if you like.

A later edition that surely would have shown up in the letter of Aristeus, if it were true, is that the translators divided into 36 pairs and worked independently, and they produced 36 identical versions of the story of the Old Testament, which probably lies behind the idea a number of people had that the translation itself was an inspired translation. There’s some skepticism regarding the details of the story, particularly later editions. The general opinion of
the story today is that the translation into Greek that we call the Septuagint was apparently
made in Alexandria, which is where the story puts it, and that the Pentateuch, the Five Books of
Moses appear to have been translated as a unit, most probably around 250 BC. So we’ve got a
pretty unified style all through that, and the way of handling different translation matters there,
which is not the case for many of the other Greek parts of the Old Testament as we have it.

The scrolls may well have come from Jerusalem, and possibly the translators had to do with
some of the details about the text the Old Testament, working out matters regarding
Babylonian-type version of the Old Testament, and a Jerusalem version, and a Samaritan
version, and then things of that sort. Given the date 250 BC then, presumably Ptolemy II
allowed the work, and he may have given aid to it. So we are in a situation again without any
time machines, but it looks like at least a substantial amount of the story is true.

The Septuagint translation of the Bible [is] very, very important for a number of reasons:
It appears to be the longest translation of any ancient writing known in antiquity, so that is
rather striking. It gives the text of the Old Testament a century or so before the oldest Hebrew
text we have for most of the Old Testament. It set the pattern for Greek theological terms as
used in the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament. It put the Old Testament in the
universal language of the Mediterranean of that time, at least of the east Mediterranean world at
that time, and it became the Old Testament of the Early Church. Obviously, once the Gospel
spreads substantially beyond Israel, the majority of people were not native Hebrew speakers.

**Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 2B**
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**Antiochus IV [Antiochus Epiphanes]**

We move on then from Palestine under the Greeks to Jewish independence under the
Hasmoneans in 160 BC, down almost a century to 63 BC. We start out again with Antiochus
IV, Antiochus Epiphanies, and the "Abomination of Desolation." Antiochus IV had actually
come to the throne by usurping the throne from his underage nephew in 175 BC. He tries even
harder than the earlier Seleucids had done to unify this diverse empire by means of Hellenism,
so he favors the Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem, and they refound Jerusalem as Antiochia, or what we would call Antioch today. He deposes the orthodox high priest, a fellow name Onias III, for Onias’ brother, Jason, who is much more favorable to Hellenism. That surely caused some problems, but nowhere near the problems caused when he later deposes Jason for Menelaus who is not in the high priestly families. He’s apparently a priest who had bribed Antiochus to get the office. Menelaus had offered a big price, but as it turns out, ironically, wasn’t able to raise the money after Jason had already been deposed. That’s the danger of depending on unpaid bribes.

Meanwhile, Antiochus is off fighting in Egypt trying to get control of Ptolemy’s side of the empire. Antiochus, like many of the guys who control these two big pieces, had a desire to take the other big piece and get nearly as much empire as Alexander (the Great) had had. So he goes down into Egypt, and in 168 BC it looks like he’s going to defeat the Ptolemies when the Romans show up. A Roman fellow who had known Antiochus from maybe not childhood, but his teenage years—I think Antiochus had been a hostage in Rome at that point—comes to Antiochus and says, “The Roman senate says you need to move out of Egypt and go back home.” Antiochus says, “I’ll think about it.” And the Roman pulls out his staff and draws a circle in the sand around Antiochus and says, “Stand there while you think about it.”

So Antiochus goes back and he’s not happy as he’s coming out of Egypt having been overawed by the Romans. He finds out that a rebellion is going on in Israel when he’s heading into that area. Namely, it’s Jason who has rebelled against Menelaus. So Antiochus IV decides to try and destroy Judaism. He forbids circumcision; he forbids observing kosher food laws; he tries to destroy Scripture, and he rededicates the temple to Zeus. He considered himself a manifestation of Zeus and sets up a statue that might have resembled himself. We don’t have any pictures of the statue and we don’t know exactly what Antiochus looked like anyway. That sets off what we call the Maccabean revolt.

**Maccabean Revolt 167 BC to 134 BC**

**Judas**

So we turn to look at the Maccabean Revolt, 167 BC to about 134 BC. While the Seleucids have put down the opposition in Israel, or so they think, the Seleucid government then sends out officers to go through all the towns in Judea enforcing Antiochus’ decrees and
commanding pagan sacrifice. When they get to the little village of Modein, there’s an aged priest Mattathias there, and the whole village is brought out to do the pagan sacrifice. One of the Jews in the village starts to sacrifice, and this aged priest, Mattathias, kills the guy. Well, that would be a pretty disastrous thing to do except that there were more villagers there than the officials and his troops. So they kill the official and the troops, and naturally that’s going to get back to headquarters fairly quick. So Mattathias and his five grown sons call for an armed resistance and flee to the mountains and caves, etc.

That is the origin of the revolt that leads us to one of Mattathias’ sons. Judas, the third son of Mattathias, had a military name, “The Maccabee,” meaning “the hammer.” Kind of like Stonewall Jackson or one of those military names that generals sometimes get. Well, Judas then leads a military campaign and manages, by ambush techniques and by knowing the terrain in a way that the Seleucids don’t, to destroy several Seleucid armies. The Seleucids [are] basically working in terms of a buildup, and they don’t want to send in more troops than they need, but they always underestimate how many they need. So as they gradually build up, Judas succeeds; and as Judas begins to succeed, more Jews flock to his standards. Judas’ forces grow with the success, and they match the Seleucid escalation.

Finally, (we’ll call them the Maccabees) the followers of Judas take Jerusalem except for the citadel, the main fortress. I don’t think that’s actually the fortress Antonia that you see in the New Testament time maps, but a predecessor to that. They take Jerusalem, [and] pen up the remaining Seleucids and Hellenistic Jews in the citadel. They cleanse the temple (remember it had been a site of worship of Zeus for a while here), and they rededicate the temple; and that is in December of 164 BC. That becomes the origin of Hanukah, or the Feast of Dedication.

Meanwhile, Antiochus IV dies in 163 BC, and Lysias takes over as regent for the person who is going to become king when he gets old enough. Lysias would rather get out of this thing, so he offers peace terms that are acceptable to some of the very pious Jews, though not to the Maccabees. This splits the opposition against themselves. So just a few years later the Seleucid forces come back and Judas and his are forces heavily outnumbered. Judas is killed in battle in 160 BC.

Other Maccabees: Jonathan and Simon

Well, that’s not the end of Mattathias’ kids. Judas was the third son, and there’s still two
sons left at this point out of the five. (The other two have already died.) One of these is Jonathan; he will become the ruler of Israel from 160-142 BC. The other one is Simon, and he will become ruler from 142-134 BC.

The Seleucid Empire by this point has been weakened by division over the succession after Antiochus, and so Jonathan and Simon, in their turn, are able by diplomacy to gain strength until the land of Judea becomes virtually independent. It turns out that both Jonathan in 142 BC, and Simon in 134 BC, are murdered by opponents, but not before Simon has gained a hereditary priesthood and the rule of Israel for his family. With Simon’s death then his son comes to rule, and so when you’ve got two successive father-son things ruling, that can be counted as a dynasty. You probably could have counted it already from Jonathan. The Hasmonean dynasty is typically dated then from 134 BC on to 63 BC.

**Hasmoneans: John Hyrcanus**

The first guy is Simon’s son who has the slightly more complicated name John Hyrcanus and he rules from 134 BC to 104 BC. He is very successful. The Seleucid dynasty has become weak, and John has become rather strong militarily. He is able to greatly expand the Judean territory, so he picks up the coastal cities which had long been lost to the Jews. Remember when they came back from Babylonian captivity they basically settled in the hill country around Jerusalem, etc. So he takes coastal cities; he takes the territory [of] the Edomites (Edom) to the south, and the territory of the Samaritans (Samaria) to the north. So it becomes a very significant territory at this point.

During his reign of 30 years we first hear in Josephus of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees had apparently been in favor initially, but by making a suggestion that was not PC: if you suggested that John should resign the high priesthood because his mother gave birth to him while she was captive, which made some suggestions as to whether he was legitimate or not. He decided to go with the Sadducees instead. So the Sadducees become the in-party at the time, and they will be that off and on down to the New Testament times.

Well, in 104 he dies, and one of his sons is Aristobulus. He reigns for about a year. He kills several brothers to, I suppose, strengthen his take on the throne. That was not uncommon, I’m afraid, among these types of situations, and he takes the title "king." Judah is just a general; Jonathan is a general; Simon is not only a general but also high priest (even though he belongs
to a priestly family, but he’s not in the high priestly line). But now Aristobulus takes the title of king, and his successor does not resign that title. Aristobulus doesn’t last long. He dies within a year. Out of fear he assassinated and killed all his brothers and dies from drink and probably from disease of some sort. One of his brothers is still alive in prison. So when Aristobulus dies, his widow releases this brother Alexander from prison and marries him.

**Alexander Jannaeus**

So John Hyrcanus’s widow and brother become the royal pair. So Alexander Jannaeus is the name of the younger brother [who] rules from 102-76 BC. He continues expansion of the kingdom until it is nearly as big of that of David and Solomon. So we are getting a rather powerful local kingdom here that is really carved out of the Seleucid Empire that has been falling apart all this time. During his reign the Pharisees revolt against him and call for the Syrians; that is, the remnants of the Seleucid’s to come in and help. Alexander is about to lose when the Pharisees get second thoughts. Would it really be better to have the Syrians (the Seleucid’s) in control of the territory? So they defect back again.

Well, Alexander wins, but has mixed feelings about the Pharisees. After all, yes, if they hadn’t come back, he would’ve lost. But if they hadn’t revolted in the first place, he wouldn’t have gotten into the problem. So he crucifies a bunch of the Pharisees.

**Salome Alexandra**

Well, he dies in 76 BC, and his wife, the one who had been Aristobulus’ wife and then his wife, comes to be the ruling queen for a short period, 75-67BC. Her name is Salome Alexandra, and she succeeds.

She has two sons, and they are called Hyrcanus II (John Hyrcanus then would be Hyrcanus I), and Aristobulus II. Hyrcanus is the milder and older of the two, and he is made high priest because Salome can’t be high priest, and Aristobulus is given military command. Unfortunately, Aristobulus is the person who is very ambitious and he wants to rule. When Salome Alexander dies in 66 BC, we come to the crucial event which leads to the end of Hasmonean independence. She dies and is succeeded by Hyrcanus II who is supported by the Pharisees, but Aristobulus II who is supported by the Sadducees takes the throne away from him. Hyrcanus flees to a neighboring nation, opens a civil war, and calls on the Romans for aide. At this point the Romans are growing strong in the Middle East, or Near East as we would
call it, and they are anxious to come in and help out.

**Three Groups: Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes**

Well, before we run along to that, we come back and look at some of the features of this time period, and one of the important ones is the three groups that we hear about in Josephus and in the NT. The Pharisees and Sadducees we hear about in both, and the Essenes we hear about only in the Josephus material. The origins of these three groups are obscure but, all three apparently rise during this period, the Maccabean period, *circa* 168-63 BC, a century or so. The Pharisees and the Essenes apparently rise from the very pious group that joined with Judah in the Maccabean revolt, the group we call the *Hasidim*. Hasidim is a noun for one who is faithful to the covenant. You see [it] rather regularly in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. *Hesed*, from the perspective of a human towards God, means faithfulness to the covenant. The perspective of God towards humans also means faithfulness to the covenant; that comes across as "loving kindness," "mercy," things of that sort because the covenant is a merciful covenant, not something that the humans beat out the features of in discussion with God, or something of that sort.

**Essenes**

Well, a little about the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Essenes; let’s look first of all at their theology. We think the name Essenes comes from *hasid*. The problem is Greek not really having a good “h” sound, so lots of things get lost. In Hebrew you got *hallelujah*, and in Greek you have *allelujah*; we think that there’s an argument over where that comes from. So if that’s right, the Essenes are “the faithful ones.” They’re what we might call "super-Pharisees." They do the Pharisees one better, and in fact, they decided that the temple was ruled by people who were not sufficiently orthodox, and so they would no longer mess with the temple. In a great anachronism we can say their view of their relationship of God’s sovereignty to human responsibility is Calvinistic. Understand that was not a term in existence at that time. Their sources of authority were the Old Testament, but with some secret books. We think we now know what some of the secret books are. They would be things like the *Manual of Discipline*, the *Book of Enoch*, and the *Book of Jubilee*; some of those kind of works would also fall into that category.

We’re not sure what their view about survival is. Some think that they believed in
resurrection, which would not be terribly surprising. Some think that they believed in immortality of the soul, but not resurrection. So I put a question mark in that question in my notes here. They had a great emphasis on angels, and that seems to have come from *Enoch* and the *Jubilees* where we get the names of a bunch of other angels and some history of their activity. It is not quite as elaborate as Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, but still a good bit of information there and, they had a great deal of emphasis on eschatology.

**Pharisees**

Contrast those Essenes with the Pharisees. Their name we think comes from *parash*, “separate.” So they were the separatists. Not really separatists compared with the Essenes because they didn’t leave society, but there was a great emphasis on ritual purity and on building a hedge about the law. The idea being, if you don’t want people walking in your fields, you put a hedge around the thing so that they can’t get through. So if we don’t want people transgressing the law, we build some extra laws that we put around the outside. So you have to stop work before the Sabbath a half hour before the Sabbath, and things like that would be the kind of categories that would form a hedge around the law.

Their view on sovereignty and responsibility are what we call today Calvinistic. Their view on sources of, what shall we say, revelation, would be the Old Testament plus the oral tradition. So they believed that Moses had given lots of other information at the time, and that was an oral tradition. So in that sense they resemble Catholicism a little bit with the Bible plus the tradition of the Church, or even the papal statements—obviously the Pharisees had no person equivalent to the Pope. The Pharisees definitely believe in the resurrection. I’m not so sure about the Essenes, but the Pharisees definitely did. They definitely believed in angels, but at least we don’t hear about names of lots of angels or anything of that sort. So they don’t seem to have the emphasis that the Essenes did on angels. They believed in eschatology as well but their emphasis was more on the last judgment than on the details of what might happen.

**Sadducees**

Well, that brings us down to the Sadducees. There is some argument where the name came from. Probably the commonest view is the suggestion that it came from the Hebrew *sedeq*, or righteous. They were the righteous ones. Most groups when they pick names for their own group are favorable names. We call the Mormons “the Mormons,” but they call themselves
“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” We call another group “the Quakers,” but they call themselves “the Friends,” or the “Society of Friends.” So usually the group’s own name is more favorable. Some people think it came from Zadok but I don’t know. The Sadducees were more pragmatic than even the Pharisees and tended to be somewhat compromising, and in that way they were able to work with whatever powers were around. So they got along better with the Roman government. If we think in terms of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility, we’d have to call the Sadducees Arminians. So there’s a big emphasis on human responsibility and human freedom, etc.

What was a source of revelation [for the Sadducees]? Origen, I believe it is, claims that they only hold the Pentateuch, but the evidence we’ve got suggests more [of] the Old Testament. They were suspicious of the oral tradition of the Pharisees, so at least anything of a different tradition. They probably weren’t into the Essene secret books either. I think that probably fits better with the evidence we’ve got.

What about the resurrection question? The New Testament tells us that they didn’t believe in resurrection, but it doesn’t tell us what they did believe in. Josephus tells us that they believed in no survival: when you’re dead you do not exist anymore. That really fits better with Jesus’ response to them on this whole resurrection question than the idea that they believed in, say, the immortality of the soul or something of that sort. They apparently did not believe in angels, and we don’t know exactly what that meant because we don’t have any of their writings. Whether it meant they believed angels don’t show up today, or whether they believed that there never were any and there’s some other explanation [for the mention of angels]. You might say, “How could they not believe in angels if they believed in the Old Testament?” Well, theological liberals and Protestants can believe in lots of things, or not believe in lots of things that the Bible explicitly says are, or aren’t, and they don’t go that way.

Emphasis on eschatology? No, the Sadducees believed that since you don’t exist after you die, there is no judgment. The judgment is in this life. If you are prosperous, God is favorable to you, so they attracted the upper class, wealthy people, etc.

**Influence and Survival of the Three Groups**

Well, that’s the theology of these three groups, taking theology in a rather broad sense. What about their influences in survival? As far as we can tell, there weren’t a lot of Essenes,
and they tended to be withdrawn from society; so obviously not quite so able to have as much influence. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were popular, but not apparently in actually a large group. So they were just a very influential group. The Sadducees were even smaller than the Pharisees, certainly, and probably smaller than the Essenes as well, but they were the richest.

The Essenes, being withdrawn from society, were withdrawn from politics. The Pharisees had some influence politically, but they were dominant religiously. Josephus tells us that their way of reading things was the way that the people went, and the Sadducees took their life in their hands to oppose that too much. The Sadducees, however, were dominant politically, realizing that that meant they were under the Romans, so they couldn’t do anything they wanted.

Influence and the survival of the Essenes: they wrote or copied the Dead Sea Scrolls. So their influence picks up again when they become known there in 1948. But there is some evidence that some of their scrolls were found in the early medieval period. So that we have an early Jewish group that founded some of those communities and decided that the oral tradition of the rabbis was wrong and went the other way. Their name has slipped my mind at the moment, so maybe it will come back before I finish this section.

The influence of the Pharisees and [their] survival is pretty substantial. They survived the destruction of Jerusalem to become the dominant group among the surviving Jews. The rabbinic literature is by the heirs of the Pharisees, so that’s the trail that’s come to dominate Orthodox Judaism over the whole of centuries. For the Sadducees, as far as we know, none of their known writings survive. We don’t actually know the name of any of their writings, as far as I know; but none of the writings that survived from that period are known to be from the Sadducees. Some of them might be, but we don’t know quite enough about them to say.

The Essenes: Qumran was destroyed in 68 BC, so in the middle of the Jewish war, and some Essenes survived. Some, in fact, were apparently at the last stand at Masada in AD 72. And some of their material shows up in the Cairo Geniza, the place for hiding documents—old documents in a synagogue. What we call the Damascus Document is pretty surely theirs, and a copy of that was found in the Cairo Geniza about a century before, no not that long, about 70 or 60 years before they discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Pharisee group survived the destruction in AD 70 and began to dominate Judaism, and it looks like the Sadducees were
more or less destroyed with the Temple. Not to say every last person was, but something in that direction.

**Palestine under the Romans**

Well, our last category: Palestine under the Romans; actually, our next to last category now that I think about it, from 63 BC to 135 AD where we will stop this discussion. But actually going on from there until the Muslims come in in the 600’s, Palestine is under the Romans. The Hasmonean Dynasty ends in 63 BC. Remember Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II have fallen out. Aristobulus II had grabbed the throne, Hyrcanus II runs for cover and called on the Romans. The Romans intervene in the dispute, and they are able to put down Aristobulus, and Judea now loses much of its conquered territories. Hyrcanus is not made king, but he would have been king otherwise. He is made Ethnarch, meaning ruler of a people/group of Judea, but Judea at this time also includes Idumea, Perea, Galilee etc.--so a demotion from king.

This time period is characterized by what we may call the Roman Peace or *Pax Romana* from 30 BC, where Augustus establishes control over the empire for about two centuries, to about 170 AD. Two centuries of peace over the Roman Empire. That isn’t to say there weren’t revolts and such.

Beginning with Augustus, there was great growth and prosperity, and the Roman Empire reaches its peak in the second century AD. The *Pax Romana* is very important for the spread of Christianity. So we have this Roman peace over the whole area. Some other features related to the Roman rule are important to the spread of Christianity: the Romans built an impressive road system over that whole area. There was no extensive road system to match it until the development of the automobiles in the 20th century. The lack of national boundaries, I mean there were obviously ethnic groups here and there, but there was no need for passports or the ancient equivalent of that to go from place to place within the empire. So it was very important, humanly speaking, for the spread of Christianity.

**The Family of Herod**

We should say a word about the Herod family because they become important at this point. We haven’t really heard anything about them before this, but it starts with Herod’s father whose name was Antipater. He was an Idumean; that is, an Edomite. He was an advisor to
Hyrcanus II, and because Hyrcanus was rather mild mannered and unambitious, Antipater appeared to be the power behind the throne. When the Romans took over, he was made procurator for Judea for aiding Julius Caesar. Procurator meant the fellow that was responsible for the emperor’s affairs in a particular territory or country. Antipater would be characteristic of many rulers of one sort or another who made his own sons administrators under him. Those sons were Phasael, someone who many have probably never heard about, and Herod who nearly everyone has heard about at this point.

Antipater is assassinated in 43 BC, and this leads to the rise of Herod. We call [him] Herod “the Great” who is important from 37 BC to his death. I have down here 4 BC, although there’s some argument over that, but that’s still the standard date currently. With the death of Antipater, the Romans appoint Herod and Phasael joint tetrarchs of this territory. Tetrarch is another word you see “arch” on the end of it, means “ruler,” and “tetra” quarter, or four. This term was used for sub-territory in something. They were tetrarchs of Judea, Herod and Phasael, but the territories included Galilee and Samaria and Idumea as well as Judea.

Well, just about this time the Parthians from the east end of the Roman Empire invade the eastern end of the Roman Empire and they briefly take Palestine and they kill Phasael. They capture Phasael actually, put him in prison, and Phasael bashes his head out to avoid torture or something of that sort. Herod manages to flee and makes it to Rome in 40 BC. The senate there appoints him the King of the Jews. That doesn’t cost them a whole lot. The idea is they found somebody who is pretty ambitious and they will allow him to borrow a lot of money from various people; he doesn’t get a big stipend from the Romans. The Romans were fairly cheap in operating their society (we won’t go into that here). So he’s allowed at least to borrow money, and he’s got this authority from the senate, and so he goes back, returns with an army, and he takes Jerusalem in 37 BC. So he now becomes the King of the Jews, 40 BC in name, 37 BC in fact.

There is a problem though: The Romans, if you were remembering Roman history from this period, which you probably don’t; I never had anything in school on that point. With the assassination of Julius Caesar, we have a triumvirate. It’s Mark Antony, and the guy who is going to be called Augustus eventually, and Lepidus, I believe, is the third guy. The eastern part of the empire is under Antony, and Antony is very much under the influence of Cleopatra.
Cleopatra would like Judea. So Herod’s throne is very insecure until Antony and Cleopatra both commit suicide in 31 BC. Thereafter, he is in pretty good shape until his own death.

However, he has terrible family troubles all during this period; he kills his favorite wife Mariamne who was a descendant of the Maccabees, which, how should we say, is his connection with the Maccabees, because otherwise he’s just basically an appointee of the Romans. In the course of time he kills three of his own sons. Two of them are sons of Mariamne, and he’s afraid they’re going to try to get the throne before he is ready to give it up, and I don’t know for sure if he was right about that or not. Then he kills a third son that was jealous of the other two sons and got them killed and such. It got so bad at one point that Augustus, commenting on Herod’s kosher food activity, says, “It’s safer to be one of Herod’s pigs than one of his sons,” and there’s a little play in Greek between *hus* “pig” and *huios* “son,” so that’s the situation there.

Herod, however, does have some accomplishments. He is not called “the Great” because he murdered his wife and three sons or anything of that sort. He’s called “the Great” because he ruled a very large territory. He refurbished the Jerusalem temple, starting in 19 BC and through the rest of his life, and then going on to 66 AD. They were working off and on in that temple, and basically it just got finished in time for its destruction after the Jewish revolt.

He did a number of building projects elsewhere in Israel, at Caesarea on the coast, [and] at Sebaste, which had been the city of Samaria earlier. So if you go back to Jerusalem today and look at some of the archeology, some of the most prominent ruins that are at least above the surface, are often Herodian ruins of one sort or another. Some of the walls around the city of Jerusalem, and the tomb of Abraham and such in Hebron etc., fall into that kind of category.

The killing of Bethlehem’s children, very explicit in the Gospel of Matthew, although we don’t have any explicit statement about that in the other historical record of Herod, fits his character very much. I mean, he killed three of his own sons. They would have succeeded him one or the other of them, [abd] he was just unhappy they wanted to succeed too fast. So you can see how a non-Herodian claimant to the throne he would have considered very, very dangerous.

**Herod’s descendants**

Well, when Herod finally did die, he had prepared a will which, however, had to be validated by Augustus in Rome; so in his will he specified that his son Archelaus would be king
and would rule over the major part of his empire and under his territory, and then Antipas would rule over Galilee and Perea; and Philip would rule over some of the area north of that: Iturea and Trachonitis. Those guys then headed off to Rome to get validation. Jesus has a parable about a nobleman who goes off to a far country to receive a kingdom in return, and that’s something that would have resonated with his hearers because of something of that very sort had happened just a little bit earlier.

Well, Archelaus has several people in the Herod family that oppose his becoming king, and so Augustus gives him the title of Ethnarch, but will be turned into king if he does a great job. He doesn’t do a great job, and so he gets deposed in about ten years. The other two brothers, however, do a fairly decent job in their territories; and so Antipas rules to 39 AD, Philip rules to 34 AD, but Archelaus only to about 6 AD. Herod has two descendants besides these, [and] a grandson and great grandson who rule as well. These are decedents through Mariamne and the descent through one or both of the sons who Herod killed. One of them is Herod Agrippa I, and he gets the title “King of the Jews” for a short period, 41-44 AD, but then dies, and his death is narrated for us in both Josephus and in Acts. Then his son Herod Agrippa II becomes king, but not king of the Jews; he’s king of another territory, and he lives to about 100 AD. So that’s the end of the Herod dynasty then finally at that point.

**Messianic Expectation**

Well, we do have one more section here I want to say a little word about. It’s actually two more sections—I never keep track exactly. One rather important one for this period of the Roman rule is messianic expectations at the end of the New Testament Period. There was, for some reason—Josephus mentions it; Suetonius mentions it; and Tacitus mentions it—there was a considerable excitement over the idea that someone coming from Israel would rule the world at about this time. So this was strong in the first century AD. It was influential in the Jewish Revolt, and my suggestion is it has something to do with Daniel’s 70 week passage. They probably didn’t have enough information to know exactly when that ran out, but it was pretty clear it was going to run out in what we call the first century AD. I have a little discussion of that in a chapter called *The Time of the Messiah* in a book called *The Evidence of Prophecy*, and I think there’s also a research report up on our IBRI website about that with the same title. [http://www.ibri.org/RRs/RR009/09timeofmessiah.htm]
Regarding messianic expectation at the Inter-Testament Period, what did the people expect? What kind of messiah did they expect? What kind of person did they expect? Well, as we look at the material we’ve got, we see that the views change with time. The early extra-biblical materials on the Messiah picture the Messiah as being more than human, though there’s no clear view of his deity in any of the extra-biblical materials. There are some even more than hints in the Old Testament itself, and obviously the New Testament goes that way; but the other extra-biblical material seems to go in an angelic direction of some sort, but not much further than that.

The later rabbinic material seems to tend to minimalize the Messiah in one way or another. The Old Testament data regarding Messiah posed various paradoxes regarding the office, his activity, the type of coming, the type of being, *et cetera*, and I suggest that these are solved by the New Testament and by Jesus, their candidate, if you like, and I have another article on the New Testament model of the Messiah, which goes by, I think, it’s “The nature of the Messiah” in this book *The Evidence of Prophecy*, but New Testament models of Messiah are the chapter that’s on the IBRI website, as an IBRI research report. [http://www.ibri.org/RRs/RR006/06ntmod.htm](http://www.ibri.org/RRs/RR006/06ntmod.htm)

We also find from [the] Inter-Testament Period various views on the Messianic Period: how would it relate to the time period we’re living in now and how would it relate to the state after the resurrection, and things of that sort. It shows us that there’s a certain sense in which the views of the Jews in trying to interpret what we call the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, regarding eschatology have some similarity to the views of Christians today trying to interpret the New Testament regarding eschatology. One could even claim that their views of the Messianic Period have a vague resemblance to Amill, Pre-Mill, Post-Mill. They’re not very close, but something in that direction. For instance, the various views viewed the time period we’re in and give the title “This Age” and then “The Days of the Messiah” then “The Age to Come.” In some views of the end of [the] age you had basically a Messianic Period only. So you have this age and the time of the Messiah, and so you had some kind of a millennium, we might say, on earth, but it was not clear what would happen after that. Other views had an *eschaton* only: this age and the age to come. So that would resemble in some way an Amillennial position, if you like. But the commonest view was This Age, the Time of the
messiah and the age to come, which would be now, the millennium and the eternal state if you like. So that would fit a kind of premillennial eschatology of some particular sort.

The order of events, the Jewish interpreters at this time are basically taking all the Old Testament prophetic data that appears to be eschatological and are trying to figure out how to sort it. It’s a little bit like putting pieces together of a puzzle but you don’t have the picture so you just got the pieces. You look at the pieces and you say does this piece have that color on it and does this piece have that and well they match or whatever so it’s a tougher job. Yet as you see it put together, they pick up a lot of things that at least premillennial Christians would say they got right. They really saw stuff in the Old Testament that we might have only noticed in the New Testament or something of that sort. So, for instance, they saw that there would be certain signs preceding the end: there’d be moral decay, there’d be calamities, there’d be signs in heaven, and there’d be a forerunner. Then the Messianic Kingdom would be established and the Messianic Kingdom would include the return of Israel from the exile, where perhaps pre-millennialists today would say perhaps there’s going to be a substantial return first and then the millennium, but even in that view you generally feel there’d be some return after that as well. There’ll be punishment of the nations, and the Messiah will rule; and there are various views on what the Messiah would have to do with establishing the kingdom, whether it would established first and then he would be brought in, or whether he’d be involved in establishing it. There are even models where there were two messiahs, one who would be establishing it and one who would actually rule, we’re not going to go off there and that’s probably even post inter-testament period anyway.

Then there are the days of the Messiah, what Christians would call the “millennium,” and variable features in that as put together by different interpreters. What would be the place of the nations? Would they be included in this, or would they be under Israel, et cetera? But usually, the time the Messiah was seen as marvelous in one way or another, more miraculous than this age as you like, length uncertain and you have some going with 40 years, others going over 1000. It was typically seen as ending with the rebellion of Gog and Magog. It's interesting that phrase shows up in Revelation and also in Ezekiel.

Then what about the age to come? What Christians call the eternal state? They saw a resurrection, ; they saw a judgment; and they saw an eternal state of punishment or reward, so
in that way it is similar to what we see.

**End of the Jewish State and Fall of Jerusalem**

Two more things to say a little about quickly here: the end of the Jewish State and Palestine after the fall of Jerusalem. Both Rome and Israel, and at least some Jews, contributed substantially to the end of the Jewish State. The Roman procurators who controlled Palestine from AD 6–66, except the period from AD 41 to 44 when Herod Agrippa is in control, is not a good time for Israel. It began with the replacement of Archelaus in AD 6. He was deposed for misgovernment, so the Romans bring in their governors, a Prefect or Procurator. In AD 6 when this takes place, there is a revolt of the zealots regarding the census. They gradually grow stronger as the Roman and Jewish relations deteriorate over the 60-year period. Then, in about 40 AD, the Roman emperor Gaius, better known to us as Caligula, has delusions of grandeur and orders that his own statue be erected in the Jerusalem Temple. Fortunately, he dies before the order was carried out, but the Roman procurator at the time really risked his life at the time to delay it. Then Caligula got assassinated by people in Rome who were interested in other things anyway.

The procurators continue, except for Herod Agrippa in AD 41-44 and the Jewish revolt. In general, the procurators did not understand the Jews. They were frequently antagonistic to the Jews; anti-Semitism was fairly common in the Greco-Roman world and such. So they tended to aggravate conditions, and in that way it strengthen the zealots who were against them. So the zealots became more popular as the situations got worse.

The last two of the Roman Procurators, Albinus and Florus, were especially wicked men. Well, that led to first Jewish revolt in AD 66–73. It actually was started by an instance between the Jews and Gentiles in Caesarea, which spread and was fanned by the procurator, and zealots who inflamed the whole country. Initially, the moderate Jews were able to take leadership, and that's how Josephus got in, but gradually they lost out to the more radical zealots. The revolt ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70, and the Jewish state, and then the mopping up operation was completed with the fall of Masada by about AD 73.

**Palestine after the Fall of Jerusalem**

Palestine after the fall of Jerusalem runs from AD 70-135 after the fall of Jerusalem.
One of the important figures here is Rabbi Johanan ben Zakai. He was in Jerusalem during a siege and realized that this was going to be a disaster, and so with connivance of his disciples, he pretended to be sick of some probably very contagious disease and pretended to die, and they carry him out in a coffin; and since it’s a contagious disease, nobody is going to look in the coffin. Once they get out of range of the walls, he gets out of the coffin, and they flee to the Romans, etc. Johanan got permission from the Romans to establish a rabbinic school and a Sanhedrin in the coastal city of Jamnia; Yavneh is the Old Testament name. There he rebuilt Judaism without a state or temple along the lines of Pharisaism – that eventually led to the codification of oral law, the Mishnah, and later the Talmuds.

Around AD 90, the Jewish Christians were excluded from the synagogues by adding a curse on the Nazarenes to the synagogue liturgy somewhere around 90 – 100 AD. So after that point, there is obviously already tension between the Christians and the Jews about whether or not Jesus is the Messiah or not, but that kind of splits things. So the Christian Jews were no longer worshipping with the non-Christian Jews.

One last remark here in this time period: the Bar Kokhba, or the Second Revolt, is in AD 132–135. The Jews at this point had lost their state, though a lot of them had continued living in Israel, a lot of them had been carried off as slaves, particularly those who were taken in Jerusalem. But as we go on to 73 – 132, almost 60 years, and the Romans are preparing to build a pagan city on the site of Jerusalem and it will be named Aelia Capitolina in honor of the chief gods of the Roman pantheon. "Aelia" is the family name of Hadrian, the Roman Emperor, of that time. The Jews realized that if that happens, they aren't going to get Jerusalem back any time in the foreseeable future.

So, one of the chief rabbis of the time, Rabbi Akiba, recognized a fellow Simeon ben Koseba who was apparently willing to lead the revolt as Messiah as the fulfillment of the Number's prophecy in 24:17: "A star will arise from Jacob," and he comes to be known as Bar Kokva, or "Son of a Star" – kind of a play on his own name "ben Koseba." The revolt is initially successful. The Romans actually had control of their empire with a very small army, and so it was spread all over the place. When there was a revolt that broke out typically, it was successful for a while until the Romans organized and brought their legions in, and that's what happened here, but it was eventually put down with very considerable slaughter. After that the
Jews were forbidden near Jerusalem except on the Day of Atonement. After that Jerusalem ceases to be connected to Judaism.

Well, I think that gives you a bit of a tour, if you like, of the Jewish background running from the end of the Old Testament up past the New Testament to give you a feel of what was going on in that time period. So that’s where we will stop for today.