

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

CHRONOLOGY OF THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD:

WITH A CLOSER LOOK AT THE MEN OF ZADOK

A PAPER SUBMITTED TO DR. W. THOMAS HAMILTON

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE COURSE NBST 525

LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY

DAVID SHIELDS

LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

AUGUST 8, 2009

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Important Questions.....	4
Hellenism – It’s all Greek To Me (331-164 B.C.).....	8
The Legacy of Alexander the Great (331 – 320 B.C.).....	8
An Empire Divided – The Ptolemaic Period (320-198 B.C.).....	9
Change is the Only Constant – The Seleucid Period (198-164 B.C.).....	10
Guerillas in their Midst – The Hasmonean Revolt and the Maccabean Era (164-63 B.C.).....	12
The Revolutionary Family and Religious Liberty (164 – 134 B.C.)	13
The Rise of the Sadducees	14
Shaping the ‘Priestly’ Empire (134 B.C. – 76 B.C.).....	15
The Golden Age of Salome Alexandra (76 – 67 B.C.).....	17
Coming Apart at the Schemes (67 B.C. – 63 B.C.)	18
The End of the Beginning: The Roman Period (63 B.C. – A.D. 137).....	19
Rome – Religion and the Jews.....	19
The Lineage of Caesar	20
Herod and His Dynamic Family (37 B.C. – A.D. 100)	21
Conclusion	23
Bibliography	24

**CHRONOLOGY OF THE INTERTESTAMENAL PERIOD: WITH A CLOSER LOOK
AT THE MEN OF ZADOK**

Introduction

Many authors have composed engaging book series that covers multiple volumes before bringing a story to a close in a way that answers all of the questions the author began when they introduced their reader to the beginning of the story. In many cases, the author of the series may not be able to complete the next piece of the story for a year or multiple years leaving the now dedicated readership clamoring for the next volume in the series. During the waiting period between volumes, many things may happen to both the reader and the author... perhaps the reader finds some more information about the subject matter and wishes to read it during the intermission to further increase their knowledge; perhaps the author finds a new way to handle a certain recurring theme in the story and hones their skills at using said method before beginning the next volume; further still, what if the reader's life becomes vastly more challenging due to a life change and they no longer have the ample time to read the next story when it arrives.

The list of assumptions and postulations could continue on indefinitely but it is still only a mere stretch of a few years. However... what if the time between volumes is longer? What if the author suffers an injury and is not even capable of writing for five, ten, fifteen years? Would you even care to read the next volume?

To that end, one can scarcely fathom what it would be like if they were told they must wait over 720 years before ever knowing how the story ends. Yet, in the history of the people of

God – Yahweh, the God of Israel – that is how long they must wait until their next revelation from God in the person of Jesus Christ. Moreover, this time was one of the darkest times in Jewish history to date that leave scars in the heart of the Hebrew people and greatly impacted not only the religion of Judaism overall but into the very world in which Jesus the Messiah would have lived, ministered, died and rose again. The vast expanse between the testaments, hereafter known as the Intertestamental Period or (IT Period) brought a paradigm of change in Israel both past and present. To understand the value of the Old Testament and interpret the New, it is necessary to consider such groups as the oft overlooked Sadducees as well as follow the Intertestamental Period from Alexander the Great to the lineage of Herod as the events had a profound impact on Jewish and Christian history.

Important Questions

Much like the teaching of Old Testament narratives requires some foundation to understand the subject matter, to understand the IT Period, some groundwork needs to be laid. Before the history lesson begins, it might be wise to consider a few things to help properly set the stage for an exposition such as this. Of special note are the reason for the name of the period, the time frame in which it occurred and some of the major players in the events. In this manner, a bridge will be built first and then the traffic on the road can begin.

In answer to the first question, the period is referred as the Intertestamental Period, sometimes referred to as Intertestamental Judaism, because it is the world undocumented in the modern bible between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Despite the seemingly simplistic etymology, this world was one all of its own that, although cousin to the two canonical

Christian testaments, it was a far stretch from either and it is unlikely that a small group teacher at a modern church would discuss such a topic or if this teacher would even know what the term means. But just as author and theologian Christopher J.H. Wright, stated in his book *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* that it is hard to fully grasp the true meaning of the New Testament without also knowing the Old¹, it would be equally as challenging to fully know the opposition faced by Jesus and the early Christian church without knowledge of the vital Intertestamental era. As a young Christian, it is easy to view the Old Testament and New Testament periods as happening sequentially with perhaps a minor break. But the reality is that when Jesus came to this earth, the world he entered into was the world of the Intertestamental Period.

The actual time period used to judge the span of the IT period is one that is often difficult to determine due to conflicting ways of dating Jewish histories (Kalmin 2006). However, one can surmise two different starting ‘events’ that define the start date with the first being approximately 539 BC according to rabbinical writings (Kalmin 2006) as this is the time of the Persian conquest of the Promised Land and the beginning of the first exile. This era is more of a precursor however as the remaining prophets of Old Testament Israel were still warning Yahweh’s people of their dire misdeeds against Him when Persia came to power and are, in essence, still ‘Old Testament’ times. At its core, the Persian Era was more of simply a political era and not a theological era.

Many scholars of the IT Period settle on the 331 BC as it is an unmistakable end to the world of Israel as it was known before, this is the time when the great cultural spike of Greece known as ‘Hellenism’ came to the people of Yahweh – carried by the hands of the eternal

¹ Christopher J.H. Wright. 1992. *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

catalyst of Greek culture, Alexander the Great (Davies and Finklestein 1989). It was during this time that the writing of the Old Testament ceased and the documents of the Early Church shows a clear distinction of this date as the end of an era (Chadwick 2001). From this point forward, the people of God take a very different course through one of the darkest times of their life that gives rise to Messianic texts and their antithesis apocalyptic texts yet you will not find these in the Bible until the New Testament.

Another question of importance is where the time ends which is up to some speculation as well. It is easy to think that the period ended when Jesus began his ministry – was this not the New Testament after all? While it may be true that Jesus was the herald of the New Testament, he faced consistent revolts from Jewish leaders and even common citizens culminating to the crucifixion (Davies and Finklestein 1989). If one wished to view the timeline of the actual text and the creation of the New Testament, they might date the end of the IT period as early as A.D. 60 which is the year that the oldest Gospel, Mark, has appeared (Kalmin 2006). Or perhaps you would date the end of the period as late as A.D. 397 which is the year that German Theologian Heinrich Joseph Dominicus Denzinger numbered as the ‘third’ Synod held in the African city of Carthage² that confirmed the canonicity of the New Testament’s books. Overall, most scholars determine the end of the period to be approximately A.D. 135, three years after the Second Jewish Revolt against the Romans ended in a bloody rebellion. This event lead to the banishment of Jews from the city of Jerusalem for some time and summarily ended the recognized political entity known as Israel (Davies and Finklestein 1989).

Every good play contains a cast of well developed characters who mold and shape the outcome of the play and the IT period is no different. This article does not have enough room to consider every single person who made an impact on a period that lasted for over 700 years but

² Catholic Encyclopedia, 1914 ed., s.v. “Carthage”

the story would not be complete without a few critical names and a few critical ‘people groups’ that profoundly impacted the formation and norms of the era. As the timeline progresses, the land and people of Israel faced an ever-changing landscape of rulers, wars, and internal struggles that lead the casual observer to wonder how the history is alive today... further proof of God’s divine plan.

Among the people to be considered, none can overlook Alexander III of Macedon – better known as Alexander the Great – as the greatest single impacting force of the IT period. Furthermore, Herod the Great, the ruler during the time of John the Baptist and Jesus, was the usher of the Herodian Dynasty that ruled Israel for a large part of the Intertestamental Period and had both positive and (predominantly) negative impacts. The priestly Maccabean kings from Judas Maccabeus to Hyrcanus II are known for their period of brief control of Israel by Jewish priests during the time. Lastly, one cannot overlook the three sects of Judaism that were virtually birthed in response to various defining factors of the IT period (Regev 2006) – the often overlooked Essenes, the well-known and perpetually legalistic Pharisees, and the vaguely known Sadducees who will be the focus of a later part of this report.

Now that the term itself, the chronological margins, and basic list of major political forces are clear, the foundation for this study has been established. Up to this point, the information covered has been 720 years wide and only an inch deep, yet a more thorough supply of information would exhaust the length of this study as well as muddle the intentions. This study of this period is more chronological in focus than anthropological so the names and people mentioned will only be needed to supplement the events of the era.

Hellenism – It’s all Greek To Me (331-164 B.C.)

Just as the Persian Empire was taking over the lands in the Ancient Near East, a new superpower was bulging at the seams, the people who had called themselves in the ancient Greek tongue μακεδνός (Makednos) or ‘highlander.’ It was the land of Macedonia, an ancient kingdom that began as a Greek colony and later built an empire the size of Europe, encompassing the whole of Greece and surrounding areas³. Among the leaders of this land was Alexander, son of Phillip, Alexander III of Macedon, or as the histories call him, Alexander the Great. At the hand of this famed warlord, the Persian Empire was all but decimated (Kalmin 2006) and the world of Intertestamental Judaism came face to face with Hellenism.

The Legacy of Alexander the Great (331 – 320 B.C.)

Hellenism, was the cultural normative in Greek society of the era. It focused on knowledge and athleticism and was delivered to every land that Alexander and his army conquered. By the time of his sudden death in Babylon, Alexander the Great had managed to conquer the entire Achaemenid Empire of Persia, one of the most stable empires the Persians created⁴. Included in this ‘Greater Persia’ was the land of Israel where the people of Yahweh strived to keep the law while living under the rule of Darius III of Persia (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 37-38). The challenge of keeping God’s people morally and spiritually clean met its greatest adversary in this time as Hellenism and its worship of Greek gods became inescapable and Alexander forced the transition of the people in whatever way he could.

Despite the promising future ahead of him, Alexander met an untimely death in Babylon when he was only 32 years old (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 44) yet the rise of Hellenism he initiated had only just begun. When his army marched into the lands, it was not just an army of

³ Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.56.3

⁴ Schmitt, R. 1989. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Vol. 3. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

warriors; he brought an entourage of scholars to spread the culture as well. Interspersed within the fighting battalions were architects, philosophers, scribes, musicians, and educators whose whole duty was to spread the culture to those who were conquered. The Jewish people were repulsed by the notion that they were forced into a culture that went against their God and many of their leaders spent centuries battling against this social enemy.

An Empire Divided – The Ptolemaic Period (320-198 B.C.)

The Macedonian Empire was quite large at this point, encompassing an area almost as large as the entire continent of Europe and no single member of Alexander's successors wanted ownership of the entire empire (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 45) and thus was divided among Alexander's heirs. The Egyptian section of the empire which included Israel was brought under the reign of a haughty satrap by the name of Ptolemy, son of Lagus whose skill of scheming vastly eclipsed his skill for leadership.

Ptolemy I created the city of Alexandria in an area of Egypt that was strategically challenging to reach from the interior of Asia Minor - the only unprotected area where his foes could reach him. From his fortified city, Ptolemy managed to isolate himself from his family, kill all of the surrounding Macedonian rulers near him and usurp their kingdoms taking the greater part of Asia Minor to be his own, and angering the nearby Seleucid rulers of Syria (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 48-49). These actions, combined with the trade viability of routes through Ptolemy's province of Israel, made the home of the Intertestamental Jews a prime target for opposition as time progressed.

Israel did gain a mixed blessing during Ptolemy's rule, however, when he settled many Jews to a specialized 'Jewish sector' of his fortress of Alexandria. The culture of Intertestamental Judaism soon developed a stronghold in the area as the people of Yahweh

strived to regain some sense of autonomy and increase their understanding of the world they were now forced into, becoming the first of the ‘Diaspora’ Jews. During the latter part of period, Ptolemy’s descendant, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, commissioned and funded a large part of the development of the Septuagint (Chadwick 2001, 27-28). Because of this act, much of the growing Diaspora Jews were able to read their holy scriptures and teach it to others and it is one of the many prominent sources in the translation and combination of the modern Christian Bible. Beyond this fact, little is known about the Intertestamental Jews of this era until the enemies of Ptolemy ushered in the next period of this study... the Seleucid Period.

Change is the Only Constant – The Seleucid Period (198-164 B.C.)

As the years went on, the Ptolemaic succession did not fare as well as Ptolemy I and wars broke out on civil and political fronts. The Ptolemaic regime, now under the control of Ptolemy V Epiphanes, came face to face with the Seleucids and came to an end against the Syrian (Seleucid) army of Antiochus III in a battle near what Biblical works refer to as Caesarea Philippi (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 67). Intertestamental Jews of Israel now were placed under the control of a king who was determined to force Hellenism upon them in intensity never seen before.

Their original conqueror, Antiochus III was actually revered rather well among Jews as he reduced the tribute Jews had to pay, he kept relations high with the priesthood, and even made contributions to the temple during his reign. This all changed when his successor, Antiochus IV Epiphanes ascended the throne. Antiochus IV was a staunch Hellenist and over time banned almost all Jewish traditions in favor of Hellenistic principles. The Jewish upper class, most notably the Tobiad family, strengthened this Hellenistic push with rampant abandon as their

adversaries, the priestly Oniad family – descendents of high priest Zadok – bolstered their opposition (Rooke 2000, 266).

Hebrew peoples during the Intertestamental Period had faced many changes during the rule of the Ptolemies but the Hellenistic infusion started by Alexander the Great was thrust into the center stage during the reign of Antiochus IV. One of the defining moments of this event came when the reigning high priest of Yahweh, Onias III was unable to obtain money from the distant land of Antioch to pay Antiochus IV's required tribute. His brother, Jason of the rival Tobiad family, convinced Antiochus IV to elevate himself to high priest for promising to pay an obscene amount of money where Onias III had failed and to implement various Hellenistic institutions, such as the gymnasium and the adolescent training institution of ephebia, to Jerusalem. With Onias III's disposal from office occurred the first time since the Davidic kingdom of the Old Testament that the high priest was not one of direct descent of Solomon's priest Zadok⁵. Not only did Jason keep his promise to further Hellenism, but his successor, Menelaus of the Tobiads continued and strengthened the changes even willingly having Onias killed (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 282).

The mounting changes of the IT Jewish world and the ever mounting opposition to the Seleucid throne only grew as Antiochus IV's drive to perpetuate Hellenism increased. In the latter part of his reign, he sought to bring an end to Jewish religion as a whole by sending a decree to summarily end Jewish temple rites, demanding the complete abolition of Hebrew holy works, eliminating any Jewish celebrations or holidays, and even banning the practice of circumcision (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 286). Fueling his opposition even more, Antiochus IV dedicated the sacred Jewish Temple to Zeus, placed an altar to him there, and had a pig

⁵ Gardner, Greg. 2007. Jewish leadership and Hellenistic civic benefaction in the second century BCE. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (NO. 2): 327-343

sacrificed on this very altar. To the Jewish people, this was one of the most disgusting desecrations of their holy temple ever seen. Any hope of keeping peace in Jerusalem was lost and a revolution would soon begin.

Guerillas in their Midst – The Hasmonean Revolt and the Maccabean Era (164-63 B.C.)

Before discussing the Hasmonean era, one would be wise to understand the family lineage. As was mentioned before, the position of High Priest of Yahweh, although often enigmatic was one that carried history from the days of the Levites in Deuteronomy (Rooke 2000, 46-48) as the descendents of Moses' brother Aaron. This Jewish tribe was set apart from the others in that it received no land when Canaan was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel and their overreaching purpose was to be a servant of the temple, handling sacrifices and rituals among other priestly duties.

This priestly lineage of Zadok, King Solomon's high priest continued throughout the rest of the history of the Old Testament and in to the Intertestamental Period despite reaching some obscurity during the Persian Empire (Rooke 2000, 220). At the time that Onias III was deposed from his high priest position, it was the first time in Jewish history that the high priest was not a Levite and the first time in many centuries when the man was not of Zadok's family. Among the descendents with the loudest protest against such an act was the family of Judas Maccabeus, whose own family members were direct descendents of Aaron (Rooke 2000, 280).

The Revolutionary Family and Religious Liberty (164 – 134 B.C.)

The pivotal arrival of the first era since Hellenism came in the guise of a devoted and rather old priest by the name of Hasmon Matthias who had simply had enough of what he saw as indignant oppositions to God by the Seleucids (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 294). In a small town known as Modein, when King Antiochus called upon Jews to denounce Yahweh and make a sacrifice on the altar of Zeus to show their allegiance, Matthias launched his revolt. He saw a man who was giving up his faith in Yahweh in the presence of a Seleucid royal agent and making a sacrifice to seal this decree. Matthias was so overcome with anger and zeal that he murdered both the man and the agent and made a universal declaration that was recorded into the OT apocrypha: ‘Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come with me!’⁶

At this point, the rallied supporters of the Matthias left the town and gathered in the desert and began guerilla assaults against the Seleucids and their Hebrew supporters. Sadly, Matthias never did get to see the culmination of his work as he passed away shortly after his first year of attacks (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 296). This did not end the era however, rather, it started the era for Matthias son, named Judas Maccabeus who was a master of military affairs and who is said to have been able to rally ten or eleven thousand men with his speeches and subsequently lead them to vanquish their foes. He started small but eventually built a large enough army of otherwise divided Israelite soldiers that soon took control of the areas around Jerusalem.

After many struggles against the government and the then-active high priest Alcimus of the Tobiads, the band managed to take over Jerusalem and had many vain attempts to take over

⁶ 1 Macc. 2:27

more of the Jewish kingdom with little avail. During the epic battle of Beth-horon pass, Judas Maccabeus met his end and control of the new revolution passed to his brother Jonathon Maccabeus (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 312-314) who managed to force a breakdown of the Seleucid rulers. Jonathon took the position of 'high priest' despite the fact that he was not directly descended from Zadok's lineage as the original successor, Onias IV, had moved to Egypt and created a temple there under Ptolemy V Philometor (Rooke 2000, 274-277). But Jonathon's reign did not last long as the final attack from the Seleucids resulted in his murder in 143 B.C.

Simon Maccabeus, the only remaining direct descendent of Matthias took control of the maverick nation to surprising success. With a powerful army and a resolute defiance against being ruled under any other ruler, Simon saw the very thing that his father had wished for many years ago... the religious freedom of the Jews. From the cry of Matthias to the final freedom of the people, God's power and love for his people had continued and led them to this wonderful day redemption. Simon ascended the throne as both the high priest and the king of Jews, a feat unheard of by the leaders of the time.

The Rise of the Sadducees

God's people were free and the world seemed to be returning to normal, logic would dictate that the people would be joyful but not all parties were satisfied. The works of Josephus and many other histories of the time indicated that during the reign of priest-king Simon, the sects of Judaism made themselves known. The Pharisees seemed to be divided over the matters with some of the more accepting members enjoying the return to freedom despite the means with which it was accomplished. The Essenes of Qumran, however, did not enjoy the leadership of the Hasmoneans and often discussed them with ire and displeasure; they also felt that Simon had no

right to the throne because he was not a direct lineage to the Zadokite bloodline (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 319). However, the connection of both priest and king was especially appealing to the remaining sectarian adherents, the Sadducees.

Interestingly enough, this group seems to have been ever present in the Jewish history from the days of Moses all the way up to the end of Jesus' ministry though there are few mentions of them in scripture or extra-biblical texts. From the lineage of Solomon's high priest, Zadok (as their very title is derived from his name 'Sadduc') (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 337), they were the priests who served in the temple and developed great wealth over time. The Sadducees later made up the majority of the Sanhedrin who sentenced Jesus to death... the very priests of Yahweh sentenced His son to die. These priestly aristocrats remained in power until A.D. 70 when the second temple was destroyed and they all but faded away (Rooke 2000).

Future perils aside, this group supported Matthias' family, identifying Simon as a priest from another branch of the holy Levite lineage of Aaron (Rooke 2000, 281). During these days of priest-kings, the pro-Sadducee governing body brought the once elusive high priesthood and its privileged members to the forefront of religious and political power. The final solidification of this authority occurred shortly after Simon's son John Hyrcanus took the throne in his father's stead when he was assassinated. John was openly disliked by the Pharisees and he chose to align with the Sadducees for his rule and the rule of those who followed him (Kalmin 2006, 55).

Shaping the 'Priestly' Empire (134 B.C. – 76 B.C.)

At the ascension of the throne, John Hyrcanus took the reins and began to build his priestly empire, seeming to desire imperial expansion of the territory of Judea from the hands of the 'blasphemous' Macedonian rulers. Hyrcanus began an aggressive growth of the kingdom and despite using a majority of his own treasury to support the effort and the tributes to various rulers

still due for freedom (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 323) ushered in a great period of peace. Despite the ever-widening rift between the Pharisees and Hyrcanus, the people prospered under John's rule despite his refusal to refer to himself as king until his death.

After John's death, the remaining rulers of his lineage were cruel, heartless men who were scarcely priestly at all. According to most accounts, John appeared to have plans for his wife to rule but this plan was seemingly squelched by a takeover of his ruthless son Judas Aristobulus I. Aristobulus willingly imprisoned his family, killed one of his brothers and let his own mother die of starvation to assert his monarchy (Rooke 2000, 312-313). This reign, however, was short-lived and ended a year after it began. To his credit, the rather 'un-priestly' member of the priestly line did secure a considerable amount of land including the area where Jesus spent most of his ministry.

The now widowed wife of Aristobulus, Salome Alexandra, freed the remaining members of Aristobulus' family. In an effort to return authority to the vacuum, she married Alexander Jannaeus, vaulting him to king with her as his queen (Rooke 2000, 314). However, unlike his father John, he was far from priestly in word or deed. Jannaeus' rule was littered with cruelty and underhanded deeds. He was quite a conqueror and managed to return more land to the people during his reign than leaders before but this never helped his popularity. In fact, the war with the Pharisees and the Hasmonean dynasty reached critical mass when the Pharisees, seeking to dethrone the cruel ruler, requested help from their old enemies, the Seleucids.

Seleucid king Demetrius engaged in a battle with Jannaeus and which he ultimately won, yet instead of vanquishing his foe, he returned to his kingdom to defend his own throne. In his wake, he left a weakened force of Jewish soldiers around Jannaeus in hopes he would seal his own fate which proved successful shortly thereafter. When he found that the Pharisees had been

responsible for Demetrius' attack, Janneus rose up with his most atrocious act in his rule when he decreed and carried out an uninhibited murder of the wives and children of some 800 Pharisees before their eyes and ultimately crucified them afterward (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 339-340).

Through the course of approximately thirteen years after the slaughter of the Pharisees, Janneus suffered both losses and wins but slowly weakened his own supporters. Near the end of his reign, he had essentially fortified his lands as well as possible to protect them and had still made various military advances elsewhere, yet his wretched lifestyle took its toll in 76 B.C. when he died of alcohol poisoning and malaria (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 342). He made an unexpected choice on his deathbed by assigning royal authority to his wife while requesting she make peace with the Pharisees (Rooke 2000, 315), a decree she accepted and ushered in a short 'golden age.'

The Golden Age of Salome Alexandra (76 – 67 B.C.)

Despite the dissension among the Sadducees, Salome acted exactly as her husband requested in his dying wish and left the Pharisees in complete control (Rooke 2000, 315-316). Laws of the time refused a woman to control the position of high priest and in response, Alexandra elected her peace-loving son John Hyrcanus II to the position. Not wanting to control the military forces either, Alexandra elected her other fiery son Judas Aristobulus II to command this position. The remaining duties of politics, she handled herself while still vigorously keeping both sons supervised and this three-pronged power assignment served to unify the nation for the brief period (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 345).

Coming Apart at the Schemes (67 B.C. – 63 B.C.)

The wonderful ride of Salome's rule came to an abrupt end when she passed away in 67 B.C. and her two children brought about a civil war which unavoidably unraveled the entire kingdom of Judea. Aristobulus II demanded his brother step down as a simple civil servant under his kingship which the peaceful Hyrcanus II accepted without much question and Aristobulus crowned himself king. Seeking power of his own, the southern governor of Idumea, Antipater, convinced Hyrcanus to request support from the Nabatean king, Aretas, who willingly marched in and overcame Aristobulus' force with little difficulty (Rooke 2000, 317).

In an attempt to make his own power return, the besieged Aristobulus sent out a request for assistance from the newest maverick nation in the history of the Intertestamental Period, Rome. The powerful Roman general Scaurus answered the call and displayed the dangerous power of the Romans which would define the future of Israel for the remainder of the IT period. In one assault, the Romans forced the Nabateans to withdrawal and enabled Aristobulus to defeat both Hyrcanus and Aretas but also set the Roman general Pompey, Scaurus' superior, to move further southward and into the Israelites' land. At this point, Pompey was approached by both the scheming brothers in an attempt to overthrow the other, and determined that he would offer a decision when he arrived in Judea (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 348).

This decision was not acceptable to fiery Aristobulus and he made a quick return to rally his troops to meet the pursuing Pompey. Unfortunately, this served to irk the warlord and his troops quickly dispatched Aristobulus, forcing him to withdraw to Jerusalem and the Temple. A three-month siege ensued until the Temple finally was overtaken, ironically on the Day of Atonement (Davies and Finklestein 1989, 349). Thousands of Jews were murdered for resisting and countless Roman supporters of the Jews took their own lives. In his final act of conquest,

Pompey forcefully entered the Holy of Holies to find no Jewish ‘god’ present, an act that set the first stages of Jewish distrust of their new rulers, the Romans.

The End of the Beginning: The Roman Period (63 B.C. – A.D. 137)

Throughout this document, the Intertestamental Period has been discussed as a time frame as it has been happening yet when the Roman conquest of Israel began the Intertestamental Period itself is nearing its end. This very period is the time in which Jesus Christ came to the earth, taught, died, and rose again to usher in the beginnings of the New Testament. Nonetheless, there are still plenty of events prior to the New Testament that must be considered to fully understand the Intertestamental Period and to give a clear picture of the world that Jesus was faced with when he came. Volumes of information are written about this particular era as, by this point, scribes and historians had become quite common. As a result, the information provided regarding the Romans will be far less detailed as the previous cultures discussed beforehand.

Rome – Religion, Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin

Prior to diving head first into the era, there is a minor string that must be connected to fully grasp the path moving forward. Once Pompey had overtaken the Temple, the conflict between the last remaining Hasmoneans was at an end but it has yet to be discussed what became of these two brothers after they inadvertently ended their own reign. Once Aristobulus II was unable to pay the tribute he promised Pompey for his life, he was taken prisoner back to Rome (Rooke 2000, 318) and little else is known of him beyond this stage but likely he was questioned and then executed or perhaps required to work in heavy labor to repay Pompey. As for the more even tempered Hyrcanus II, Pompey was greatly pleased with his assistance during the takeover

of Jerusalem and as a signature of gratitude; he was restored to the position of 'high priest' in the Jerusalem temple (Rooke 2000, 318). However, his actual power and authority as a Hasmonean ruler ends for he was now absorbed into Roman power.

During the struggle between the Hasmonean brothers, it might be easy to think that a majority of the Jews had disappeared during this time, but this is incorrect. In fact, throughout the siege and the Roman rule, life went on... the Sadducees continued to meet as the now, well established Sanhedrin under very close direction of the high priest and continued to maintain order as they had previously. The very existence of the Sanhedrin proved quite useful to the Romans as they preferred to use existing rulers of their conquered lands who simply carried out Roman rule in the manner they were instructed. This supreme council did just that, ruled as the supreme leaders of the Jews for centuries following the Roman Era, cementing a Roman-regulated Jewish theocracy (Horbury, Davies and Sturdy 1999, 98).

The Lineage of Caesar

The Sanhedrin dutifully carried out the requests of their rulers and was, in some cases, in direct connection with the Roman emperors. In the case of the Intertestamental Period at the stage of Roman rule, was covered under two emperors that drastically changed the way of the period, Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus. Julius Caesar's reign during this era of the Intertestamental period was very short as he was assassinated in 44 B.C., only a scant nineteen years after Israel became a Roman state⁷. His adopted son, Octavian, better known as Caesar Augustus, took his place, and although he kept many elements of the republic, his rule was an absolute monarchy.

⁷ Platner, Samuel Ball, "Theatrum Pompei." *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (1929): 515-517

Herod and His Dynamic Family (37 B.C. – A.D. 100)

Although Caesar Augustus was in control of the Roman Empire and Israel, his direct interaction was limited most of the time and preferred the leadership to be handled by a local authority. From the members of the wealthy Sanhedrin, rose the Herodians who ruled the land of Israel throughout the remainder of the IT period and beyond. The lineage began with Herod the Great and passed through his sons Herod Antipas, Phillip the Tetrarch, his grandson Herod Agrippa I and a great grandson Herod Agrippa II.

During his reign, Herod the Great accomplished many astounding feats and many grievous atrocities leaving him a checkered historical figure. He was very cooperative with the Roman rulers (Horbury, Davies and Sturdy 1999, 109) and as such was able to receive the support he needed when he needed it and ushered in a period of prosperity and stability. However, one might be prone to ask, at what cost? This very same Herod is the one who was guilty of the famous ‘Massacre of the Innocents’⁸ when he attempted to kill baby Jesus out of paranoia for his throne. He was well known for the rebuilding of the famous ‘Second Temple’ (Horbury, Davies and Sturdy 1999, 38) of Jerusalem and his massive palace in Jericho among other projects. However, the price tag for such massive buildings was pushed on to the Jewish people, driving many to intense poverty. Over his years, Herod grew more and more paranoid and disliked by his subjects and his sexual perversion increased as well (Kalmin 2006, 52-53). The picture of ‘Herod the Great’ at his death is best stated by J. Julius Scott: ‘When death finally found him in his beloved palace of Jericho, Herod the Great was a diseased, crazed, broken, pathetic figure.’⁹

⁸ Matthew 2:16-18

⁹ Scott, J. Julius, *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*, 96

At the time of his death, the kingdom of Herod the Great was divided among his sons Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Phillip the Tetrarch. Archelaus offered little to the kingdom he managed and was eventually evicted from his rule and banished to Vienne in A.D. 6 (Horbury, Davies and Sturdy 1999, 744) . Herod Antipas was every bit as ambitious as his father, launching massive building programs that taxed his citizens to death and even had an incestuous relationship that led to war with the Nabateans and eventually the exile of himself and this wife of incest to Lugdunum in A.D. 39 (Horbury, Davies and Sturdy 1999, 744). Luckily, the final of the second generation of Herodians, Phillip the tetrarch had little fanfare in his life and he happily served his people until he died quietly in A.D. 33.

Herod's grandson and his lineage, managed to handle themselves quite well using political power to handle their territories. Agrippa I inherited the mess left by Antipas and later the territories of Phillip but was a skilled politician and well liked among the Caesars for his service. Agrippa I served from A.D. 37 - A.D. 44 and briefly unified the entire Herodian kingdom. When he died, his kingdom remained in a state of uncertainty for he had no adult heirs to take his place until A.D. 49 when his oldest son Agrippa II took the throne (Horbury, Davies and Sturdy 1999, 746). Agrippa II's reign was one of peace and stability politically, but the undercurrents of the centuries of strife from the less moral Herodians and from the impoverished Jews finally exploded in two Jewish revolts which ended the Herodians and the Roman control of Judea. It is here that the story of the Intertestamental period comes to an end as far as the greatest impacting factors of the time.

Conclusion

The time between the final writings of the Old Testament and the writing of the New is not just an empty vacuum of time and space to be ignored; it is over 700 years of history that molded the world of the New Testament after the lessons of the Old. This era saw the rise and fall of countless kings and their empires, the conquest of the nations by the superpowers of times long past, and the ultimate realization that God molded history in his own hands. Differing schools of thought often argue about whether or not the centuries of Jewish oppression and death were history at work or God's divine judgment against his chosen people and still have difficulty answering that question. Yet, it seems that perhaps the very meaning of the era was to not only prepare the world for the message of Jesus, but also to show God's love despite the presence of sin by offering a divine gift of eternal life that only the King of Kings is capable of offering and a solemn reminder that no other king is greater than God.

Bibliography

- Chadwick, Henry. *The Church in Ancient Society - From Galilee to Gregory the Great*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Davies, W D, and L Finklestein. *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Cambridge University: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Horbury, William, W D Davies, and John Sturdy. *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Vol. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Kalmin, Richard. *Jewish Babylonia Between Persia and Roman Palestine: Decoding the Literary Record*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Regev, Eyal. "The Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Sacred: Meaning and Ideology in the Halakhic Controversies Between the Sadducees and the Pharisees." *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 9, 2006: 126-140.
- Rooke, Deborah. *Zadok's Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.