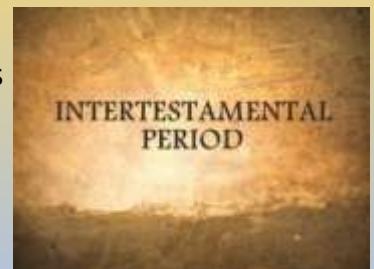




## Introduction

- Before learning church history, we need to know the prior developments that create the setting for the coming of Jesus and the birth of the church.
  - Your own birth – womb, parental factors, push/pull.
- OT ends with Malachi – NT begins with Matthew. What is different?
  - Synagogues, rabbis, Sadducees, Pharisees, King Herod, cities, Romans, Samaritans, Messiah, taxes, etc.
- Influence is a combination of Oriental and Occidental.
  - Oriental = Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and ANE.
  - Occidental = Greece and Rome
  - Abraham, the Jews, Jesus, and the Apostles were all Oriental, not Occidental. We often forget this fact.
  - Paul brings Oriental faith to the West.



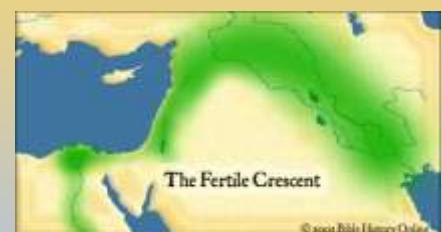
## Persian Empire

- Persian Empire rises to power in mid 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. under Cyrus the Great (Isa 44:28-45:1).
- Persia and Media unite and destroy Babylon – ended Mesopotamian power.
- Successors expand empire to include Fertile Crescent, Asia Minor, parts of Greece, and great flood plains.
  - Largest empire (land) until British in 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Stretched from Mediterranean Sea to as north as Caucasus Mts and as far east as Cush Mts in India.



## Persian Influence

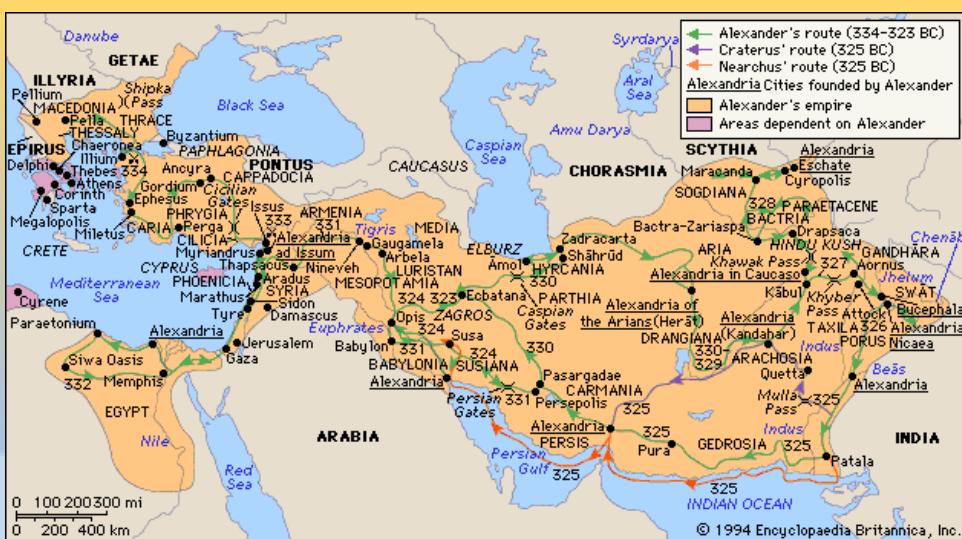
- They allowed Hebrews to return to Land.
  - Offered safety and permitted rebuilding of temple. God used Babylon to destroy His people and Persia to restore them.
- Persian period (also called Achaemenid) is covered in OT books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.
- Peace with Persia allows Judaism to develop its theological goals unhindered for almost 300 years.
- Prominence of Law, obedience to the Law, and ritual cleanliness (no intermarriage) develop.



# Persian Defeat

- Alexander the Great begins his father's planned crusade against Persia.
- The war was decided in 3 battles.
- First was at the Granicus River in upper Turkey, where Greeks defeated resident Persian army.
- Moved south to battle of Issus in 333 B.C.
  - Fought the main Persian professional army. Close battle, but Alexander won.
  - War should have ended, but Alexander mysteriously went south to conquer Egypt, and Syro-Palestine. Prophecy? (Eze 26).
  - Allowed for Persians to create another large army since he took 2 years.
- Third battle was at Gaugamela (331), which also was close. Darius was defeated and later killed. Persian Empire was finished.
- Alexander mysteriously wanted more and attacked India. Fought fierce battles with Indian princes in Indus River plain.
- Troop mutiny caused him to stop conquest. Soon after, he died.

# Alexander's Empire



## Alexander's Achievements

- He was an apostle of Hellenism – wanted the whole world to become Greek.
  - Established hundreds of colonies & married troops to local women to plant Greeks in areas.
  - Built cities to serve as operational bases for spread of Hellenism.
- Alexander had ecumenical concept – one-world government, religion, language, and king.
  - Wanted to make Greek replace Aramaic as lingua franca.
- The result of the Western world infiltrating the East was great conflict as worldviews clashed.
- Alexander died in 323, never consolidated his empire, and failed to achieve his ecumenical goals.

## Greek Empire

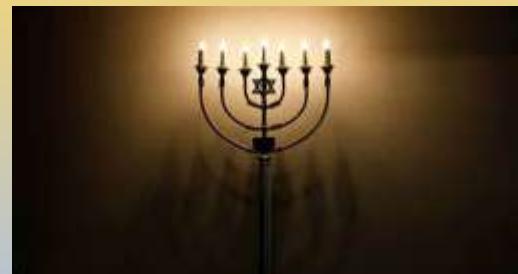
- After his death, there was internal fighting for 20 years. His empire was split 4 ways between 4 generals. These are wars of the Diadochoi.
- The only 2 that are important for our subject is that of Seleucus (Syria & Mesopotamia) and Ptolemy (Egypt & Syro-Palestine).
- The Ptolomies rule Palestine from 300 to 200 B.C. and had a hands-off policy. Jews were left alone. This allowed the later OT Judaism to grow through childhood stages—beginning of Early Judaism.
- The Seleucids were ideological heirs of Alexander and wanted to spread Hellenism. They will conquer Palestine around 200 B.C. under Antiochus III (223-187). They would use force to change people's religion.



## Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163)

- Made violent and aggressive push to destroy Jewish religion.
- Turned Jerusalem into a pagan city, outlawed Judaism, corrupted the priesthood, & committed the abomination of desolation.
  - Daniel 8:21-26 predicts this 300 years in advance.
- Antiochus had a pig sacrificed to Zeus and placed an alter in the Holy of Holies. Lasted nearly 3 years.
- Maccabean Revolt fights back – Mattathias (168-166) in Modiin, and Judas Maccabeus his son. Revolt was from the countryside.
- Did not fight on Sabbath, enforced Law of Moses on liberated regions, and were purists. Judas often defeated Greeks, until his own death.
- Revolt succeeded under his brothers. Antiochus leaves and is killed by a disease.
  - Victory led to the feast of Hanukkah (John 10:22).
- Brothers are corrupt and ungodly. They set up Hasmonaean Dynasty.
- They rule 100 years until Pompey of Rome arrives in 63 B.C.

## Antiochus and Hanukkah



# Roman Empire

---

- This is the first time a Mediterranean power became the central power of the world.
- Italy sustained a large population. At first, Rome could win wars with numbers alone.
  - Over time they developed into an efficient military machine that used the best naval and land technology of their conquered enemies.
  - They could sustain warfare on a level the that world had never seen before.
- Rome finished off the remains of Alexander's Empire by conquering the four divisions (although Parthia conquered much of the Seleucid empire).



Pompey



## Roman Rule

---

- The Romans would use either local kings, client kings, or governors.
  - It depended on the need.
- They used a client king for Palestine. Caesar Augustus made Herod the Great, the king of the Jews.
  - He was not a Jew, but a mix of Arabic and Edomite.
- Jews hated Herod and his successors because they weren't Jewish and were flagrant Hellenists.
  - Debauchery.

## Jewish Hatred for Rome

- Romans did not force Roman-Greco worldview on their subjects.
  - This is why they used local kings when possible. Why did the Jews hate them?
- The reasons were primarily economic
- By NT time, the Roman Empire aged and became more demanding on its subjects.
- Taxes were increased heavily (e.g. Egyptian villages).
  - 30-40% of income!
  - Rabbi Hillel hid grain in cane to avoid taxation.
- Roman system of tax collection allowed for corruption.
  - Publicans pay off Romans and then tax collector the people inflated prices.
- This was a violation of Law of Moses. Jews hated tax collectors.
- Light is shed on this from the Gospel account of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).
- Jews also disliked Rome for the political reason of empowering Herod's family.

## Impact of Hellenism (Greek Culture)

- Greek philosophy, language, culture, and religion influence the conquered regions.
- Philosophy – Socrates (education), Plato (idealism), and Aristotle (first cause) provide classical foundation to philosophy.
- Zeno created the philosophy of Stoicism.
  - Freedom from emotion; self-control is good, passion is bad. Antarchia – predestined purpose of each of us (fulfillment of duty leads to happiness).
  - Rejected deities in favor of a supreme being of pure intelligence called the logos, or word.
- Epicurus was a skeptic who promoted the principle of pleasure (Epicureanism). Called for pleasure in moderation.
  - Like atheists today.
- Paul has to deal with Stoics and Epicureans in Acts 17:18.

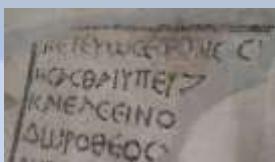
# Greek Deities

- In popular culture, the Greeks believed in a number of gods.
- Their religion was pessimistic and their gods were only super humans that were motivated by greed, selfishness, lust, pedophilia, etc. Nothing like YHWH.
- Pantheon – Zeus (chief god), Hera (goddess of women and marriage), Hermes (messenger of gods and god of thieves & merchants), Poseidon (god of the sea), Aphrodite (goddess beauty & sex), Aries (god of war), Hades (god of underworld), and Artemis (goddess of forests, hills, and fertility).
- In Acts 14:12, pagans think Paul is Hermes and Barnabas is Zeus. In Acts 19:28-29 angry crowd moves against Christians in the name of Artemis.



## Greek Contributions

- Koine Greek became the lingua franca, and the means by which the NT spread the Word of God.
  - Scholars used to think it was Holy Spirit Greek. It was really the language of commoners.
- It was spoke by most people in the eastern half of Roman Empire.



<sup>1</sup>Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.