

The Time Between the Old Testament and the New Testament

The Persian Period

539 – 336 BC

- Kings of Persia
 - Cyrus
 - Darius
- Samaritans, those Israelites who intermarried with Babylonians and Syrians, were in continual conflict with the Jews. They even had built their own temple in the north. Worship included mixing paganism with the worship of YAHWEH.
- Persia falls to Alexander the Great

The Hellenistic Period

336 – 165 BC

- The Greek empire becomes the largest in the world at that time.
- Worship by the Jews continued with little change
- Thousands of Jews were resettled to Alexandria
- Greek language was promoted and Jews began to speak Greek
- The Old Testament was translated into Greek and became known as the Septuagint, which is still used and quoted today.
- 198BC – Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple, tried to wipe out the Jews, forced them to eat pork, cancelled the Sabbath and Holy Days.
- Those who resisted these changes were known as the Hellenists and the Hasidim and then later as the Pharisees.

The Maccabean Period

165 - 63 BC

- Maccabees, also called the Hasmoneans
- Mattathias – led a rebellion with faithful Jews against the Syrian rulers.
- The Sadducees supported Hasmonean rulers, as kings and priests.
- The Pharisees insisted the kings and priests could only be descendants of David and Aaron.
- 63BC Pompey sacked Jerusalem. The Jews lost their freedom and were ruled by the Romans.
- This was the last period of self-rule until the state of Israel was formed in 1948.

The Roman Period – The time of PAX Romana

63 BC – 135 AD

- Jews have come under the rule of the Romans.
- They have freedom of worship and rule of their own affairs.
- The Pharisees became legalists

- Their hope is for a Messiah who will come and conquer the Romans
- They expect a warrior – not a baby born in a manger
- Factions develop between the Pharisees and the Sadducees
- However, they agree Jesus must be put to death
- The Greek language, the Roman highways and extent of its empire made it possible to communicate the message of Christ's resurrection – “the set time had fully come, God sent His Son.” Gal. 4:4

NOTES: During the time of Pax Romana

- There had been no prophets for 400 years. The last prophet being Malachi.
- Worship took place in the Temple as well as in dozens of synagogues.
- The religious governing body was established – The Sanhedrin
- Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes (teachers) were governed by the Sanhedrin