

Bible Study # 28
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Between the Testaments

We have been going through the Old Testament from the standpoint of an historical survey. In other words, we're not going through everything in every book of the Old Testament, but we're going through the story flow of the history of the Old Testament starting with the book of Genesis, coming down through the five books of Moses, through Joshua and Judges, through the story of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles as has been put together. Then we went through the books of Ezra and Nehemiah which pick up the story from the time of the Babylonian captivity until the conclusion of the story that we have directly recorded in our Bibles.

After the death of Ezra and Nehemiah, the completed Old Testament, as the Jews had preserved it, was delivered into the hands of the Great Synagogue which was presided over by the high priests. The Great Synagogue was the Great Assembly. We are told in the book of Nehemiah that Nehemiah brought together a great assembly (5:7), and he presided over it.

After his death, it was presided over by the high priests. This was the group that was charged with the responsibility of maintaining the reforms that Ezra and Nehemiah had brought together and accomplished. There is reference in the book of Nehemiah to these things and to the specifics. Some of the genealogies, the lists of names we went into (which we did not focus on in detail) delineate who were involved in the Great Assembly. Ezra, you remember, brought back the copy of the Law (Ezra 7:14), the Scriptures, from Babylon, and as he brought back those Scriptures from Babylon, he was responsible for teaching them to the Jews who had returned. This set the stage. They had all those problems. The Great Assembly was left with the responsibility for maintaining the reforms.

There were other events going on in the world that affected what was happening with the Jews and what was happening in Judea. The Persian Empire under which the Jews had gained independence continued along for a period of time, basically for a generation after the death of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Malachi would be contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. The book of Malachi was the last book that was written and added in. By 400 B.C., the canon of the Old Testament was completed.

The Persian Empire continued on over the course of the next 70 years. By the time 70 years has passed, we have a generation that has come into leadership that only know of Ezra and Nehemiah by what they have heard from others. They were as far removed from Ezra and Nehemiah as we are removed from World War I.

The events of World War I certainly affected us; there are a handful of people left who have firsthand memory. There are others who have secondhand memory, who heard stories told by their parents and people who went through it. But you see, after 70 years, even those people are less and less.

The generation that was on the scene in leadership positions when Alexander the Great overthrew the Persian Empire was as far removed from Ezra and Nehemiah as we are removed from World War I. Alexander the Great had a tremendous impact on the ancient world at that time and a major impact on the events that shaped the world into which Jesus Christ came.

What we want to do this evening is **to set the stage for the story that we are going to encounter next Bible study when we go into the New Testament and do a survey of the Gospels and Acts. What we find are the events between the Testaments that shaped the society into which the Messiah came.** One of the events that greatly shaped this was the rule of Alexander the Great.

The events of between the Testaments are told in the Bible. They are not directly told in the Bible, but they are told in prophecy in the book of Daniel. We might just notice very briefly in the book of Daniel.

In Daniel 8, Daniel saw in vision. He is writing prior to the time and around the time that Babylon fell in 539 B.C., before the Persian Empire came to power and right around the time that Babylon fell. Daniel saw a vision (v. 1).

Daniel 8:3-5, "Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no beast could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great. And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes." The goat had one great horn. This was a rather unusual

looking goat. The horn protruded out from between his eyes.

Verses 6-8, “Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand. Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.”

This was an unusual thing. When you break a goat’s horn off, you don’t see four little sprouts come out, but this is what happened with this particular goat. It goes on into some other things, but let’s notice the interpretation.

Verses 20-22, “The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.”

What we find here is the story when the empire of the Medes and the Persians is going to come in and conquer. Then they would be overthrown by an empire from the west—an empire that was going to move with great force and speed—the empire or kingdom of Greece. That was typified in that “large horn”; it is one significant king, the one that was the founder of the Empire, Alexander the Great. He was going to sweep across and absolutely destroy this ram, the empire or kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. But then this great horn, this king, Alexander the Great, was going to be broken off. And rather than his empire being perpetuated by his son and grandson, it would be broken off and would be split into four divisions with each ruled over by a king—by one of his generals as it actually was. And that was the case. Let’s go on a little bit further.

Daniel 11:2, “And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.” This refers to Xerxes. Xerxes would be the one to stir up everyone against Greece.

Verses 3-4, “Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do

according to his will And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.” Then it describes a king of the South (v. 5) and talks about a king of the North (v. 13).

What we have as you go through Daniel 11 is a story that comes down to a fight between a king of the North and a king of the South. Let’s get the picture. Alexander’s empire conquered the known world. It spread across from Greece. He swept across Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), came down through Palestine, conquered the area of Judah, came all the way down into Egypt and conquered Egypt. He spread across to the Euphrates River to ancient Babylon, into Persia, all the way into India. He got all the way to Afghanistan, the area of India and Afghanistan.

Certain of the Afghan tribes trace themselves back and are descendants from some of the soldiers of Alexander the Great. They were a bunch of fighters, and they have been fighting ever since. Nobody has ever been able to do anything with them, as the Russians have learned to their dismay.

You read of the British Empire at its height, and the most that the British were ever able to do with the Afghans was to put soldiers at the Kybur Pass and to keep them from coming into India. They had a very similar escapade in Afghanistan as the Russians did, and they finally decided the simplest thing to do was to get out of Afghanistan, just guard the Pass and not let them get out—keep them there. They are a rough bunch when it comes to that.

Alexander’s Empire spread across all the way to India. He conquered the northern part of India, the part he wanted, and up to the border that is now Afghanistan. He left soldiers and spread across the whole Middle East. He united the whole Middle East, everything from Greece to India.

You see, the Persian Empire had not gone that far west. The Persian Empire had extended up to portions of India. Alexander conquered even more of India than the Persians had. The Persians had a great Empire. Alexander had smashed their empire and he did it in just a few years. Basically, it took ten years for Alexander to conquer the world, from 333 B.C. when he crossed the Dardanelle from Greece into Turkey. And in ten years he was dead. He was thirty years old and he was obviously a remarkable

individual to have been able to “stir up” things to that point.

But when he died, there was no one person to take his empire. Very quickly, within a few years, it split into four divisions and was led by his four generals: Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander and Lysimachus. These were the four particular generals that split it. It was prophesied in the book of Daniel that this would happen. Daniel was writing before the fact. In a matter of a few decades, the empire consolidated to where Seleucus in the North ruled the area of what is modern-day Syria across to Babylon. Ptolemy ruled Egypt in the South. This is north and south from the standpoint of Jerusalem, the normal way directions are given in the Bible—from the standpoint of Jerusalem. What’s east and west is different if you are in China, as opposed to if you are in the United States or Europe. Directions are a matter of where you are in relationship to other things.

The portions of Alexander’s Empire that had long-term impact on the Jews were the areas of Seleucus to the north and Ptolemy to the south. These are outlined in Daniel 11. The details of the king of the North and the king of the South pushing at each other back and forth are recorded. We are not going to go through the details of Daniel 11, but we will at a later time. It actually records in advance all of the struggles back and forth.

Now if you look at a map and look at the area to the north where Syria stretches across to Babylon and look at the south to where Egypt is, what’s in the middle? What’s between them? – Jerusalem, the area of the Jews.

Now what do you think they fought over? It didn’t take them long to start fighting. They wanted to expand their territory. Well, what is in the middle? Jerusalem. So when they were going to fight, what were they going to fight over? Who was going to rule that? It was a matter that if Ptolemy was going to move north and try to fight against Seleucus, the kingdom of the North, then he had to go through Jerusalem to get there. And if the Seleucuses were going to come to the south to fight and try to conquer Egypt, they had to come through Jerusalem to get there. So what it amounted to, the Jews caught it in every direction. Every time they came through, the Jews got caught in the middle.

This set the stage for events that greatly affected them and shaped the world into which Jesus Christ came. There were events that resulted from Alexander’s coming on the scene. One of the major events that resulted from Alexander’s

conquest was that the Greek language and culture were diffused throughout the known world, all the way across to India. Each of these four kingdoms that came up was still a Greek kingdom. The Ptolemys who ruled Egypt were Greek. The last of the Ptolemys was Cleopatra. She’s probably the best known. You’ve heard the story of Anthony and Cleopatra. She committed suicide, and the Romans swallowed up her kingdom. She was the last of the Ptolemys. She was not Egyptian in the ethnic sense. She was Greek. The Ptolemys were Greek. They were descendants of one of Alexander’s generals who conquered that area and ruled it.

The Seleucus ruled from Syria to Babylon. The capital was at Antioch in Syria. They named it after themselves. Antiochus was one of the most popular names that all of these kings up in the north had. We’ll talk about one in a few minutes whose name was Antiochus Epiphanes which means “Antiochus of the glorious appearing.” He obviously had a high opinion of himself. He must have thought he looked pretty good. He plays a role in both Bible history and Bible prophecy.

So the stage was set. The Greek language and culture spread across the known world. This set the stage for the New Testament because what is the New Testament written in? It is written in Greek. That was a common language that most educated people could speak by the time of the New Testament. That’s why the apostles could go into different areas of the world and communicate in the Greek language. Wherever the Apostle Paul would travel, he could communicate in Greek. Not to say that he didn’t speak other languages. The New Testament was written in Greek, and the Christian community (scattered throughout a wide area at that time) could understand it because the Greek language was the language of education. People spoke their native language, but in addition, if they were educated, if they went to school, they learned Greek. It became the language of education, of trade and commerce in much the same way the spread of the British Empire and the English language in the 19th century set the stage for God’s work today.

The diffusion of the English language throughout the world meant that God’s work could go to the world in English and reach educated people throughout the world, whose native tongues would have been languages we wouldn’t have known or wouldn’t have had a way to gain access to. Then, as educated people in those societies learned the truth and came into the

Church, speaking and having knowledge of English, they also spoke the native language of their country. It opened the way for the work to go out in other languages.

The widespread use of English, as well as other colonial languages, set the stage. We could go first in English to a great deal of the world. What we couldn't reach in English could generally be reached in French. Portions of the non-English parts of the Caribbeans and the non-English part of Africa could be reached in that way by the French language, and then the Spanish language, again as a result of colonial empires throughout the areas of Latin America.

So in three languages, the vast majority of nations could be impacted. God set the stage for that. God determined the bounds. We are told God has made of one blood all people that on the face of the earth do dwell and has determined the bounds of their habitations and the times appointed (Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26). So God has a great time plan.

The Greeks came on the scene and spread across the world. They spread knowledge of the Greek language and culture. Then within a very short time, it came down to a Greek kingdom in the North and a Greek kingdom in the South—and the Jews were caught in the middle.

Now Alexander the Great played a role. I want to read to you a few comments from the Jewish historian, Josephus. He was one who wrote contemporary with the Apostle Paul, a priest of the priestly family in Jerusalem. He was a general in the war of the Jews against the Romans. He was taken captive by the Romans, and therefore lived to write an account. He gives a very good historical account of many of these things. There are a number of comments that he makes. We can pick up the story at the time of Alexander.

Let me read you a comment on Alexander the Great in *Josephus*, *Antiquity of the Jews*, Book 11, Chapter 8, 4-7, "Alexander, when he had taken Gaza in Egypt, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony and under terror, not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased with him." So Alexander (this is about 331 B.C., about 70 years after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah) is on his way to Jerusalem. He has conquered Egypt and now is coming to Jerusalem; the high priest is scared because he knows Alexander is mad. He determines what he should do.

So they decided the best course was to bring out a copy of the book of Daniel and to show

Alexander what was said about him. They figured they needed to do something to get on his "good side." We are told, "When the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that he was the person intended and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude. The next day he called them and asked what favors they pleased of him. Whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the Laws of their forefathers and pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all that they desired. When they entreated of him that he should permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws, also he willingly promised to do hereafter, as they desired."

Then we are told, "The Samaritans seeing that Alexander had so greatly honored the Jews determined to profess themselves Jews. For such is the disposition of the Samaritans, as we have already elsewhere declared that when the Jews are in adversity, they deny that they are of kin to them, and then they confess the truth, but when they perceive that some good fortune has befallen them, they immediately pretend to have communion with them, saying that they belong to them and they derive their genealogy from the posterity of Joseph."

That is the illustration that is made in the book of Revelation, "...those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie..." (Revelation 3:9). That is an illustration to the Samaritans and what they have always done, as Josephus records, even back in ancient history, back to the time of Alexander.

I read the portion in Daniel that applies to Alexander the Great. He was coming in and he was mad. They said, "We better show him something; we better show him something to get on his "good side." He's going to fight the Persians. We will bring out and say, "Here are our sacred books and you are mentioned in there. Let us show you what it says."

So they showed him there that the king of Greece is going to smash the king of Persia; he was rather pleased with that and was sure that he was the king of Greece mentioned there. I am sure they stopped at the right part of the verse and didn't go on down to show him that he was going to be broken and that his empire would be divided. It is a matter of knowing where to stop reading. You don't necessarily read the whole thing. They read to him the good part, and he was so pleased with it that he agreed to let them out of paying taxes every seventh year because if

they were keeping the Sabbatical year, they wouldn't have anything to pay taxes with.

The Samaritans thought this was a good idea. They didn't keep the Sabbatical year, but they liked the idea of getting out of paying taxes. So they sent word down to Alexander that they were Jews, too. Josephus brings out that whenever something goes well for the Jews, the Samaritans say, 'We are all in this thing together.' But when something goes bad for the Jews, the Samaritans say, 'Hey, we don't have anything to do with these people. We are not kin to them. We don't know them.' So this is the background. Josephus goes on through many of these events.

The high priest that is mentioned in the book of Ezra and Nehemiah is the one Josephus mentions.

Nehemiah 12:1, "Now these are the priest and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Sheltiel, and Jeshua..." It goes through and names them. This is in the days of Jeshua.

Verses 10-11, "Jeshua begot Joiakim, Joiakim begot Eliashib, Eliashib begat Joidad. Joiada begot Jonathan, and Jonathan begot Jaddua." Jaddua is the one Josephus mentions that met Alexander the Great. His successor is called Simon the Just because of his kind disposition toward God. Simon the Just was high priest from about 309 B.C. to 280 B.C. This brings us down to within about 280 years of the birth of Christ. The great synagogue founded by Ezra lasted until the time of Simon. Simon the Just was considered by the Jews as the last righteous high priest. In the aftermath of his death, there were events that took place.

By this time we are getting quite a ways down from direct contact with the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Simon was a young fellow, a young man at the time of Alexander the Great. The high priest at the time of Alexander the Great was one who had been born about the time of the death of Ezra and Nehemiah. You have a certain amount of continuity, but what happened by this time?

The Greek culture had spread and the tendency of people is to try and be like the world, to try and blend in and be part of the society. The Greek language and culture had begun to have great impact upon the Jews. The high priest had gotten involved in a lot of politics back and forth. They were ruled from Egypt by the Ptolemys. Then they got the idea of quitting paying taxes to the Ptolemys. This didn't go over too well because there was warfare back and forth. By 198 B.C., Syria had moved in and taken Judea from Egypt.

The situation continued to degenerate because of the negative influence that had come in and the fact that much of the priestly families were involved in politics and were looking for worldly power. It got to the point where there was a literal fight between two brothers for the high priesthood. They allied themselves with different factions.

Jason became high priest in 175 B.C.; he was a Hellenist. A Hellenist was one that accepted Greek culture—in other words, pagan culture. He managed to usurp the priesthood from his brother. They fought on it, and then a Benjamite purchased the priesthood from the Syrian ruler. Then Jason got it back around 168 B.C., which is when the Syrians led by Antiochus Epiphanes came down to fight against the Egyptians.

They were going to conquer the Egyptians. They were always fighting back and forth. They got down there to conquer Egypt, and the Roman fleet met Antiochus Epiphanes. The Romans told him to turn around and go back where he came from because they weren't going to let him invade Egypt. He turned around, but he was mad and wanted to take it out on somebody. So he decided the simplest thing to do was to go back through Jerusalem and see if he could kill a few Jews, which he did.

He came through and he was mad for several reasons. He was mad at the Jews in general because they stood in the way. Alexander spread the Greek language, but he did something else. He also spread the Babylonian Mystery Religion. He took the priests from the schools in Babylon and scattered them throughout his empire. His idea was to create one world, one language, one religion, one race and one people. That's why his soldiers were left behind in India and near Afghanistan. The idea was to create one world, but it was one world the devil's way.

In the succession of the Babylon system, the succession of world ruling empires that Daniel describes, the devil has his plan for one world. God is going to create one world under Jesus Christ. The devil has always tried to create one world, going back to Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. Coming all the way down, the devil has in mind to create one world, the beast system. The beast power in the future is going to have their attempt to create one world, but one world under the devil's sway and the devil's influence.

Alexander spread the Greek language and culture and the Babylonian religion. These Babylonian priests were scattered throughout his empire. The Jews who were keeping the law of God stood in the way. They didn't blend in. They didn't

worship the same god, and they didn't follow the same customs. Everybody else went along with it, but these guys were the "fly-in-the-ointment." They were the ones that weren't doing what everybody else was doing. They weren't with "the program."

Antiochus Epiphanes didn't like that. So he decided that he was going to come to Jerusalem and teach the Jews a lesson. He was going to take their temple and destroy the Scriptures. He was going to set up an idol of Jupiter Olympus in the Holy Place. He was going to sacrifice a pig on the altar and he was going to put "his man" in as high priest. He was going to make the Jews follow the same religion that everybody else was following. He was going to have one world.

When you go through the succession here in Daniel 11, it talks about the king of the North and the king of the South; it goes back and forth. We pick up the story.

Daniel 11:21, "And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue." –A vile person, this is Antiochus Epiphanes. Since Seleucus, the previous king, didn't leave an heir, his brother came in and drove out Illedorous and obtained the kingdom. He flattered his way in. This is Antiochus Epiphanes.

Verse 22, "With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant." Prince of the covenant would refer to the Jewish high priest.

Verses 23-24, "And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people. He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province [Galilee and lower Egypt]...." He's going to do various things.

Verses 28-30, "While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land. At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyrus [KJV, "Chittim"] shall come against him [The ships of Chittim are the Roman fleet. Chittim was the ancient term for southern Italy; Sicily is the modern term.]; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage [The Roman fleet came and kicked him out of Egypt. He was mad and went back. What was he going to do? Take it out on the Jews!]. So he shall return and show

regard for those who forsake the holy covenant."

He comes back and enters into a league with apostate Jews who turn their back on the religion of the Jews.

Verse 31, "And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation."

He stopped the daily sacrifice and placed there the abomination that made desolate. What he did was set up an abomination that led to desolation or destruction. The abomination was the statue of Jupiter Olympus, and they offered a pig on the altar. This was an abomination that desecrated the temple, and it led to the desolation of Jerusalem.

Verse 32, "Those who do wickedly [the Jews who forsook the truth] against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery [they were going to get in good with him]; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits."

In the New Testament, Jesus spoke of an abomination of desolation that is going to take place in the future (Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14).

He said, 'When you shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet.' Daniel spoke of an abomination of desolation. It was one that had taken place in 168 B.C., 168 years before Christ. But Jesus said there would come again prior to His return, an abomination that would make desolate, that would lead to the destruction of Jerusalem. So there is an event that is to happen in the future, of which this event that happened in the past was a type. Antiochus Epiphanes, this vile person that had attained the kingdom by flattery, the one who came in and stopped the daily sacrifice and set up the abomination that made desolate, is the type of the final beast of Revelations 17 (and other places). It happened in history, but it is also prophecy.

When you understand about Antiochus and some of the things that he did, you are also getting a picture of the future. His idea was to have one world, one society, one language, one religion, and everybody will be happy if we all get together. Isn't that what is going to be said in the future by the beast and the false prophet? And who are they going to want to persecute? –Those that don't want to fall in line and don't want to get with "the program." That's why they are going to attack physical Israel and they are going to attack the true Church. They are going to

persecute God's people because they will not want to join "the program."

This is what is shaping up. There is going to come together in Europe a final seventh revival, that final tenth horn. The seventh head of Revelation 17, that final full revival of the old Roman Empire is going to come together. Babylon the Great is going to come together, and once again, it's going to attempt to enforce one world and one religion. They are really going to persecute those that don't go along with "the program," those that don't blend in, that don't fit in.

This is exactly what Antiochus tried to do. He came to Jerusalem, and he was doing these things. I want to read to you a little bit of a historical account of it—a firsthand historical account—the book of Maccabees. This is not part of Scripture and it was never intended to be. It was, rather, a historical book that the Jews preserved, but they never considered it Scripture. They simply considered it part of an historical account similar to Josephus. It provides a firsthand account.

I Maccabees 1:11-45, "And there came out of them a wicked root, Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king. In those days there went out of Israel wicked men who persuaded many, saying, 'Let us go and make a covenant with the nations around about us, for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow'...So they built a place of exercise in Jerusalem according to the customs of the heathens [a Greek gymnasium]. They made themselves uncircumcised. [They went to the point that they tried by an operation to actually disguise the fact that they had been circumcised—the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham. They didn't want to be identified as the people of God.] They forsook the holy covenant and joined themselves to the heathen and were sold to do mischief. Now after that Antiochus had smitten Egypt...he returned again and he went up against Jerusalem with a great multitude. He entered proudly into the sanctuary and took away the golden altar, the candlestick of light and all the vessels and he made a great massacre and spoke very proudly. They shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary and defiled it. The inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them. The city was made a habitation of strangers. The sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness. Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, that everyone should leave his laws so all the heathen

consented to his religion and sacrificed unto the idols and profaned the Sabbath."

So what did you have? You had a falling away.

Verses 46-60, "The king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of the Jews that they should follow the strange laws of the land and he forbade burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings and said they should profane the Sabbath and the Holy Days...and whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he should die. Many of the people gathered unto them, everyone that forsook the law, and they committed the evils in this land. And in the fifteenth day of the month, Kessla, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar and built idol altars throughout the cities of Judah on every side. Whosoever was found with any book of the Testament, or if any consented to the law, the king's commandment was that they should be put to death."

This is a type of the Great Tribulation. What Antiochus did historically was a type. Daniel prophesied of it.

Daniel 11:31-32, "...they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits."

I Maccabees 1:65-67, "Howbeit many in Israel were fully resolved and confirmed in themselves not to eat any unclean thing. Wherefore, they chose rather to die that they might not be defiled with meats and that they should not profane the holy covenant, so they died."

I Maccabees 2:1-23, "Now in those days there arose Mathias, the priest, the son of John, the son of Simeon, a priest. He left Jerusalem and dwelt in Modine. He had five sons, the last of which was Judah, called Machabeus. Now this decree went out and Mathias said, though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him and fall away everyone from the religion of their fathers and give consent to his commandment, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not hearken unto the king's word to go from our religion either to the right hand or to the left. When he had left speaking these words there came one of the Jews..."

Now what had happened was they sent in the king's officers to each city to make the people come forward and bow down to an idol and kiss

the toe of the idol. The idea was that they were going to make everybody agree. They came into this little village of Modine where Mathias the priest was. He was an elderly man. They called him up first, 'Now you, all right, you go up first, and then everybody else will come in behind you.' Well, when they told him he goes first, he said what I just read—'everybody else can do it if they want to, but I am not going to depart from the law of God.'

Verse 23, "And when he had left speaking, there came one of the Jews in the sight of all to sacrifice on the altar according to the king's commandment." There's always somebody, one of these "chicken hearted" trying to get in good with them.

Verse 24, "Now when Mathias saw this he was inflamed with zeal, his reins trembled, neither could he forebear to show his anger according to judgment, wherefore he ran and slew him upon the altar." This, needless to say, created a little bit of a furor.

Verses 25-28, "And the king's commissioner who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down. Thus dealt he zealously for the law of God like as did Phineas under Zamri, and Mathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, 'whosoever is zealous of the law and maintains the covenant let him follow me,' so he and his sons fled to the mountains and left all that they had ever had in the city." They went out.

Verse 70, "[Mathias] died..."

I Maccabees 3:1, "Then his son, called Judas Macabaeus rose up in his stead." Judas went forth and finally recaptured the city. He captured Jerusalem from the Syrians and won independence. He cleaned out the temple and rededicated it to the worship of God. He established his brother as high priest. This was the first Maccabees that ruled. They became known as the Maccabee family.

The Jews to this day celebrate this event for eight days. It is called Hanukah (also Hanukkah or Chanukah). You've heard about it. It generally takes place in December, beginning the 25th day of the tenth month on the Jewish calendar, the month of Kislev. This is the time when the temple was rededicated. It is called the Feast of Lights or Feast of Dedication.

You read of it in John 10:22. Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. The Hebrew name is "*Chanukah*," which is the term we hear. A lot of Jews in this country kind of observe it as a pseudo-Christmas, but it has no connection with Christmas at all. It goes back

to the time that the Maccabees cleansed the temple and rededicated it. It is a Feast of Dedication.

Daniel 11:31-32, this is what was spoken of in Daniel when he says, "...they would defile the sanctuary fortress; then shall take away the daily sacrifice, and place there the abomination of desolation. And such as do wickedly against the covenant and corrupt by flatteries, but the people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits." Well, the people that did know their God were strong and did exploits. That was the Maccabees and they cleansed the temple.

The Jews fought on and finally by 141 B.C., Jewish independence was achieved from Syria. Simon Maccabee was high priest. John Hircanus who was of the Maccabee family succeeded him. His son who was high priest from 134 B.C. to 104 B.C. is considered by the Jews to be the last righteous high priest.

There are events that occurred in the time of John Hircanus. It is basically at this time that the Sadducees and the Pharisees arose as sects that came to power. The Pharisees were basically laymen. They were not of the priestly families. They saw the situation that had existed and the extent to which the priests had been corrupt. The Maccabees had kicked out the corrupt priesthood and installed themselves. They were of the priestly line, but it was not a direct father-son succession. They were of the priestly families, but they had to expel the corrupt high priests and establish themselves.

Because of the situation that arose, this group of people had the idea that they wanted to enforce and make sure that things did not get back like it had been. They felt the priests needed somebody to keep an eye on them, so this group of Pharisees began to arise. The Pharisees' theory was to put a hedge about the law. They began to enact all kinds of traditions to enforce a strict separation. They were kind of a reform party that came in. Josephus tells a little bit about them.

The priests were basically identified with the Sadducees. The Sadducees took the Scripture and said, 'Look, we accept the authority of Scripture, but we don't accept the authority of oral tradition.' The Sadducees were never a large popular party. They were more restricted to the priesthood.

When John Hircanus died, his son Judas became high priest, and he also proclaimed himself as king. He was both the civil ruler and the religious ruler of the land. This continued down a little bit.

Josephus, The Antiquity of the Jews, Book 13, Chapter 6, 1, “Now when their father Hyrcanus was dead, the eldest son, Aristoples, intending to change the government into a kingdom, for so he was resolved to do, first of all put a diadem on his head....” He made himself the king.

Let me read a little bit about John Hyrcanus or about the Pharisees from *Josephus*. John Hyrcanus had been at an earlier time a Pharisee as the Pharisees had first arisen. They had been allied with him, but he left.

Josephus, Book 13, Chapter 10, 6-7, “...he made him leave the party of the Pharisees, and abolished the decrees that they had imposed upon the people...the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them...He [Hyrcanus] was esteemed by God worthy of three privileges, —the government of his nation, the dignity of the high priesthood, and prophecy; for God was with him....”

He is considered to be the last of the righteous high priests. Aristoples made himself king, and then his son Alexander took over and ruled as king in his stead and died in 76 B.C.

Now when Alexander died, his widow Queen Salome was left.

I want to read to you a statement from *Josephus*, Book 13, Chapter 16, 1, “...when she [Salome, the wife of Alexander] had taken the fortress, acted as her husband had suggested to her, and spoke to the Pharisees and put all things into their power....”

Now in the New Testament, we read where Jesus made the statement:

Matthew 23: 2, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.” Have you ever wondered how the scribes and Pharisees came to sit in Moses’ seat? This is how. In 76 B.C., Queen Salome delivered the religious authority over the nation to the Pharisees. It really makes a transition.

If you really want a parallel in terms of eras of the Church, the Maccabees makes a parallel with the Philadelphia Church—the context and the description of what the Maccabees did parallel the sixth era. And really, as you go through the eras of the Old Testament Church, they represent the sixth period or era. They were succeeded by the final era, the seventh one, which was the domination of the Pharisees, which lasted from 76 B.C. until the time of the New Testament Church.

It was the Pharisees who were in Moses’ seat at the time when Christ came on the scene. They

had gotten in Moses’ seat, having been placed there by the Maccabee family, but after several generations, had basically gotten away from that zeal. Finally, the widow of the Maccabee king, to perpetuate herself in power, gave the Pharisees religious control over the nation. Within a short period of time (this was in 76 B.C.), by 63 B.C., the Romans came in and established their rule. Less than 30 years later, Herod was set up as king by the Romans. He was king when Jesus Christ was born.

The story that we have is a story of ups and downs. It is a story of the spread of Greek influence, Greek religion (Babylonian religion with a Greek overlay), Greek culture and Greek language that spread throughout the known world at that time. There was a constant bickering back and forth (with the Jews in the middle) between the Greek kingdom of Syria to the North and the Greek kingdom of Egypt to the South. This bickering went back and forth.

As more and more of the Jews had gotten away from God, they entered into an alliance with Antiochus Epiphanes, who came in and launched what was really a type of the Great Tribulation. The result was the Maccabees and the cleansing of the temple, a certain revival that took place that lasted for basically a long generation and began to trickle out. Finally, by 76 B.C., the kingdom was basically turned over to the Pharisees to govern the religious affairs of the nation, and it set the stage for the world into which Jesus Christ came.

The Romans came in, picked up the pieces and governed things from a civil standpoint. The Pharisees governed religiously. They came in with their own ideas and traditions. They were going to solve the problem using human reason.

You have these ups and downs, these revivals, these departures. The tendency has always been for people to begin to compromise with the world, to try to be like the world, to try to blend in as Satan tries to get in his influence, to water down the law of God, to get people to kind of back off of real zealous obedience to the law.

Time after time, God has raised someone to make sure that the truth was preserved. It was in this context that Jesus the Messiah was born, coming with the good news of the Kingdom of God—not an earthly kingdom that was going to be set up as one of the competing governments of this world, but a government that God was going to establish.

I hope that in going through some of this material, we’ve gained a little bit of insight

into the story flow of the Old Testament and even the time between the Testaments. While it is time between the Testaments, it is also covered in the Bible because Daniel covers it through prophecy in Daniel 8 and 11. We see the ups and downs that culminated in the time of Jesus Christ.

We are going to pick it up next Bible study. We will start a new series. Having completed this Old Testament series, we will start into a new series on the New Testament.