

Intertestamental Period & the Herods in the Bible

Written and typed: 4/25/24

- Please allow me to touch on the major points of the intertestamental period to give you a high level understanding of how we get from Persian rule in Malachi to Roman rule in Matthew
 - We've already mentioned that Cyrus issued a decree stating the Jews could go back to Jerusalem in ~539BC – Jews start arriving in Jerusalem around ~536BC (Ezra 1)
 - The Jews in Jerusalem and Judea were under Persian rule until 332BC when Alexander the Great took control of Jerusalem
 - This is an interesting story, but I won't go into details for you here – read about it in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 11, Chapter 8 written by Josephus
 - The Jews underwent a change of allegiance
 - Supposedly the high priest received word from God (whether that part of the story is true or not, who knows) to welcome Alexander and the Greeks, and this time they listened
 - Remember when God warned them to submit to Babylon - they didn't listen
 - Didn't submit to Rome either – Paul told the Christians to (Romans 13), but apparently the Jews disregarded that memo
 - In both of these cases, the Jews disobedience ultimately led to the destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25, Matthew 23:33-36)
 - In the case of Alexander and the Greeks – the Jews listened and it saved Jerusalem
 - Alexander could have destroyed Jerusalem just like Babylon did and just like Rome would do later – he certainly had the military strength to do so
 - But he didn't have to – the Jews welcomed him and the Greeks
 - Alexander also supposedly received word from God saying that he would soon overthrow Persia (and again, who knows if this is actually true or not) – Alexander received a sense of confidence nonetheless
 - ~331BC, Greece officially dethrones Persia's rule and they become the world superpower imperialistically speaking
 - Alexander dies unexpectedly in 323BC and his kingdom is split 4 ways
 - Exactly how Alexander died – nobody really knows
 - I'll say that I've read that he was poisoned, that he was a heavy drinker and died from complications due to that, I've heard he fell off of his horse, I've heard that he had complications with epilepsy, interestingly Josephus writes in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 12, Chapter 1 that Alexander “ended his life” – so maybe even throw him falling on his sword in the mix, maybe God took him out similar to Herod Agrippa 1 in Acts 12 – who knows

- Had Alexander not died, maybe the Romans don't rise to prominence? Regardless of the specifics, God certainly had a hand in all of this as He controls the rise and fall of nations (Daniel 2, 7, 8)
- Regardless of what happened, he died unexpectedly – leaving Greece and the world in shock
- Much like when Nero died and Rome was in trouble – the Roman empire nearly collapsed
- There was trouble in the Greek empire and unlike Rome, Greece never quite recovered (Daniel 8:22)
- Of the 4 splits, 2 major ones for the Jews is Seleucus (took over Syria – the Northern kingdom in Daniel 11) and Ptolemy (he took over Egypt – the Southern kingdom in Daniel 11)
- Notice that Daniel 11 refers to them as 2 different kingdoms
 - This was not a friendly 4-way split – these guys wanted total control
 - The ambition for power, the ambition for money, greed – power corrupts
 - Anyone in a position of authority – you need to watch for this, because this is a very real thing
 - 1 Timothy 6:10 – *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*
 - Matthew 6:21 – *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*
 - Matthew 6:24 – *“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”*
 - Where's your treasure? Is it chasing after that promotion, is it chasing the almighty dollar that comes with it, or are you chasing after the Lord your God
 - God is no respecter of persons – on the day of judgment, He's not going to care if you were the managing director with 100 direct reports or the janitor – you are going to be judged the same either way
 - So consider your ways – chase after the Lord, not the things of this world
- All 4 of these new kingdoms constantly fight one another in an attempt to gain more power, but the Seleucids and the Ptolemaics were particularly violent
- Control of Judea constantly changed hands between the Seleucids and the Ptolemaics during this time period – read all about that in Daniel 11

- One prominent historical figure during this time of civil war between Greeks is Antiochus Epiphanes – he is a key figure in the prophecies of Daniel (ruled from ~175BC – 164BC) (Daniel 8, 11, etc, *Wars of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter 1)
 - In those 11 years, he did some damage
 - The state of the Jews in Jerusalem was not good (infighting, civil war type disputes over who's in control, when in reality they missed the fact that God is in control) – sound familiar?
 - How about like when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD
 - Or when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586BC
 - Amazing how many times God repeated things in Jewish history and they never learned
 - We must learn as well from our history – else we're doomed to make the same mistakes over and over again
 - 1 Corinthians 10 teaches us this (vs 1-6)
 - The Hebrews writer tells us that those who missed the promised land that Joshua led them into at the ultimate leadership of God – did so because of unbelief
 - Their unbelief looked like disobedience, rebellion, and sin
 - Does that sound like the world's definition of unbelief? Likely not – they'll tell you it's the lack of mental assent
 - No – your belief requires action and lack of action is unbelief according to Hebrews 3
 - The Christians at the subject of the Hebrews letter were to learn from that
 - “Look, they missed out because of unbelief and you are going to miss out as well” – except the thing you're going to miss out on is much better than the physical land that God gave the Israelites in the book of Joshua
 - You're going to miss out on the real promised land – an eternity in heaven with our Lord
 - And we need to learn from history as well – that's what Paul is telling the Corinthians and us today
 - An informer reached Antiochus about the state of the Jews in Jerusalem and he seized the opportunity to take control of the city
 - Antiochus' reign over Jerusalem was very brutal – I won't get into many details here because they are graphic
 - He put a stop to daily sacrifices at the temple for 3.5 years
 - He showed great violence toward the Jews
 - He used the altar to sacrifice pigs
 - He forced the Jews to neglect the laws of God

- This very much mirrors the book of Revelation – how many times did God need to show the Jews to be faithful to Him
- God still preserved His people though – He had a Messiah to bring forth and He was going to do so despite man’s weaknesses
 - Read the account of Jesus’ lineage
 - There are some bad people in that list
 - Manasseh and Amon in Matthew 1:10 – they did some evil things, a lot of evil things in the OT
 - And here they are in the lineage of our Savior
 - But God had a savior to deliver – and he wasn’t going to let man get in His way
- You may have heard of the Maccabee’s – they ran Antiochus out of Jerusalem with the help of the Romans (the Romans were actually an ally to the Jews at one point in history) and the Jews actually had an independent nation for several years once Antiochus was gone
- During the rule of the Maccabee’s, there was constant fighting (they just couldn’t establish a legitimate government) which came to an end with 2 brothers – Aristobulus and Hyrcanus
 - Hyrcanus was the rightful heir to the throne at the time, but Aristobulus was greedy and seized the throne instead
 - Again, don’t think that you can’t become overwhelmed with a thirst for power, money, etc. or a strong jealousy of something that your brethren may have
 - Acts 8:9-25
 - Peter and John had something that Simon wanted
 - Simon wanted this gift for the wrong reason – he likely wanted to make himself look better and get rich off of it
 - He was reprimanded for this type of behavior in vs 20-23
 - As Christians – we must be on guard for this type of behavior
 - We all don’t have the same talents
 - We need to be respectful of that
 - If there’s something to be done publicly (preaching, teaching, song leading, etc.) and we have multiple people who can do it, we better be ready to spread the wealth
 - Otherwise, people start putting the emphasis on the person delivering the message and not the message itself
 - God condemns this type of behavior
 - It doesn’t matter who you are, God doesn’t care if you’re the president or the guy who makes hamburgers for other people – He’s going to judge you the same way
 - This is no behavior to be demonstrating as a Christian

- Aristobulus' behavior concerned a man named Antipater the Idumean who worked as an advisor to Hyrcanus
 - Antipater talks Hyrcanus into going to Arabia, where he gets an army and attacks his brother – this draws the attention of Pompey and the Romans
 - Jesus says who lives by sword, dies by sword (Matthew 26:52)
 - By this time, Rome had emerged as the prominent world power
 - After a series of events between Hyrcanus, Aristobulus, and Pompey – Rome had enough
 - Pompey took control of Judea in the name of the Romans – and it would be a very long time before Rome ceased to control this area imperialistically
 - We mentioned Antipater of Idumea a little bit ago – how he in some ways instigated the civil war between brothers that brought Pompey into Jerusalem to assume control for Rome
 - The Jews revolted against Rome, and it was Antipater who talked Cassius (who should be well known to all of us for his role in the assassination of Julius Caesar) into acting very violently toward the people in Judea
 - And this Antipater had several sons + 1 daughter: Salome (daughter), Phasaelus, Joseph, Pheroras, and Herod (who would later become known as Herod the Great)
 - Notice that Antipater is Idumean – what do we know about the Idumeans?
 - Descendants of Esau – the nation of Edom
 - **Genesis 25:22-23**
 - The older will serve the younger
 - The Edomites will be in subject to the Israelites
 - Israel was God's chosen people – not the Edomites
 - And here we read that Antipater was Idumean
 - So Herod, the king of the Jews was Idumean – a descendant of Esau ruling over the descendants of Israel
 - So how could God be correct?
 - Does the kingdom of Edom/Idumea exist today?
 - What about the Lord's church? Does it exist today?
 - The older did serve the younger for a short time, but it is ironic that Herod descended from Esau and ruled over Israel for a time
 - When Rome participated in the Jewish-Roman war that resulted with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, they wiped out the entire Judean strip – the entire strip of land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River and then SE toward Masada – the cities that didn't submit to Vespasian and Titus were wiped out
 - The land of Idumea was included in this
 - But the Lord's church – spiritual Israel – is still strong
- And this brings us to the Herods of the Bible

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 – *“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,”*
- This gospel contains our salvation (Romans 1:16)
- God has laid out His plan of salvation for last man for us
 - **Step 1: Hearing the gospel** – *Romans 10:13-17*
 - Gospel = Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, arose, and appeared to many – *1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Romans 1:16*
 - **Step 2: Believing the gospel** – *Mark 16:16, John 3:16*
 - **Step 3: Confession that Jesus is Lord** – *Romans 10:8-10, 1 John 1:9*
 - **Step 4: Repentance of sins** – *Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38*
 - Repentance: a turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and a turning back to God. Change of mind that produces a change in action.
 - **Step 5: Baptism into Christ** – *Galatians 3:27, Acts 2:38, Romans 6:1-10, 1 Peter 3:21-22*
 - Baptism: immerse or submerge
 - **Step 6: Live faithfully** – *Revelation 2:10*