

INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD OVERVIEW – PART 1 -- POLITICAL

Review: Where have we been lately?

- after finishing studying the 39 books of the OT
- in preparation for studying the 27 books of the NT – beginning with the 4 gospel accounts

Key Text – Galatians 4:4

*But when the **fulness of the time** came, God sent forth His Son*

Significance: God’s redemptive plan, decreed from eternity past, anticipated throughout the OT prophecies, is now bursting upon the scene of human history in the incarnation of the Son of God. God controls history down to its details, and Christ came at **precisely the moment decreed by divine sovereignty**.

- Overview of OT Prophecy of the First Coming of Jesus Christ – very specific Fulness of the times in terms of **OT Messianic Prophecy** related to First Advent There was an **expectancy** on the part of the Jews – when would these promised prophecies come to fruition? But there was also ignorance about the need for suffering to precede glory – so the two comings of the Messiah were seen as one with an emphasis upon political domination with the kingdom of God replacing the Roman Empire **Prov. 13:12** – “*Hope deferred makes the heart sick*” – cf. promises of Rom. 9:4
- Significance of the Temple (Pastor Harmon) – the intersection of God and man – Desire of God to dwell with His people – 3 week series just concluded last Sunday
 - o Mobile Tabernacle
 - o Solomon’s Temple – temple furnishings all pointing forward to Christ
 - o Post-exilic Temple – under governorship of Zerubbabel – Ezra, Nehemiah
 - o Enhancements by Herod
 - o Significance of the Incarnation of Christ – Emmanuel – “*God is with us*”
 - o Destruction of the temple in 70 AD by the Romans – end of the OT Jewish religious system with its sacrifices / Transition from OT to NT – book of Hebrews
 - o Reconstruction of End Times Temple - focal point in Millennial Kingdom – Ezek Looked at the different views to Christ’s Olivet Discourse in the book of Matthew
- Today and next Sunday: Analysis of Intertestamental Period – 400 Years of Silence
 - o Political Context – Impact of different Empires and Key Events
 - o Religious Context – Jewish Institutions
- Introduction to the Four Gospels
- Starting with Gospel of Matthew – 27 weeks covering each of the NT books

Intertestamental Period:

400 year silent period – just in terms of revelation; not in terms of God’s working in history; The Old Testament closed with an exhortation to “*remember the Law of Moses*” (cf. **Mal 4:4**), as well as the promise to “*send Elijah to Israel before the day of the Lord*” — he would bring about reform in the lives of the people, that they might resemble their godly forefathers... if they did not, God would visit the land with a curse (cf. **Mal 4:5-6**).

There are many non-inspired texts (such as the Apocryphal books) or what we would simply say are historical works that shed some insight into what took place during that time. So it's not as if we have no information, but what we do have is definitely not inspired scripture.

Why are the Apocryphal books not considered part of the canon of Scripture?

The Apocryphal (or *deuterocanonical*) books include writings such as *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)*, *Baruch*, and *1–2 Maccabees*, among others. While these books contain valuable historical and moral insights, they are **not considered inspired Scripture** by Jews or by most Christians throughout history.

Reasons:

1. The Apocrypha Was Never Part of the Hebrew Canon

The Jewish historian **Josephus** (1st century AD) also affirmed that the Hebrew Scriptures consisted of **22 books** (equivalent to the 39 books of the Protestant Old Testament) and that no inspired writings had been added since the time of **Artaxerxes** (c. 400 BC). The Apocryphal books were all written **after** that period.

2. Jesus and the Apostles Never Quoted the Apocrypha as Scripture

While the New Testament quotes or alludes to nearly every book of the Hebrew Old Testament, **it never quotes the Apocrypha as authoritative Scripture.**

Jesus affirmed the boundaries of the Hebrew canon when He said:

“from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. (Matt. 23:35).

This statement spans the entire Hebrew canon — from **Genesis (Abel)** to **2 Chronicles (Zechariah)** — the first and last books in the Jewish order. There is no indication that Jesus recognized any additional writings as Scripture.

3. The Early Church Distinguished the Apocrypha from Inspired Scripture

Ligonier Ministries notes:

“The earliest Christians respected the Apocrypha much as we would respect modern devotional writings... but they did not treat them as divinely inspired or fit for having the final word in making doctrinal assessments.”

4. View of Historic Church Councils and Confessions

The Reformers Reaffirmed the Historic View

The **Reformation** did not remove books from the Bible; it **restored** the ancient Jewish and early Christian canon.

The **Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)** declared:

“The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture; and, therefore, are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.”— *WCF 1.3*

This aligns with the earlier **Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England**, which stated that the Apocryphal books may be read “for example of life and instruction of manners,” but not to “establish any doctrine.”

5. These books do not bear the marks of Divine Inspiration

- lack prophetic authority in terms of authorship
- some teachings that contradict other parts of Scripture
- contain some historical inaccuracies
- not received generally by the community of God's people -- I don't believe that the canon is purely based on church tradition. But I do believe that we have to understand that God did, through providence, lead the early church in recognizing what he had inspired.

Final Caveat: Just because something is not scripture does not mean it has no value.

Preparation for the coming of the Messiah

This period is a total mystery to most Christians – did not receive any attention in seminary – so you have been getting at least a Bible Institute level of instruction throughout this SS series. Today you will receive material not even covered in some seminary programs. But this is an important time period. A series of events fundamentally changed the world landscape and prepared the scene for the arrival of the Messiah.

Why this silence on the part of God?

- Part of His providential exercise of sovereignty throughout human history
- Preparing to speak in loud and clear tones with the coming of His Son the Logos – so this backdrop provided a fitting contrast to coming monumental revelation

Illustration: Remember the old TV commercials about E. F. Hutton – “*When E. F. Hutton talks, people listen.*”

Louis Giglio: We go from Malachi to Matthew in one page of our scriptures. But that one piece of paper that separates the Old Testament from the New Testament represents 400 years of history. 400 years where there wasn't a prophet, 400 years where God's voice wasn't heard, and that silence was broken with the cry of a baby on Christmas night.

When we get to the gospels we see the Jews living not under Persian rule but Roman rule. We see different Jewish institutions on the scene like the Pharisees and the Sadducees – but where did they come from?

Two Main Threads of Concentration:

- I. POLITICAL CONTEXT -- CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE --
Progression of Different Historical Empires impacting the Jews in Palestine
This thread will be treated chronologically.
Highlighting key events and trends that will be significant for the spread of Christianity**
 - II. RELIGIOUS CONTEXT -- DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH INSTITUTIONS --
Jesus interacts with these during His earthly ministry
This thread will be treated in summary fashion – taking a look at each of the various institutions**
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I. POLITICAL EMPIRES

A. The Persian Period (430-332 BC)

The OT ends with the Persian King Cyrus allowing Ezra and Nehemiah to lead the Jews in rebuilding the temple and wall.

Judah remained under the reign of Persia which had begun when they conquered Babylon in 536 BC. / Date of **430** marks the prophecy to Malachi = the beginning of the 400 silent years

Key Trend: They were allowed **religious freedom** but remained politically subordinate with the high priest exercising a measure of civil authority. You always want to be discerning of what role the high priest is playing in the Jewish nation.

The focus shifted from **kingship** to **Torah obedience**.

Josephus is one source for the last years of this Persian period.

This relatively peaceful time was just the calm before the storm. Because, as we progress in our study of political changes we see Alexander the Great defeating Darius of Persia, bringing **Greek rulership** to the world.

B. The Greek Period (331-167 BC)

During this same period the Golden Age of Greece was growing in power.

Key figure = **Alexander the Great** – son of Philip of Macedonia.

Time period of the famous Greek philosophers = Plato and Aristotle – spoke classical Greek = a very precise language with eloquent expressions; Alexander trained in Greek language and philosophy – studied under Aristotle

When Alexander the Great was 20 years old, he took command of the Greek army. Alexander conquered Persia but was kind to the Jews and did not destroy Jerusalem. He encouraged the Jews to settle in Alexandria, Egypt with the hopes of spreading Greek culture, thought and language.

By 334 BC he became the first world leader to conquer the known world. He defeated the Persian King, Darius III, in 3 decisive battles that gave him control of the lands of the Persian Empire.

As Alexander the Great continued to conquer more lands and cities Greek language, culture, and thought spread greatly. This is known as **Hellenism**. Intended to put the pagan world together with the Greek world; functioned as a Hellenistic missionary (the Greek way of life and culture); did not do this by force but by persuasion; gave the leaders delegated authority; he himself would marry wives from many of the different areas he conquered

Key Event: Made **Attic Greek** the language of his empire – evolving away from classical Greek. This developed into a quickly learned language called **Koine Greek** = simplified dialect easily learned throughout the empire. The word *koine* in Greek means **common**. So it was the common language of the people, and it was the language of commerce during the time of Christ. By first

century BC nearly everyone could at least understand this language. The Elite may have still spoken Latin.

Famous saying: “Rome may have conquered Greece militarily but Greece conquered Rome culturally.”

Some of the Jews went along with the changes brought about by the Greeks while other Jews resisted. This led to opposing parties within the Jewish nation known as the **Pharisees** and **Sadducees** – more about these groups next Sunday. So there was significant cultural tension developing in the Jewish community during this time period.

Alexander, however, permitted the Jews to observe their laws and even granted them an exemption from taxes during their sabbatical years.

Hellenism brought a **Greek culture** that is both educated, and a multi-god worshiping; thus there were many gods in the land; they brought in magic and the onslaught of mystery religions... so the religious impact was big on the land.

Very detailed OT prophecies regarding the future significance of Alexander the Great:

PROPHECY	SYMBOL	FULFILLMENT
Dan. 7:6	Leopard with four wings and four heads	Swift conquests and fourfold division of empire
Dan. 8:5-8, 21-22	Goat from the west with one horn	Greece under Alexander; his death and division of empire
Dan. 11:3-4	Mighty king whose kingdom is divided	His rise and partition of realm among four generals

C. Egyptian Period (323-198 BC)

After Alexander the Great died in 323 BC his land was divided among his 4 generals.

[Macedonia in the North and Pergamum in Asia Minor]

Israel was positioned in the middle of two lands: The Seleucid Dynasty (Syria) and the Ptolemies (Egypt). Israel eventually was controlled by Ptolemy. While under Ptolemy the Jews experienced a peaceful period and **Alexandria** in Egypt became a center for Judaism.

The policy of toleration followed by the Ptolemies, by which Judaism and Hellenism coexisted peacefully, was very dangerous for the Jewish faith. A gradual infiltration of Greek influence and an almost unnoticed assimilation of the Greek way of life took place. During this period Jewish worship was influenced to become **more external than internal**, a notion that had a lasting impact upon Judaism. Two religious parties emerged: the pro-Syrian Hellenizing party, and the Orthodox Jews (in particular the Hasidim or “Pious Ones” — the predecessors of the Pharisees).

A struggle for power between these two groups resulted in a polarization of the Jews along political, cultural, and religious lines. The Jews had prospered until near the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty when conflicts between Egypt and Syria escalated. Israel was again **caught in the middle**. When the Syrians defeated Egypt in the **Battle of Panion in 198 BC**, Judea was annexed to Syria.

Key Event: Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek – called **Septuagint** – LXX – Legend: produced by 70 scholars in 70 days around 200 BC

Many Jews had migrated to Egypt after the death of Alexander due to increasing difficulty of living under the Seleucid Empire.

72 Jewish elders and scribes undertook the translation project commanded by **Ptolemy II** – very similar to the Greek spoken during the time of Christ.

Jesus quoted from both the Septuagint and the Hebrew bible in the gospel records.

Ptolemy II had expanded the expansive library in Alexandria; also granted citizenship to the Jews

D. Syrian Period (198-165 BC)

Under the rule of Antiochus III the Great and his successor Seleucus Philopater, the Jews came under the control of Syria... though treated harshly, they were nonetheless allowed to maintain local rule under their High Priest.

Judea had been left under the rule of the **Seleucid Dynasty**

After several generations of leadership – more or less indifferent to Judaism a leader arose who saw it partly as his mission to **Hellenize his subjects**

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (“appearance” – connotation of the appearance of a god) (175-164 BC)

– banned the practice of Judaism in land of Judea

he discouraged traditional Jewish monotheism; promoted Greek culture and religion

Illustration: Inscription on coins under his rule: claimed to be god-like in his authority



Silver coin of king Antiochus IV. Shows seated Zeus holding Nike and scepter. Greek inscription reads: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΟΥ ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΥΣ, Basileōs Antiochou Nikēphorou Theou Epiphanous, "*of victorious god manifest king Antiochus.*"

Trying to defeat another rebellion down in Egypt with the Ptolemies; But by now the Romans were just starting to assert their power – After consolidating his power base, Antiochus next went to war with the much weaker neighboring kingdom of Egypt, all but conquering it before being confronted by the Roman ambassador, Popilius, who demanded that Antiochus withdraw from Egypt or face war with the Roman Republic. This is the source of the adage of “*drawing a line in the sand*” –the consul C. Popilius Laenas, commissioned by the Roman senate to order Antiochus Epiphanes to abstain from war, with his staff draws a circle around the monarch and ask him not to go beyond it before answering – you think about it before you get out of this circle – pride of Antiochus deeply wounded – had to retreat --

So he was humiliated and returning on his northward journey and not in a good mood when he came to the region of Palestine.

In **168 BC** he set about to destroy every distinctive characteristic of the Jewish faith — he forbade all sacrifices, out-lawed the rite of circumcision, canceled the observance of the Sabbath and the offering of sacrifices, and disallowed the celebration of feast days... additionally, he mutilated and destroyed nearly every copy of the Hebrew Bible. Jews were forced to eat pork and make sacrifices to idols. His final act of sacrilege, and the one that spelled his ultimate ruin, was the desecration of the Most Holy Place by building an altar and offering a sacrifice of a pig to the god Zeus. Many Jews died in the ensuing persecutions.

Key Event: This event by Antiochus Epiphanes prefigures the prophecies about the coming **abomination of desolation** – cf. **Matt. 24** – Pastor Harmon looked at this in some detail last week. You have the near term fulfillment in the events surrounding the destruction of the Jewish temple in AD 70 and then the end times fulfillment (already / not yet perspective of the Olivet Discourse) that still awaits as Antichrist sets up the image in the rebuilt temple before the wrath of God is then poured out leading to the return of Christ.

Daniel	Prophetic Description	Fulfillment in Antiochus Epiphanes	Foreshadowing / Typology
8:9-12	A "little horn" grows exceedingly great toward the "Beautiful Land," removes the daily sacrifice, and throws truth to the ground.	Antiochus expanded his power into Israel, desecrated the Temple, stopped sacrifices, and set up an idol of Zeus (167 BC).	Prefigures the Antichrist's desecration of the future Temple (2 Thess. 2:3-4).
8:23-25	A fierce king arises, skilled in intrigue, who destroys many and exalts himself against the "Prince of princes," but is broken "without human hand."	Antiochus exalted himself as "Epiphanes" ("manifest god") and persecuted the Jews until his sudden death (164 BC).	The Antichrist will likewise magnify himself and be destroyed by Christ's direct power (Rev. 19:19-20).
9:27	The ruler will confirm a covenant for one week, then stop sacrifice and offering, setting up an abomination that causes desolation.	Antiochus halted Temple sacrifices and erected a pagan altar, offering swine's flesh upon it.	Jesus said this prophecy has a future fulfillment (Matt. 24:15-16).
11:21-24	A "despicable person" seizes the kingdom through intrigue, distributing plunder and deceitfully rising to power.	Antiochus usurped the Seleucid throne through manipulation and bribery, calling himself "Epiphanes."	The Antichrist will also gain power through deception (Rev. 13:3-4).
11:25-28	He wages war against the king of the south, returns to his land with great wealth, and sets his heart against the holy covenant.	Antiochus fought Egypt, then vented his rage on Jerusalem, killing thousands and plundering the Temple.	Foreshadows the Antichrist's persecution of God's people (Rev. 13:7).
11:31-32	Forces from him desecrate the sanctuary, abolish the daily sacrifice, and set up the abomination of desolation.	In 167 BC, Antiochus desecrated the Temple, outlawed Jewish worship, and forced idolatry.	The Antichrist will commit a similar abomination in the end times.
11:36-39	The king exalts himself above every god, speaks blasphemies, and honors a foreign god of fortresses.	Antiochus demanded worship as a god and honored Zeus with lavish gifts.	The Antichrist will exalt himself as divine and demand global worship.
11:40-45	His final campaigns end with his destruction "between the seas and the beautiful holy mountain."	Antiochus died suddenly during a campaign in Persia, not by human hand (164 BC).	The Antichrist will also meet his end by divine judgment (Dan. 8:25; Rev. 19:20).

Key Impact:

- Crisis of identity: What does it mean to be Jewish under foreign rule?
- Sparked one of the most defining revolts in Jewish history

E. The Maccabean Period (165-63 BC) – gets a little more confusing

An elderly priest named *Mattathias* (he was of the house of Hasmon), lived with his five sons in a village just northwest of Jerusalem. When a Syrian official tried to enforce heathen sacrifice in that village, Mattathias revolted, killed a renegade Jew who offered a sacrifice, slew the Syrian official, and fled to the mountains with his family. Thousands of faithful Jews joined him, and history records one of the most noble demonstrations of holy jealousy for the honor of God.

After the death of Mattathias three of his sons carried on the Maccabean Revolt in succession:

Judas (166-160 BC), brilliant military leader – given the name **The Hammer** = Judas Maccabeus; followers known as the Maccabees

Jonathan (160-142 BC),
and *Simon* (142-134 BC).

Key Event: These men had such success that by 165 BC they had retaken Jerusalem, cleansed the temple, and restored biblical worship — this event is commemorated even today as the **Feast of Dedication / Festival of Lights – [Hanukkah]** – which Jesus Himself also celebrated (cf. **John 10:22ff**). “*At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem.*”

Note from MacArthur Study Bible:

Under the leadership of an old priest named Mattathias, the Jews fought guerrilla warfare (the Maccabean Revolt – 160-142 BC) against Syria and freed the temple and the land from Syrian dominance until 63 BC when Rome (under Pompey) took control of Palestine. The celebration of the rededication of the temple is also known as the Feast of Lights because of the lighting of lamps and candles in Jewish homes to commemorate the event. There was only one small cruse of pure oil, enough to light the menorah in the Temple for one day. But it lasted **eight days**, in time to produce new pure oil and the menorah was able to remain lit and never burn out. This miracle is attributed to God and the faith that the Jews had in God

Though fighting against Syria continued in outlining areas, the Jewish people finally received their independence under the leadership of Simon in **142 BC**. They experienced almost seventy years of independence under the reign of the **Hasmonaean dynasty** (the High Priesthood), the most notable leaders of which were John Hyrcanus (134-104 BC) and Alexander Jannaeus (102-76 BC). The most significant religious development of this period resulted from a strong difference of opinion concerning the kingship and High Priesthood of Judea. For hundreds of years the position of High Priest was held by individuals of **political strength** rather than those who were descendants of Aaron... orthodox Jews resented this development. When John Hyrcanus became governor and High Priest, he conquered Transjordan and Idumaea and destroyed the Samaritan temple — his power and popularity led him to refer to himself as a king. This flew in the face of the orthodox Jews, who by this time were called **Pharisees** (which literally means “*separatists*”); they recognized no king unless he was of the lineage of King

David. Those who opposed the Pharisees and supported the Hasmonaeans were called **Sadducees** (they adopted their name from a Hebrew word meaning “*righteous*”). These names surfaced for the first time during the reign of **John Hyrcanus** who himself became a **Sadducee**.

Hasmonean Rule (c. 140–63 BC)

Summary:

- Jews gained political independence for about 80 years
- High priests functioned almost as political kings

Impact:

- Strengthened national pride
- Also led to corruption and internal division
- Mixed political and religious authority, creating tensions still evident in the NT

F. The Roman Period (63 BC – 4 BC; [636 AD])

In **63 BC** Pompey entered Jerusalem, including the Holy of Holies (the central section in the Jerusalem temple). This caused offence, but Pompey had no anti-Jewish agenda, and the immediate impact of the arrival of Rome was not huge, since **Hyrcanus 2** – one of Alexandra’s squabbling sons – was given authority to rule in Jerusalem under the Romans.

This is the nation that would tax and control the Jews and eventually be the one that God uses to bring about the crucifixion.

Key Event: Eventually the Roman General Pompey the Great chose **Antipater**, a descendent of the OT character Esau, as ruler of the Jews. After the death of Antipater his son **Herod the Great** was appointed ruler. Herod wanted to get the Jews on his side so he lavishly rebuilt their temple – 20 BC. Spares no expense. Expanded it in size. 13 acres of court property – not completed until after the death of Christ.

Two Characteristics are notable about Herod’s rule:

- **First, his insecurity** – political, to start with, and psychological. Having fought his way into power, he faced continuing opposition and uncertainty for the early years of his reign. He successfully *played off different Roman leaders against each other*, and ruthlessly put down internal opposition to his rule. *Members of his own family, including his father-in-law and his wife Mariamme* (of whom he was very fond, but who had Hasmonean blood in her), fell foul of his suspicions and were killed. He continued to be nervous, and in the latter years of his life he was obsessed about possible threats to his position. *Three of his own sons were executed*, including his favourite Antipater, just days before Herod’s own death. Herod’s Palestine was a police state, living in fear. The murderous reaction to the announcement of the birth of a ‘*king of the Jews*’ (**Matt. 2:2**) is entirely in character.
- **A second more positive characteristic of Herod’s reign was his achievement as a builder**. He built fortresses, palaces, temples and theatres. For example, by the Dead Sea

there was Machaerus on the East coast, where John the Baptist was imprisoned and finally executed, and Masada, the magnificent hill-top fortress complex on the west side of the Dead Sea, where the Jews would so heroically resist the Romans in the war of AD 66-70. Herod built the port of Caesarea on the Mediterranean, providing a massive artificial harbour on a coast where there is hardly any natural harbour. This became the key entry/exit point to the country, through which almost everyone would have passed (including the apostle Paul following his arrest, Acts 23:33). Herod did great building work in Samaria, but most famous of all was his work in the Jerusalem area, where he built a whole variety of buildings, including a palace for himself, a theatre, an amphitheatre and a hippodrome, where crowds would come to watch sports and shows.

<https://fbcclassroom.com/courses/gospels-and-acts/lessons/the-historical-context-of-jesus-new-testament-romans/#:~:text=In%20today's%20lesson%20we%20will,attention%20to%20particular%20significant%20events>

Descendants of Herod the Great: family name (like name Caesar for Romans)

- Herod Archelaus (Ruled 4 BC – AD 6) -- **Matt.2** – Archelaus evil and not competent; Jews send a delegation to Rome to tattle on him; Romans remove him from power
- Herod Antipas (Ruled 4 BC – AD 39) – northern part of Palestine in Galilee – builds Tiberius; shows up in the story of John the Baptist and has him beheaded; also at the trial of Jesus in book of Luke
- Herod Agrippa I (Ruled AD 37-44) – Acts 12 – grandson of Herod the Great – puts James to death; about the execute Peter who is miraculously rescued
- Herod Agrippa II (Began ruling in AD 50) – great grandson – Paul appears before him in Acts 26

(a couple of others that don't play a role in NT)

The Jews that followed King Herod are known as Herodians while the Jews that opposed Herod were called Zealots. Synagogues were built in each city as a place for the Jews to worship and Scribes, Rabbis, and chief Priests became prominent roles.

A time of world wide peace (Pax Romania).

Roman empire known for: military might, governmental structure and social institutions. However, one of the most underrated facets of Roman geopolitical success can be found in how they unified their empire during a time when travel was difficult in most places

Roman road building revolutionized the world -- Famous **Appian Way** – became masters of roadbuilding skills – roads were expertly engineered; vey durable; built rapidly

Could lay down 2 yards of paved road per man per day

- Advanced the spread of Roman thought and language
- Created incredible mechanism for the spread of the gospel of Christ

<http://www.thetransformedsoul.com/additional-studies/spiritual-life-studies/the-intertestamental-period-and-its-significance-upon-christianity>

All of these events that we have studied today set the stage for the coming of Christ and had a profound impact on the Jewish people. Both Jews and pagans from other nations were becoming

dissatisfied with religion in general. The pagans were beginning to question the validity of polytheism. Romans and Greeks were drawn from their mythologies towards the Hebrew scriptures which were now easily readable in Greek. The Jews, however, were despondent because once again, they were a conquered, oppressed, and polluted people. You ever wonder why the Jews are so hostile toward the Gentiles during the time of Christ? They were an oppressed people.