

## ***The Intertestamental Era***

### *Sources*

- Charles Pfeiffer, *Between the Testaments* (1959)  
F. F. Bruce and David Payne, *Israel and the Nations*, rev. ed. (1997)  
H. A. Ironside, *The Four Hundred Silent Years* (1914)  
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Martin Abegg, et al., *The Dead Sea Bible* (1999)  
Bruce Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* (1957)

### I. Political History

- A. Persian Era—relatively peaceful; end of OT times
- B. Greek Era (332-167 BC)
  - 1. Conquest by Alexander (332 BC)
  - 2. Rule by Ptolemies—about 100 years; peaceful, as far as the records show
  - 3. Rule by Seleucids
    - a. Antiochus III, the Great—took Palestine
    - b. Antiochus IV, Epiphanes (the illustrious; called “the Madman” by the Jews)
      - 1) Policy of Hellenization (building of gymnasium; use of Greek names): Sparked “Hellenization crisis”
      - 2) Made high priesthood a political plum
      - 3) Defiled temple: “Abomination of desolation”
      - 4) Persecution—sparked Maccabean revolt
- C. Maccabean Era (167-63 BC)
  - 1. Mattathias sparked revolt by destroying a pagan altar and fleeing with sons
  - 2. Judas Maccabeus (the hammer)
    - a. Brilliant military genius
    - b. Hanukkah (“feast of lights”) celebrating purification of temple
  - 3. Hasmonean dynasty
    - a. Ruler-priests descended from Maccabees
    - b. Became corrupt & cruel
- D. Roman conquest (63 BC)
  - 1. Began w/ conquest by Pompey
  - 2. Herodian Dynasty
    - a. Client kings: Left alone if peace kept & taxes paid
    - b. Herod the Great (37-4 BC)
      - 1) Idumean but Jewish in religion
      - 2) Senate recognized as “King of the Jews”
      - 3) Great Builder: The Temple, fortress at Masada
      - 4) Murderous: Killed wife & three sons, “Massacre of the Innocents”
    - c. Herod Agrippa (AD 37-44)
      - 1) Ruled same territories as his father
      - 2) Persecuted early church (Acts 12)
  - 3. Later direct rule by Rome (e.g., Pilate)

### II. Religious Developments

- A. Factions
  - 1. Pharisees “separated ones”
    - a. Descended from Hasidim (“the pious”) of Maccabean period

- b. Strict followers of the law w/ oral tradition (“fence about the law”)
    - 2. Sadducees
      - a. Aristocracy, pro-Hasmonean
      - b. Controlled priesthood
      - c. Theological “rationalists”
    - 3. Essenes
      - a. Separatist, almost monastic
      - b. Source of Qumran community (Dead Sea Scrolls)
    - 4. Zealots—political revolutionaries; late, anti-Roman
  - B. Development of Synagogue
    - 1. Means “a gathering of people”
    - 2. Product of “Diaspora” (scattered Jews of Babylon, Egypt, etc.)
    - 3. No temple or sacrifices; replaced with prayer and study of the Scriptures
    - 4. Survived the restoration of the temple and became center of Jewish life, even in Jerusalem
    - 5. Sanhedrin = ruling body of synagogue
- III. Literature
- A. Greek Influence
    - 1. Septuagint: Greek translation of OT made in Egypt
    - 2. Also marked growth of Greek/Egyptian allegorical interpretation
    - 3. Philo of Alexandria—allegory & philosophy
  - B. Dead Sea Scrolls
    - 1. Discovered 1947
    - 2. Product of Essene Qumran community
    - 3. Contents
      - a. Biblical Mss. (e.g., Isaiah Scroll)
      - b. Jewish literature (e.g., Habakkuk Commentary, Apocrypha)
      - c. Essene Documents (e.g., Manual of Discipline, Damascus Document, Copper Scroll)
    - 4. Value
      - a. Textual criticism: Oldest surviving mss. of OT
      - b. History of Intertestamental/NT era
      - c. Shows popularity of Messianic ideal
      - d. Suggestions on specific points of NT interpretation
  - C. Apocrypha
    - 1. History: Maccabees
    - 2. Wisdom literature: Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach)
    - 3. Apocalyptic literature
    - 4. “Pious Fiction”
      - a. Additions to Esther and Daniel
        - 1) Susannah—Perry Mason mystery
        - 2) Bel and the Dragon—locked room mystery
      - b. Tobit: Suffering for faithfulness to the law
      - c. Judith (“Jewess”) saves Bethulia from Assyrians by killing Holofernes (set after exile when Nebuchadnezzar was king of Assyria)