

SESSION 2: BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

This session will be something of a “break” for participants. Before the session, rather than watching the video and reading around ten chapters of Scripture, we’ll read half that amount and only watch the video when we’re together.

Read Daniel 9-12 and have a quick read of a couple of chapters from the Apocrypha (Wisdom chapter 2 and Sirach chapter 7). The NT often addresses similar topics, so it is good to hear how Jewish teachers approached them to see where the NT agrees and departs from them. Use biblegateway.com and the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. Search for “Wisdom 2” and “Sirach 7” and read the text looking for similarities with NT writings.

Summary of the Video: Module 4, Episode 2

In order to get into the time frame between the Old and New Testaments, we look first at the development of the OT canon.

Andrew Wilson gives us four major pieces of evidence that Jews in the time of Jesus considered the books of our OT as authoritative Scripture (and that they wouldn’t have seen the Apocrypha in this way): Ben Sirach, Dead Sea Scrolls, Jesus, and NT allusions.

After discussing the OT canon, we dive deep into the historical events that took place between the end of the Old Testament and beginning of the New Testament. There is a lot of detail in this section. It may be interesting historically and at times becomes important apologetically, but you likely don’t need to memorize everything you hear. Just pay attention to the big ideas.

First, we allow Daniel’s prophecy to inform our understanding of what happened between the Old and New Testaments. Daniel 11—12 offers the most information in the Bible about this time period. Essentially, Alexander the Great conquered the Persians and amassed a huge empire. When he died, his empire was divided into four portions, two of which matter for understanding the NT (Ptolemies and Seleucids). Toward the end of Daniel’s prophecy we start to see a glimmer of hope about the coming of the Messiah and the ultimate future hope of God’s people.

The map of “Israel” is changed in various ways in this period as new names for regions and cities come into being. The government of “Israel” changes as well, as Rome gains authority over the local (Jewish and non-Jewish) leaders. Certain Jewish leaders adjusted the way they operated by becoming a little more like the nations (e.g. being a “priest-king”). This earned them a bad reputation among faithful Jews (like Pharisees and Essenes) who abhorred Roman rule and Roman ways.

The Maccabees are such a key part of the development of Israel up to the time of Jesus. Why don't we hear more about them in the NT? We do hear allusions to this period when Jesus and Revelation talk about the destruction of Jerusalem. E.g. Jesus appears to allude to this background when describing the destruction of Jerusalem (e.g. Luke 19 and 21). But we must also keep in mind that these events were over 100 years before Jesus. They may simply not have been as important as older or more recent events.

We end this section with a summary of how people might have perceived the “fulfillment” of God’s promises. As a result of the position they found themselves in, Jews had good reason to question whether or not God had or would keep his promises. Oppression, curses, lack of a king, Roman overlords, absence of God’s glory, and no new covenant made the people feel like they were still under exile.

Terms You’ll Need to Know:

Sectarian—a sect is a distinct (religious) group of people; “sectarian” writings would be written to teach and organize this group of people.

Apocrypha—a group of fourteen books that were written between the Old and New Testaments; Catholics use these books as “deuterocanonical” (a secondary level of authority); these books include 1-2 Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon (and many others); they should be considered valuable for understanding history and how Jews thought in those days but not inspired as Scripture.

Book of the Twelve—a reference to the twelve minor prophets of the OT (from Hosea to Malachi).

Abomination that causes desolation—in the book of Daniel, an event is predicted that will disgust faithful Jews, namely, someone will take unholy things into God’s temple and spoil it (Daniel 9:26-27); Jesus appears to refer to this as well (Matt 24:15-16).

Watch Video

Watch Module 4 Episode 2 (38 minutes).

[Note: the wrong slide has been spliced into the video at 17:52-18:21]

Exile and Return

- I. The Story so Far
- II. The Return from Exile back to Judah
- III. From Malachi to John the Baptist**
- IV. God, Gospel, People, Mission

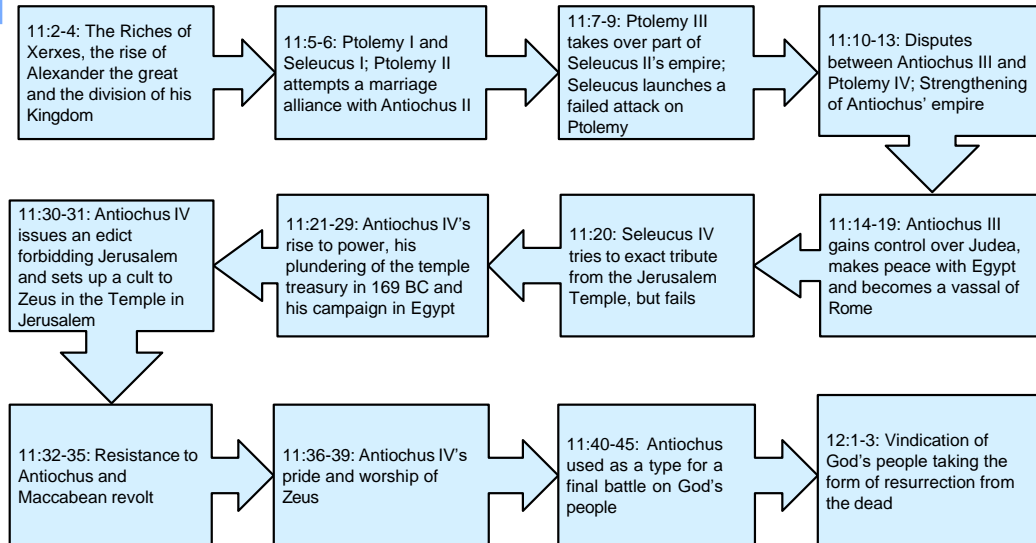
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The Old Testament Canon

- The growth and consolidation of the Old Testament Canon is more difficult to map out than that of the New Testament, for which we have much more concrete information. There are clear clues, though, that by the time of Jesus, what we consider as the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible was considered authoritative
 - The 2nd century BCE book of Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) refers to the reading of the "Law and the Prophets", probably a reference to the Pentateuch, the historical books and the prophetic writings of the OT (the Wisdom books may possibly be included under the large subsection of "the Prophets")
 - The Dead Sea Scrolls (2nd century BC – 1st Century AD) contain fragments from all books of the Hebrew Bible, with the exception of Esther
 - Jesus refers, in Matthew 23:35, to "the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar." It is likely, despite the uncertainty about his father, that the Zechariah mentioned is a reference to the one mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24 (the last book of the Hebrew Bible)
 - Almost all of the books of the Hebrew Bible are cited or alluded to in the New Testament (with the notable exceptions of Song of Solomon and Esther – although see the similarity of language between Est 5:3, 6; 7.2 and Mark 6.23)
- None of the New Testament writers (nor most Jews, it seems) considered the writings of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha to be authoritative (Jude quoting 1 Enoch 1:9 must be noted and explained, though)
 - Both the Jewish historian Josephus and the writer of 4 Ezra (both late 1st century AD) refer to a collection of authoritative books (presumably the Hebrew Bible) and do not include other writings in this list

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The God Who Controls History (Daniel 11-12)



For details, see John Goldingay, *Daniel* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 293-305.

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The Persian and Greek Empires (not pictured in video)



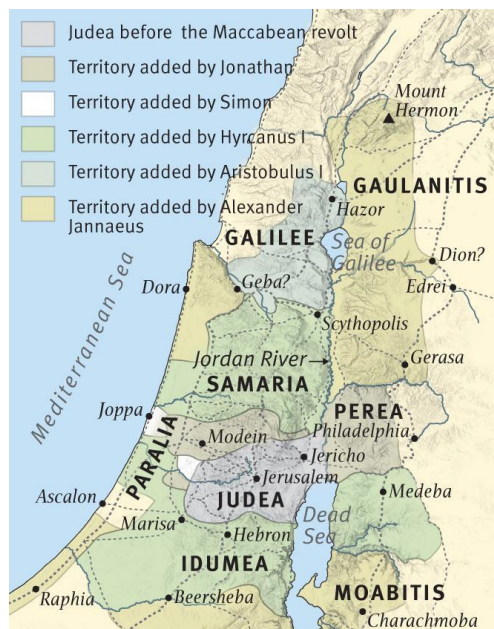
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From Persia to Antiochus IV

- During the reign of the Persian king Artaxerxes V (330-329 BC), Alexander the Great's conquest of the middle east was underway
 - There are references to Alexander in the book of Daniel (7:6; 8:5; 11:3)
 - In 329 BC, Alexander defeats Artaxerxes and the Persian Empire came into his hands, along with Judah
- Alexander has no clear successor at his death (323 BC), so his kingdom divides into four empires (in 301 BC) : Macedonia (Greece), Pergamon (Asia Minor), Seleucid (Syria to Iran), and Ptolemaic (Egypt)
 - During the third century, Judea is under the rule of the Ptolemies (the king of the South in Daniel 11)
 - Judea is taken over by the Seleucid king Antiochus III (king of the North in Daniel 11:15) in 198 BC
 - In 188, Antiochus III is forced by a defeat against Rome to sign the treaty of Apamea. The Romans lay heavy military restrictions upon the Seleucids and require a tribute
 - The following Seleucid king, Seleucus IV, attempts to plunder the Jerusalem Temple treasury to pay the Romans (Daniel 11:20; 2 Maccabees 3)
- Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) starts an intense persecution of the Jews in 167 BC
 - In 169, Antiochus had plundered Jerusalem on his way back from his humiliating defeat in Egypt
 - He issues a decree in 167 forbidding Jewish worship, and then tortures and kills Jews who refuse to conform (see the brutal accounts in 2 Maccabees 6-7)
 - Temple worship is profaned and then stopped: the altar is rededicated to Zeus and a pig is sacrificed on it (Daniel 8:9-12; 11:31; 1 Maccabees 1:41-61; 2 Maccabees 6:1-11; Josephus, *War* 1.31-35)

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The Maccabean and Hasmonean dynasty (164-37 BC)



Coin of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)

On the right hand side is the Greek expression **BASILEUS ANTIQCHOU THEOU EPIPHANOUS NIKEPHOROU** (King Antiochus; God manifest; Bringer of Victory)

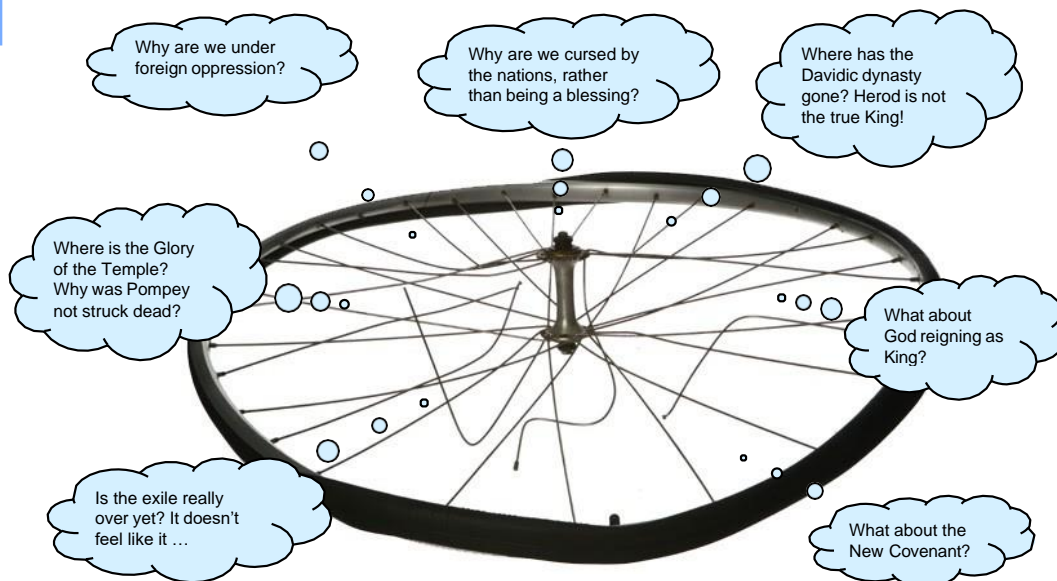
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The Maccabees to the Romans

- Antiochus' oppression is eventually lifted by the Maccabees, a family of priests who repossess Jerusalem and cleanse the Temple in 165 BC. The rededication of the Temple is behind the Jewish festival of Hanukkah
- The Maccabees and their descendants hold power for the next century. They operate both as priests and kings
 - The Hasmoneans (from Simon, Judas' brother) hold the government and the priesthood until 63 BC
 - During John Hyrcanus' reign (134-104 BC), the Jews obtain true political independence from the Seleucids and expand their territory
- However, a dispute between Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II leads to Pompey taking Jerusalem in 63 BC
 - Pompey takes over Jerusalem and enters the most holy place in the Temple. Judea officially comes under Roman dominion here; the Hasmoneans still have influence, but not overarching political power
- Herod the Great begins to reign in 37 BC
 - He is a Roman client king, whose father (Antipater) was an Idumean. Octavian (later Caesar Augustus) makes him king of Judea; Herod captures Jerusalem in 37 BC
 - Herod undertakes massive building works (see Josephus, *War* 1.401-25), including a complete renovation and expansion of the Temple
 - Herod the Great is infamous, both in the New Testament and in Josephus, for being a paranoid, murderous despot. It is not difficult to believe that he would carry out a slaughter like the one in Matthew 2:16-18

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What About the Promises?



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GROUP MEETING:

Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you?

1. Imagine that a non-Christian asks you about the limits and authority of the OT. Use insights from this video (and beyond) to respond.

2. How does knowing about the intertestamental period help you to appreciate the coming of Christ?

3. The Jewish people did not see God's promises fulfilled in their lifetime. What lessons ought we learn from the intertestamental period about God's ways? (Hint: where do we look for insight about why they didn't see God's promises fulfilled in their lifetime?)

Meditation on Scripture

Daniel 9:17-19

Daniel 12:1-3

Putting This Session into Practice

Just as the people living between the testaments waited for their redemption, people all around the globe and even in your community live without redemption in their lives. This week, let's pray for those who live without a Savior. Perhaps they have a religious background that is unfulfilling and yet they hold onto it. Perhaps they've looked to government, the economy, or education to save them but remain unsatisfied. Let's pray that God would bring the light of Christ into their lives.