

Biblical Prophecy between the Testaments

Without question we understand that after Malachi, who wrote his book in 450-400 BC, the pens of the writers of our Old Testament Scriptures were silent. In the 1st century AD the New Testament era of our Bible begins with the book of Matthew. (Actually the book of James was the first of the New Testament books written about 45-50 AD) However, it cannot be said that Scripture is completely silent during those nearly 500 inter-testament years.

Daniel chapter 8 is a Scriptural account for part of this period and so is Daniel chapter 11. In fact most of what Daniel wrote about in chapter 11 occurred during what is called the "Inter-Testament period." Looking forward Daniel wrote in prophecy concerning this period between the Testaments. We now can look back historically and see that his prophecies came true and interestingly, we can even accurately identify the names of people who are involved in his prophecy by following ancient historical accounts written by ancient historians.

The Medo-Persian Empire, 539-333 B.C.

The Medo-Persian Empire controlled the area of the Middle East that included the land of Israel from 539 BC to 333 BC. This Empire was used by God to allow the exiled Jews to return to their homeland Israel, (See Ezra and Nehemiah). This Empire also made it possible for the Jews to rebuild their temple, the city of Jerusalem and its wall and return to their old way of life and worship in the temple. They were allowed, once again, to establish the Levitical Priests, the office of the High Priest and to worship God with sacrifices and offerings in the

temple. After more than 70 years of captivity they were able to worship and live again as orthodox Jews according to their Levitical Law established by God through Moses.

The Jews were ruled by high priests who acted under Syrian governors rule who had annexed Israel but were controlled by the Medo-Persian Empire. These priests were both spiritual and civil heads of state for Israel. An assembly of leaders, called the Sanhedrin, advised the priests and was used as a check and balance of the priest's power and influence. The Sanhedrin made it impossible for the Priests to overstep their boundaries, so to speak. In the Intertestament Period Jewish scribes replaced the now absent prophets to safe guard and control the sacred Scriptures under the priest's authority.

The Medo-Persian Empire reached the height of power in about 500 AD but by the time of its fifth emperor, Artaxerxes I (Referenced in Nehemiah), the empire had become weak. The seat of power for Medo-Persian Empire was at **Susa** ("Shushan" **Nehemiah 1:1**) in present day Iran east of the Tigris River. As the Medo-Persian power declined this gave the ruler of Greece, Alexander the Great, the opportunity to overthrow the Medo-Persian Empire.

The Grecian Empire, 333-146 B.C.

Thus enters the Grecian Empire ruled by **Alexander the Great**, Daniel's third world empire as he described the statue in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2. In 333 BC Alexander the Great defeated the Medo-Persian Empire. This was prophesied by **Daniel in chapter 8** where Daniel wrote about his vision

of the **Ram and the Goat**. The **Ram** represents the **Medo-Persian Empire** and the **Goat** represents the **Grecian Empire**. The “**Notable Horn between the eyes of the Goat**,” (Daniel chapter 8 verse 5) is a reference to the person of **Alexander the Great**.

After Alexander the Great had conquered the Persian Empire he took possession of Jerusalem and went on to conquer northern Egypt in North Africa. Alexander the Great treated the Jews well and gave them many liberties.

The following article is from the book, “Josephus, the essential writings.” Josephus dated the following information at **332 B.C.**

Alexander had conquered Tyre, following a seven-month siege. After two more months he had taken the city of Gaza also. Then he hurried to go up to Jerusalem.

When Jaddua, the high priest, heard that Alexander was coming, he was terrified, and ordered his people to join him in sacrifice and prayer to God. Appearing to him in a dream, God told him to take courage and decorate the city with wreaths. The people were to clothe themselves in white and the priests with robes of their order. Then they were to march out of the gates to meet the Macedonians, for they would not be harmed.

Jaddua awoke rejoicing, and announced the revelation to all. When he learned that Alexander was not far from the city, he went out in a procession with the priests and the people. Alexander saw the procession coming toward him: the priests were clothed in linen and the high priest in a robe of blue and gold. On

his head was a miter with the golden plate on which God's name was inscribed. Approaching alone, Alexander prostrated himself before the Name and greeted the high priest. As the Jews welcomed Alexander with one voice and encircled him, his officers wondered if he had suddenly become insane. One of them, Parmenio, went up to Alexander and asked him to explain. He replied, "When I was a Diom in Macedonia, considering how I would become master of Asia, I saw this very person in my sleep, dressed as he is now. He urged me not to delay, but to cross over confidently and take dominion over the Persians."

Alexander was escorted into Jerusalem by the high priest and his attendants. He went up into the temple, where he sacrificed to God according to the high priests directions. And when the book of Daniel was shown to him, which predicted that one of the Greeks would destroy the Persian Empire, he thought himself to be the one so designated. When he offered the Jews whatever they desired, the high priest asked that they might observe their own laws and be exempt from the tribute every seventh year. Alexander granted these requests. They further asked that the Jews in Babylon and Media be allowed their own laws, and he also agreed. Finally he told the people that if any of them wanted to enlist in his army, he would allow them to continue their own customs, and many joined his army.

Alexander now left Jerusalem. The Samaritans of Shechem which was beside Mount Gerizim and was inhabited by Jewish apostates saw how Alexander had honored the Jews. They now also claimed they were Jews and asked Alexander to visit their temple and to grant them the seventh-year exemption from tribute.

He promised to consider it in the future, and took Samaritan troops with him to Egypt.

When Alexander died after conquering Persia, his empire was divided among his (4) succeeding generals. (End of article by Josephus)

Alexander the Great died In Babylon in 323 BC at the age of 32 and his Grecian kingdom was divided into four parts. Each part was given to four of Alexander's generals to govern. These four generals are illustrated in Scripture as, **“the four horns that stood up in the place of the broken horn of the Goat,”** Daniel chapter 8 verse 22. These four generals were:

- **Cassander** who controlled Macedonia and Greece.
- **Lysimachus** who controlled Thrace and parts of Asia Minor.
- **Ptolemy** controlled Egypt, Israel, and parts of North Africa.
- **Seleucus** controlled Syria and Mesopotamia.

Under the divided empire, Israel under the control of **Ptolemy** of Egypt, was Libya and Arabia. Another one of the four generals was **Seleucus** who obtained Syria and the Asian countries not given to Ptolemy. With this alignment the Seleucid kings were kings from Asia and Ptolemy kings were from Africa.

Keep general **Seleucus** in mind because out of his ruling dynasty, 7 generations later in 175 BC, a **king having “fierce features”, (KJV, fierce countenance), (NIV, stern-faced)**, came to power, **Daniel chapter 8 verse 23.** This King whose exploits against the Jews, Jerusalem and the temple in 175 to

165 B.C. are recorded in **Daniel chapter 11 verses 21-45**, and is named **Antiochus IV Epiphanes**.

In Daniel chapter 11 from verse 5 through to the end of the chapter there is a detailed account of the battles and conflicts between the rulers of the **Seleucus dynasty**, called **the kings of the North**, and the **Ptolemy dynasty**, called **the kings of the South**. These battles and conflicts involved **Israel** because **Israel** was under the control of the **Ptolemy Dynasty** and also because **Israel** was located between these two warring factions.

Why does the angel give Daniel such detailed accounts concerning Israel? It is because the angel is giving information to Daniel who had asked God for ***understanding about his people and the Nation of Israel***.

Daniel chapter 9 verses 17-19, *¹⁷Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. ¹⁸O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. ¹⁹O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.*"

Daniel chapter 10 verse 12, *Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and **I have come because of your words.**”*

During the control of Israel by the Grecian General **Ptolemy** and the **kings of the south** who followed in the **Ptolemy dynasty**, the Jews in Israel were allowed to keep their own priests just as they had under Alexander the Great's domination. **Ptolemy** brought several thousand Jews to Alexandria, Egypt and he gave the Jews religious freedom and full citizen rights. However, the Greek culture was dominant in Egypt and the Jews found it difficult to maintain their separation as Jews from the Gentiles.

In about 280 BC seventy-two Jewish scholars were asked to come from Israel to assemble in Alexandria by the ruler **Ptolemy II Philadelphus** for the task of translating the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language which was the common language of the day. This was a holy supernatural event; each of the seventy-two persons involved in the translation was responsible for his copy of the translation. Each of the 72 copies of the translation produced the same words and phrases and the same number of alphabetic letters as though guided by the Holy Spirit Himself. It took 72 days to complete this venture. We know this translation now as the **Septuagint Version** of the Old Testament.

Josephus, in his book “The essential Writings,” describes this account of how the **Septuagint Version (Otherwise known as the Greek Version)** of the Old Testament came to be written. **Here is part of what Josephus wrote.**

“After Ptolemy Soter had ruled for 41 years, (Ptolemy) Philadelphus took over Egypt for the next 39 years. Demetrius of Phalerum, who was in charge of the king’s library, told the king that he wanted to collect all the books in the world, if possible. Demetrius went on to say that there were many books of law among the Jews, which were worth studying and adding to the King’s library. But they were written in the Jewish language, he said, and ought to be translated into Greek for the library. The king was pleased with Demetrius’ proposal and wrote to the high priest of the Jews about the matter.”

(Here is part of that letter.)

I have decided to have your Law translated into Greek and deposited in my library. You will do well, therefore, to select from each tribe six men of good character. They should be mature, knowledgeable about the laws, and able to make an accurate translation.

Josephus continues with his writing, “*Eleazar, the high priest at this time, was delighted with the king’s letter and the gifts the king had sent with the letter. He gladly selected and sent him **70*** educated men out of the twelve tribes, who carried with them to Alexandria the sacred books of the Jews...* Josephus continues further in his article. *The elders worked on their translation in a house*

that Demetrius had prepared for them. It was on an island near the seashore, a quiet place where they could write and talk together without being interrupted. When the Law had been translated after 72 days, Demetrius called together all the Jews and read the translation aloud in the presence of the elders. They expressed their approval and desired copies.”

***Note:** Josephus does not explain the numerical problem: six each from twelve tribes should be **72, not 70**.

During this period of rule under the Grecian dynasty the Jews were split into two opposing parties; one party was called the **Hellenizers** and the other party was known as the **Anti-Hellenizers**. The Hellenizers cared little for religion; they were worldly, intellectual, sophisticated and conformed to the world. Later they would become the sect called the Sadducees who hardly believed in anything that was of spiritual in nature. The Anti-Hellenizers, on the other hand, renounced anyone who opposed traditional Judaism and were proud of their orthodoxy (their accepted traditional Jewish practices and beliefs). Later they would become the sect known as the Pharisees.

In 204 BC the last strong Ptolemy ruler (King of the South) died and their rival, the Seleucid kings of the North, began to take control of Israel. It was Antiochus III the Great a Seleucid ruler who ruled from 223 to 187 BC who took Israel from the weak Ptolemy king of Egypt. The son of Antiochus III the Great whose name is **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** (175-165 BC) (the little horn of

Daniel chapter 8, verses 9-12) wanted to make a great empire for himself. (The Jews called Antiochus IV Epiphanes, **Antiochus the madman**) His goal was to Hellenize the world. In the temple at Jerusalem he replaced spiritual priests with unspiritual ones; he outlawed the practice of Judaism. He desecrated the temple and abolished worship of the one true God. He set up pagan worship with its sacrilege and immorality. Additionally, in 168 BC he abolished the Jewish daily sacrifices and desecrated the temple and altar by forcing the Jews to sacrifice to heathen gods as noted in **Daniel 11:21-35**. This act of desecration of the temple and the temple altar by **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** is known in Scripture as the “**Abomination that makes desolate,**” (**Daniel 11:31**), the “**Transgression of Desolation**” (**Daniel 8:13**).

NOTE: Here is one reason why Antiochus IV Epiphanes so viciously attacked Israel and desecrating the temple at Jerusalem.

In **Daniel chapter 11 verse 30**, Daniel wrote, ***For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage.*** The King James Bible says, “*Ships of Chittim shall come against him...*” This is a reference to the **Roman ships** who opposed the Grecian rule of **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** as he marched toward Alexandria, Egypt for another conquest against the **Ptolemy Dynasty**. Since he was prevented from this conquest, he turned his rage against **Israel** because **Israel** was under control of the **Ptolemy king**. The **Romans** were rising in power and would become the **fourth world empire** as referred to by Daniel as the **legs**

and feet of iron and clay in describing King Nebuchadnezzar's statue in Daniel chapter 2. The **Roman Empire** is also the **fourth beast, dreadful and terrible** Daniel described in chapter 7 verse 7.

The following article is from the book, "**Josephus, the essential writings.**" Josephus dates the following information at **167 BC**.

*In Egypt, **Ptolemy Epiphanes** had died, and the son who succeeded him, **Ptolemy Philometor**, was so young that **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** of Syria invaded Egypt with a large force and took Memphis. But before he could besiege Alexandria, the Romans ordered him out of Egypt. Afraid of Rome, he obeyed at once and returned via Judah.*

*At this time, Jerusalem was in confusion, for the high priest, Onias (III), had died, leaving an infant son. The brothers of Onias then fought for the high priesthood: Jesus, a name he had changed to Jason defeated his brother, but Menelaus and his followers fled to **Antiochus (IV Epiphanes)**. They offered Antiochus their services as guides for an invasion of Judea, and so he now marched against Jerusalem and took it without difficulty, for the friends of Menelaus opened the gates for him. Killing many in the opposition party, he plundered the city, after which he returned to Syria.*

Two years later, Antiochus came back to Jerusalem with his army. Having again been admitted within its walls, he treated the inhabitants with great cruelty, sparing not even those who had led him into the city. He dismantled the walls of

Jerusalem, burned the finest parts of the city, and stationed a Macedonian garrison in the citadel overlooking the temple. He carried away the golden vessels and treasures of the temple, putting a stop to the sacrifices. He polluted the altar by offering up swine on it, knowing that this was against the Law of Moses. He compelled the Jews to give up their worship of God and to stop circumcising their children. Those who persisted were mutilated, strangled, or crucified, with their children hung from their necks.

When the Samaritans saw the Jews suffering these cruelties, they sent a letter to Antiochus denying any Jewish relationship. They also asked that their “temple without a name” on Mt Gerizim be known as that of Zeus Hellenios.

The Jews prepared to oppose the decrees of **Antiochus IV Epiphanes**. **Mattahias Maccabeus**, a priest well advanced in years, objected to the changes in worship and led a revolt that killed some Syrian officers. His son, **Judas Maccabeus**, became the Jews military leader and organized the anti-Hellenism party **called the Maccabees** against the party of the Hellenists. Thousands of Jews were killed in the conflict including Judas Maccabeus. His two brothers, Jonathan and Simon Maccabeus then led the fight of the Anti-Hellenists to bring political independence and religious freedom back to the Jews who had remained faithful to Judaism. **Israel** began to make an alliance with **Rome** to help guarantee its independence from the **Grecian** rule. **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** went insane and died in 165 BC, (see verse 25 of Daniel chapter 8,

“But he shall be broken without human means.”) By December 25, 164 BC
the Jews had cleansed and re-dedicated the temple.

See handout “Who are the Maccabees?”

Foot Note to the paragraph above: Because of the destruction caused by the battle to overthrow those who controlled the temple and because sacrifices to Grecian gods were made on the altar, the **“Abomination that makes desolate,”** (Daniel 11:31), the **“Transgression of Desolation”** (Daniel 8:13), the temple was refurbished, the old altar torn down and a new altar built. After the refurbishing process was completed the Jewish priests cleansed and rededicated the temple to God. This rededication was done on the **25th of the Jewish month of Kislev (December) in the year 164 BC.** You are familiar with the Jewish celebration for this historical event. Jesus celebrated this event called ***Hanukkah*** in John 10:22-23.

The Roman Empire, 146 BC to 476 AD

In 146 BC the Roman armies led by the Roman general Pompey marched against the Grecian army at Jerusalem and captured it. In the battle 12,000 Jews were killed, most of them by the Grecian army. In 37 B.C. Herod became ruler in Jerusalem and ruled until 4 AD. It was this Herod who gave the orders to kill all Jewish children at the age of 2 or under in an attempt to kill Jesus, Matthew chapter 2.