

Jewish Background to the New Testament

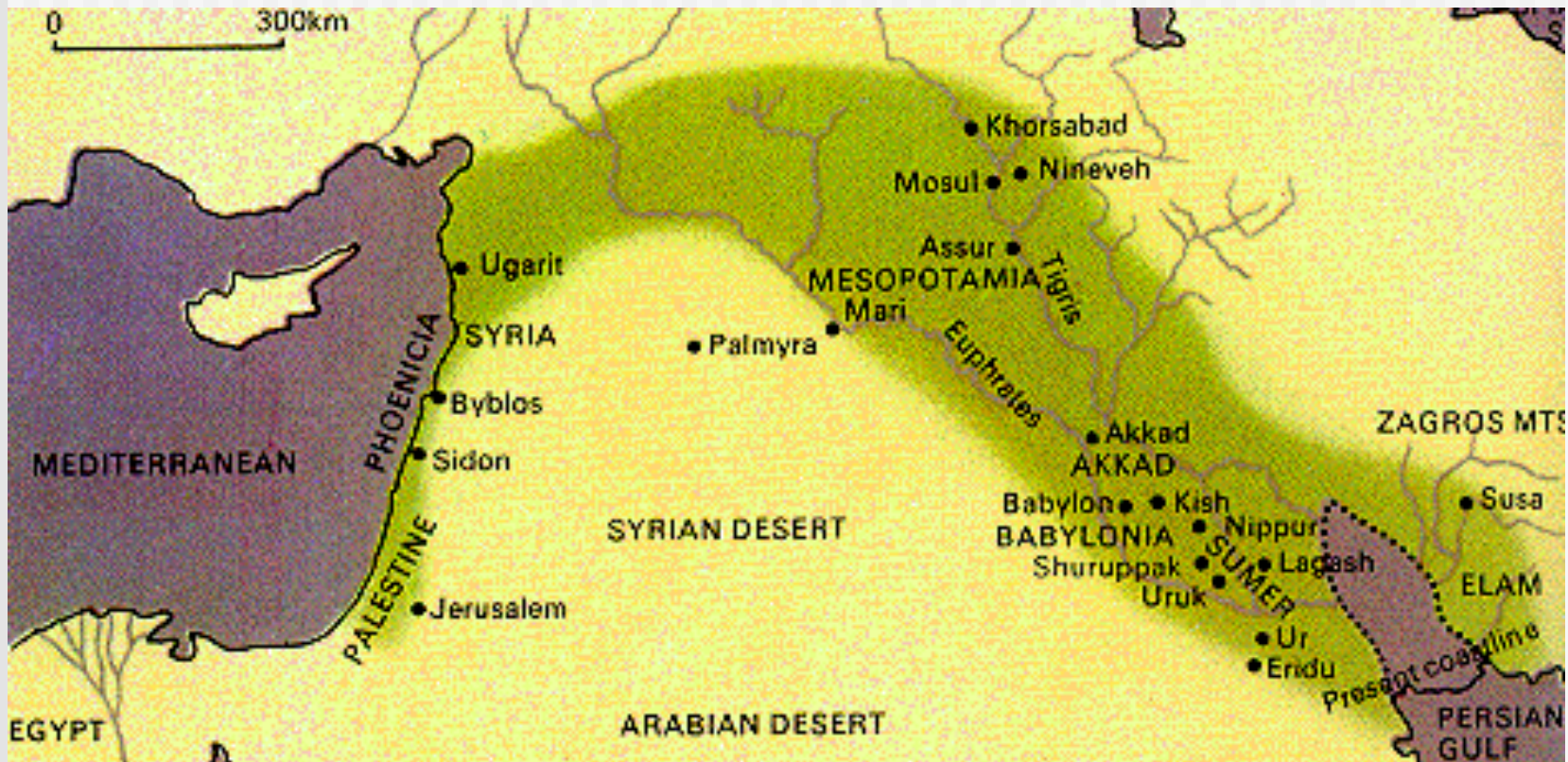
Robert C. Newman



The Intertestament Period

- Valuable to know something of this period, due to big changes between the OT and NT periods.
- OT ends ~400 BC, NT begins ~4 BC.
- Government is Persia at end of OT, Roman at beginning of NT.
- Languages in OT period are Hebrew, Aramaic; NT period adds Greek, Latin.
- OT culture Semitic, NT culture Hellenistic.
- Geographic center: OT is Fertile Crescent, NT is Mediterranean

Fertile Crescent



Ancient Sources on the IT Period



- OT prediction, esp. Daniel
- OT Apocrypha & Pseudepigrapha
- Philo of Alexandria (20 BC – AD 40+)
- Josephus (AD 37-100+)
- Dead Sea Scrolls
- Rabbinic literature

Daniel's Overview of the IT Period

Nebuchadnezzar's Image (Dan 2)

- Image described.
 - Gold head
 - Silver chest
 - Bronze thighs
 - Iron legs
 - Iron & clay feet
- Image destroyed by stone.



Daniel's Overview

- Daniel's Four Wild Animals (Dan 7)
 - Successive animals come out of sea.
 - The horn from the fourth animal.
 - The wild animals judged.
 - One like a son of man receives ruling power.



The Kingdoms

- Kingdom **Image** Animal
 - Babylon **Gold head** Lion w/ wings
 - Persia **Silver chest** Bear eating
 - Greece **Br thighs** Leopard 4-heads
 - Rome **Iron legs** Terrible 10-horn
- Will use this scheme to structure our survey.

Structure of Survey

- Palestine under the Persians
 - 539-331 BC
- Palestine under the Greeks
 - 331-160 BC
- Independence under the Hasmoneans
 - 160-63 BC
- Palestine under the Romans
 - 63 BC to AD 135 and beyond

Palestine under Persia

539-331 BC



Palestine under Persia

- Rise of Cyrus
- Return of the Jews
- Rebuilding the Temple
- Revival in Judah & Rebuilding Walls
- The Aramaic Language
- Rise of the Synagogue
- The IT Temples

The Rise of Cyrus

- 559 BC – Cyrus inherits small kingdom of Anshan (Persia)
- 550 – Cyrus defeats the Medes
 - Nabonidus cancels his support!
- 546 – Cyrus takes Asia Minor
- 539 – Cyrus takes Babylon

The Return of the Jews

- 539-530 BC
- Cyrus is concerned to stabilize his empire.
- One of the problems of Assyria & Babylon rule was religious triumphalism.
 - So Cyrus tries to be considerate.
- Another problem was their deportation policy.
 - Cyrus allow Jews & others to return home.

Rebuilding: the 2nd Temple

- Cyrus allowed rebuilding to start, but stopped it when neighbors opposed (Ezra 4 & 6).
- When Darius reigns, Jewish loyalty rewarded by allowing rebuilding.
- Temple completed 515 by:
 - Prophets Haggai & Zechariah
 - Governor Zerubbabel & High Priest Jeshua
- This 2nd temple lasts till AD 70.

Revival & Rebuilding: The Walls

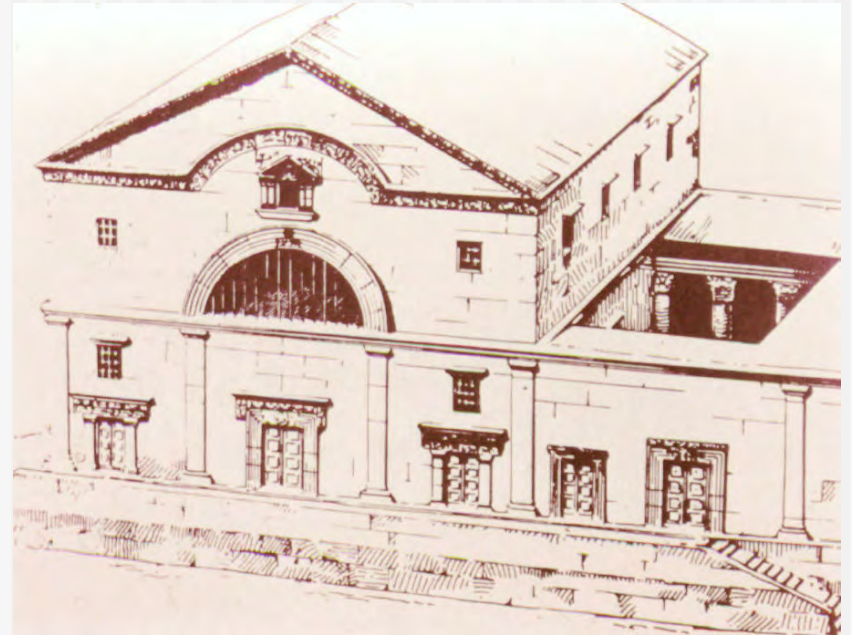
- Under Artaxerxes 1 (465-423)
- 458 – Ezra returns from Babylon w/ commission from Persian king; restores people to observing Law.
- 445 – Nehemiah sent as governor to rebuild city walls of Jerusalem.
- With fortifications in place, Jerusalem is now a city again.

The Aramaic Language

- Ancient language of Syria/Aram (upper Euphrates valley)
- Becomes diplomatic & trade language of ancient Near East
- Adopted by the Jews:
 - Probably during Babylonian exile, ~550 BC
 - Oral translations of OT → Aramaic
 - Still in use at time of Jesus
 - Used in rabbinic literature beyond AD 550

The Rise of the Synagogue

- Place of worship for those unable to attend temple
- Features prayer & Bible study but no sacrifice
- Origin obscure
- Continued alongside 2nd temple
- Only place of Jewish worship after AD 70



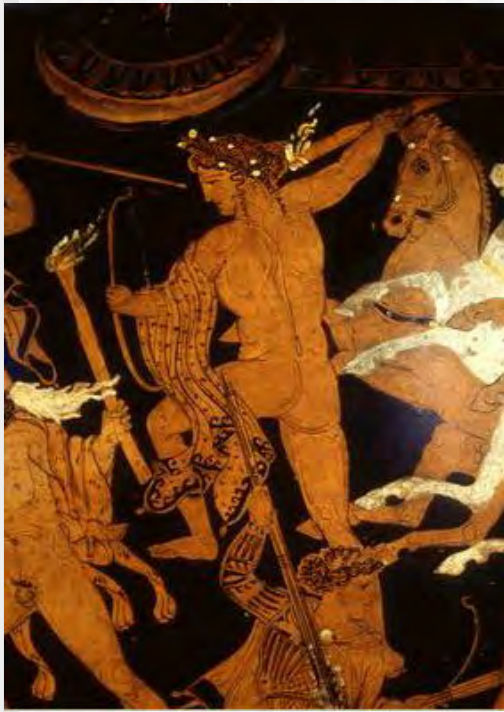
The IT Temples



- 2nd (Jerusalem) Temple (515-70AD)
 - Orthodox, on site of Solomon's temple
- Samaritan Temple (450/330-128BC)
 - On Mt Gerizim, near Shechem
 - Destroyed by Maccabees
 - Still a holy site in NT times & today
- Elephantine Temple (525-390BC)
- Leontopolis Temple (160-72AD)

Palestine under the Greeks

331-c160 BC



Palestine under the Greeks

- Alexander the Great (336-323 BC)
- Struggle for Succession (to 301 BC)
- Ptolemaic Dynasty (to 30 BC)
 - Controls Palestine 301-198 BC
- Seleucid Dynasty (to 63 BC)
 - Controls Palestine 198-c160 BC
- Hellenism
- The Septuagint

Alexander the Great



- 336 – succeeds father Philip at age 20
- 334 – invades Asia Minor
- Major victories:
 - 334 – Granicus River – opens Asia M
 - 333 – Issus – opens Syria, Pal, Egypt
 - 331 – Gaugamela – destroys Persian E
- Continues to India
- 323 – dies at Babylon, age 33

Alexander's Empire



The Struggle for Succession

- Alexander did not have an heir.
 - Son a baby, dies young
 - Brother mentally incompetent
 - Generals fall to fighting when son dead
- The empire divided
 - Thrace ruled by Lysimachus
 - Macedonia by Cassander
 - Asia Minor, Mesopotamia by Seleucus
 - Egypt, Syria by Ptolemy

The Empire Divided



The Ptolemaic Dynasty

- Lasts till 30 BC, controls Palestine 301-198 BC
- Ptolemy grabbed off Palestine while other generals fighting Antigonus.
- He & successors (almost all named Ptolemy) treat Jews fairly well.
- Many Jews settle in Alexandria, capital of Ptolemaic dynasty.

The Seleucid Dynasty

- Lasts till 63 BC, controls Palestine 198-160 BC
- Gets Palestine after long series of wars with Ptolemies.
- Antiochus 4 favors Hellenized Jews & allows them to re-establish Jerusalem as Hellenistic city.
- Antiochus later attempts to abolish Judaism (168), leading to Maccabean revolt (167).

Hellenism



- From Greek word for Greece, "Hellas"
- Name for Greek culture as it developed in the East after Alexander
- Influenced Judaism & somewhat influenced by it
- Includes religious mixing
- Various Greek philosophies
- Political, economic benefits of citizenship

The Septuagint (LXX)



- Greek translation of the OT
 - Oldest translation into Greek
- Origin – *Letter of Aristeas*
 - Ptolemy 2 has Jewish elders translate Law for his library
 - Later additions to story
 - General opinion of story today

Importance of the LXX

- Longest translation of any writing from antiquity
- Gives OT text a century before oldest Hebrew manuscripts
- Sets pattern for Greek theological terms in NT
- Put OT in universal language of Mediterranean
- Became the OT for the early church

Independence under the Hasmoneans

160–63 BC



Independence under the Hasmoneans

- Antiochus 4 & the Abomination of Desolation
- The Maccabean Revolt (167-134)
- The Hasmonean Dynasty (164-63)
- Jewish Sects of the Period
 - Pharisees
 - Sadducees
 - Essenes

Antiochus Epiphanes



- 175 – usurps throne from nephew
- Tries to unify empire via Hellenism
- Favors Hellenistic Jews; Jerusalem refounded
- Deposes high priests
 - Onias 3 for Jason
 - Jason for Menelaus
- 168 – defeated by Romans in Egypt
 - Tries to destroy Judaism; rededicates temple to Zeus

The Maccabean Revolt

- Origin
 - Aged priest Matthias resists at Modin
 - He & sons flee to wilderness to resist
- Judah the Maccabee (166-160)
 - Succeeds father
 - His nickname "Hammerer"
 - Successful series of battles
- Jonathan (to 142) & Simon (to 134)
 - Seleucids weak; Maccs grow by diplomacy
 - Both murdered, but start dynasty

The Hasmonean Dynasty

- John Hyrcanus (134-104)
 - Greatly expands Judean territory
 - Rise of Pharisees & Sadducees
- Aristobolus (103)
 - Kills several brothers, takes title "king"
 - Dies from fear, drink, disease
- Alexander Jannaeus (102-76)
 - Continues expansion to Solomon-sized
 - Troubles with Pharisees

The Hasmonean Dynasty

- Salome Alexandra (76-67)
 - Wife of Aristobolus & Alex Jannaeus
 - Succeeds at Alex's death
 - Two sons:
 - Hyrcanus 2 – made high priest
 - Aristobolus 2 – given military command
- End of Hasmonean Independence
 - Salome dies, succeeded by Hyrcanus 2
 - Aristobolus 2 snatches throne
 - Hyrcanus flees, opens war, calls on Rome

Jewish Sects of the Period

- Three main groups:
 - Pharisees
 - Sadducees
 - Essenes
- Their Theology
- Their Influence & Survival

Palestine under the Romans

63 BC to 135 AD +



Palestine under the Romans

- End of the Hasmonean Dynasty (63)
- The *Pax Romana* (30 BC – 170 AD)
- The Herod Family
 - Antipater, Herod's father
 - Herod the Great
 - Herod's sons
 - Herod's descendants
- Messianic Expectation & the End of the Jewish State

The End of the Hasmonean Dynasty

- Hyrcanus flees brother Aristobolus.
 - Romans intervene in dispute.
 - Judea loses most of its conquered territories.
 - Hyrcanus 2 made "Ethnarch" of Judea instead of king.
- Romans rule Palestine as client state or province from 63 BC to AD 639.

The Roman Peace

- Two centuries (30 BC – 170 AD) of peace over empire beginning with Augustus
- Great growth in prosperity, reaching peak in 2nd century AD
- Important for early spread of Xy:
 - Peace
 - Roman roads
 - Lack of national boundaries

The Herod Family

- Antipater, Herod's father
 - Idumean, advisor to Hyrcanus 2, power behind the throne
 - Made procurator of Judea for helping Julius Caesar
 - Made sons Phasael & Herod administrators
 - Assassinated 43 BC

Herod the Great

- 42 – appointed joint Tetrarch with brother Phasaël
- 40 – Phasaël killed by invading Parthians, Herod flees to Rome
- 40 – Roman senate appoints him King of the Jews.
- 37 – Herod reconquers Jerusalem.
- 31 – Throne insecure till death of Antony & Cleopatra

Herod the Great

- His terrible family troubles
 - Combination of conniving & suspicion
 - Eventually he kills favorite wife & three sons, among others.
- Herod's accomplishments
 - Ruled large territory
 - Renovated Jerusalem temple (19 BC +)
 - Building projects (Caesarea, Sebaste)
 - Killing Bethlehem's children

Herod's Sons & Descendants

- Sons: ruled by his will after death
 - Archelaus – Judea/Samaria/Idumea till AD 6
 - Antipas – Galilee/Peraea to AD 39
 - Philip – Iturea/Trachonitis to AD 34
- Descendants by Mariamne
 - Herod Agrippa 1 – King of Jews 41-44
 - Herod Agrippa 2 – a king to c100

Messianic Expectation

- Messianic fervor by the end of the IT period
- The person of the Messiah
- Various views of the Messianic Period
- The typical order of events

Messianic Fervor

- Very strong in the 1st century AD
 - Dissatisfaction with Roman rule
 - Zealot leaders calling for revolt
- Influential in leading many Jews to participate in revolt against Rome
- Probably one of the reasons was that Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks looked like it was running out

The Person of the Messiah

- Variety of views, changing with time
 - Early interpreters see Messiah as more than human, tho no clear view of deity
 - Later rabbinic materials tend to minimize importance of Messiah.
- OT Paradoxes:
 - Re/ office, activity, being, coming
 - Solved by NT and Jesus

Various Views of the Messianic Period

- Several alternatives:
 - Messianic period only
 - Eschaton only
 - Both will occur – most common
- These alternatives somewhat resemble the Christian views:
 - Post-Millennial
 - A-Millennial
 - Pre-Millennial

Order of End-Time Events

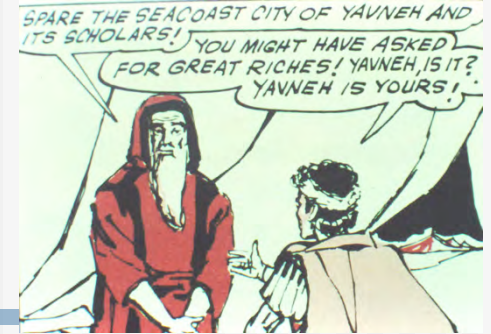
- Signs will precede the end
 - Moral decay, disaster, signs, forerunner
- Messianic kingdom established
 - Return from exile, nations punished, Messiah rules
- Days of Messiah (= Xn millennium)
 - Variable features, length uncertain
 - Ends with rebellion
- The Age to Come (= Xn eternal state)
 - Resurrection, judgment, eternal states

End of the Jewish State



- The Roman Procurators (6-66 AD)
 - Replacement for Archelaus (AD 6)
 - The activities of the Zealots (6+)
 - Caligula's statue (41)
 - Herod Agrippa 1's short rule (41-44)
 - The insensitivity of the Procurators
- The (1st) Jewish Revolt (66-73)
 - Started in Caesarea
 - Moderate Jews lose control to Zealots
 - Jerusalem destroyed (70), Masada (73)

Palestine Afterward



- Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai
 - Got Roman permission to continue school & court at Jamnia
 - Rebuilt Judaism w/o sacrifice
 - Xns excluded from synagogue
- The (2nd) Bar-Kochba Revolt (132-35)
 - Romans to rebuild Jerusalem as pagan city.
 - Simeon b Koseba revolts & is recognized as Messiah.
 - Revolt put down w/ much slaughter.
 - Jews forbidden to come near Jerusalem

The End

But God is not
finished with Israel
yet!