

# **The Intertestamental Period: Alexander the Great and Hellenism**

330 - 300 BC

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## Introduction:

1. Understanding the context and content of the Bible helps to have a good perspective of the world in which the Bible takes place.
2. I hope we don't get bogged down in names, dates, and minutia but to provide you with information relevant to the shaping of the New Testament world.
3. The world we observe in the new testament is very different from the world in the old testament. The purpose of this class is to gain some perspective on both the what and the why of those changes.

## **I. OT Eras:**

### **A. The Patriarchs**

1. Creation to ~1876 BC =

### **B. The Formation of Israel**

1. ~1876 BC to ~1350 BC = 526 years
2. Israel spent 430 years in Egypt. From ~1876-1446.

### **C. The Judges**

1. ~1350 BC to ~1050 BC = 300 years

### **D. The United Kingdom**

1. ~1050 BC to ~931 BC = 119 years

### **E. The Divided Kingdom**

1. ~931 BC to 722 BC = 209 years
2. The divided Kingdom came to an end with the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC

### **F. Judah Alone**

1. ~722 BC to 605 BC = 117 years

### **G. The Exile to Babylon**

1. ~586 BC to 516 BC = 70 years
2. The Babylonian Empire falls to the Persian Empire in 539 BC
3. King Cyrus of the Persians allows some Jews to return in 538 BC.

### **H. The Restoration**

1. ~516 BC to 432 BC = 84 years
2. The Second Temple is completed in 515 BC after 21 years.

### **I. The Intertestamental Period / Second Temple Period**

1. 432BC to 4 BC = 428 years
2. The "intertestamental period" begins with the writing of Malachi, which is the conclusion of the OT and extends to the birth of Jesus.
3. The "Second Temple period" begins with the construction of the temple in 515 BC and ends with its destruction in AD 70.

## II. Prophecies of Daniel

- A. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream
  - 1. (Daniel 2:31-45)
- B. The vision of the Ram
  - 1. (Daniel 8:20-22)

## III. Alexander's Conquest

- A. Alexander's Background
  - 1. Alexander succeeded his father, Philip II of Macedon was assassinated (possibly by Alexander) in 336 BC at age 20.
  - 2. Alexander was personally educated by the great philosopher Aristotle.
- B. Alexander's Conquest and Goals
  - 1. Alexander was a master strategist
    - a) He created the Phalanx
  - 2. Alexander immediately began a military campaign of conquest with a "Pan-Hellenistic" vision for the world.
  - 3. November 333, Alexander conquers the Persian Empire at the battle of Issus
- C. Alexander's death
  - 1. Alexander died in 323 BC at the age of 32.
  - 2. Alexander died without a proper heir to inherit his empire. His young son Alexander IV and his wife, Roxane, are murdered by Cassander.
  - 3. Alexander's four great generals begin to carve up his empire and make themselves kings.
    - a) Ptolemy I "Soter" — associated with Egypt
    - b) Seleucus I "Nicator" — Associated with the East
    - c) Antigonus I "Monophthalmus" — Associated with Asia Minor and Macedon
    - d) Cassander — Associated with Greece and the European portions of the Empire.

## IV. Features of Hellenism

- A. Common Language
  - 1. Greek became the common language of business and trade.
  - 2. This would later result in the creation of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint (LXX).
- B. Common currency.
  - 1. Economic unity allowed the world to become a "smaller" place.
- C. Greek Education
  - 1. Literacy explodes across the world.
  - 2. Exposure to many of the Greek Philosophers
    - a) Platonic Philosophy, Aristotelian philosophy, stoicism, epicureanism, etc.
    - b) Platonic influence on Jewish intellectuals like Philo of Alexandria shaped Jewish thought.
- D. Greek "Polis" (Cities)
  - 1. There was a transition from villages and temple-states to city life.

2. Greek Social events and clubs.
  - a) Gymnasiums were a major issue for the Jews.
  - b) Greek/Roman Religion and social obligation were closely tied together.
- E. Religious Syncretism
  1. The assimilation of local Gods into the Greek pantheon.
    - a) Ex. Baal became Zeus because they were both “chief gods”
- F. Increased Individualism.
  1. As culture begins to shift, the cultural and traditional norms are now voided, leaving individuals isolated and trying to blaze a new path.