

## **BIB 251 The Gospels**

### **Lesson 1 - Inter-Testament period - Political History**

Intro. The necessity of studying this period is to understand the major contributors and characters of influence during the time of the Incarnation. The book of Daniel and specially the eleventh chapter is predictive of this entire period. (Scroggie does a great job of expounding the chapter and giving the fulfillment of it and naming the ruler and kingdom spoken of.) In previous chapters in Daniel there is the framework of the four major world empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Each of these four empires had a significant influence upon the culture and condition of the nation of Israel. Palestine is centrally located between each of them and would be in a strategic position to an empire attempting to maintain control of the world. Babylon's contribution was the great captivity under Nebuchadnezzar which ended with the beginning of the Persian empire under Cyrus. At this point the biblical account ceases leaving predictions of a Messiah and His Kingdom.

This inter-testament period contains the other three world empires in a span of 400 years. The Persian, Greek, and Roman empires were each used to prepare the world for the coming Messiah. The stage was being set for the redemption of man.

#### 1. The Persian period 536-333 BC

- A. Cyrus the first leader allows the Jews to return - this was the Persian contribution for preparing the world for Christ by allowing the nation to inhabit Palestine in order to fulfill biblical prophecies.
- B. The Dispersion is a key aspect that Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt were all partially responsible for. In dispersing the Jewish people, it would pave the way for the first missionaries to spread the gospel over the known world by establishing synagogues which gave a platform for Paul and the other apostles to proclaim the gospel from.
- C. During this time the Samaritans arose, the people that repopulated Palestine during the captivity. They established their own religion, forever separating them from the Jews. They held only to the Law of Moses as scripture and established their own center of worship in Mt. Gerazim, explaining the conversation Jesus had with the Samaritan woman.

#### 2. The Greek period 333-63 BC

- A. Alexander the Great - Alexander is the notable horn of Daniel 7:1-7
  1. High priests sought clemency from him showing him the prophecies of Daniel about himself. He responded well and gave good treatment to the nation inspiring a "hellenistic" pro-greek sympathies.
  2. The major contribution to Christianity from the Greek is obviously the "Hellenizing" of the world to the Greek language. Therefore, everyone in the world would speak Greek allowing them to hear the gospel in the language the NT was written and spoken in.

B. Alexander's 4 General's - after his death his empire was divided amongst his four generals (predicted in Dan. 11) which further divides the influence over Palestine. Alexander died at 32 leaving the control of the world to his four generals as Daniel had

predicted (8:21-22): Ptolemy (Egypt), Lysimachus (Asia Minor), Cassander (Greece), and Seleucus (Syria). At different times different leaders arose out of these four empires who became the dominant force in the world, each making significant contributions to the unfolding drama.

1. The Egyptian period 323-204 BC - During this time the great Library at Alexandria was founded which led to the Greek translation of the OT known as the Septuagint, which Jesus and the apostles would preach out of.
2. The Syrian period 204-165 BC
  - a. Palestine became divided into 5 provinces mentioned in NT: Judaea, Samaria, Galilee, Peraea, Trachonitis.
  - b. Antiochus Epiphanes - "God manifest" the greatest OT type of the antichrist. Destroyed Jerusalem, defiled Holy of Holies, traitor made high priest, and burned the scriptures.
3. Maccabean period 165-63 BC
  - a. Started when Mattathias an aged priest refused to offer sacrifices to Zeus (which was an attempt by Antiochus to destroy Judaism) he kills the commissioner and the disloyal Jew, tears down the altar and flees to the mountains.
  - b. His 5 sons continue the revolt: Johanan Simon, Judas (the hammer), Eleazar, Jonathan fighting guerilla warfare and eventually controlling Jerusalem.
  - c. Major contribution to Christianity: carries the priestly line up to Herod the Great who rebuilds the temple and killed the babies two and under. (Idumaen) of the line of Esau who married Mariamme of Maccabean line, likely for political advantage.
  - d. During this time priests held governing power as well, which corrupted the priesthood. "The high priesthood gradually became the coveted office of ambitious ecclesiastics who thought more of its political advantages than of its spiritual responsibilities." Baxter - it was frequently purchased.
3. The Roman period 63 BC onward
  - A. High priest deprived of royal status, retaining only original function of priesthood.
  - B. Major contribution to Christianity was the creation of Roman roads. This allowed the gospel to be spread easily across the Roman empire. They also instituted the execution method of crucifixion.
  - C. Because they knew of possible insurrection the Roman governor (Pilate) would be in Jerusalem for the feast days. He was sent to Herod for trial because he was governor over Galilee.

### Conclusion

Major contributions were the dispersion of Jews around the world, the return under the Persians, the language of the Greeks, and the roads of the Romans.