

Intertestamental Period

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Session 2: Rome, Herod, and Books

Hasmoneans

- **[SLIDE]** The success of the rededication of the Temple during the first Chanukkah in 164 BCE was unfortunately not the end of the war with the Seleucid empire. Antiochus IV Epiphanes had died earlier in 164 BCE while on a military campaign in Parthia, an area in modern day Iran. According to the book of 2 Maccabees he had “excruciating pains in his bowels”, “he hurtled from the speeding chariot,” and then his body “swarmed with worms, and while he was still alive in hideous torments, his flesh rotted off, so that the entire army was sickened by the stench of his corruption.”
- His young son Antiochus V Eupator only reigned for a few years before being overthrown by his cousin, Demetrius I Soter.
- **[TIMELINE]** Judah Maccabee died in the Battle of Elasa in 160 BCE. Over the next 30 years his brothers followed him in leadership over Israel. There were times of war with the Seleucid Greeks, and times of peace, mostly as vassals of the empire.
- In 134 BCE, John Hyrcanus, the nephew of Judah Maccabee, became the high priest after his father and brothers were all murdered at a banquet. He was also named ethnarch, a type of governor but not a king. Remember, the Hasmoneans were from a priestly family. They were not from the line of Zadok, the high priest during the time of King David, but they descended from another member of the same family, Joarib.
 - This coin that I’m passing around is a bronze prutah that was minted by John Hyrcanus I. The text in ancient Hebrew says, יְהוֹנָתָן כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל וְחֵבֶר הַיְהוּדִים (*Yehonatan Kohen Gadol veChaver haYehudim*), which means "John the High Priest and the Council of the Jews."
- By 129 BCE, the Seleucid Empire was in decline, so the Hasmonean state was able to take root. John Hyrcanus and later Hasmoneans were able to expand their reach and get more of Israel under their control.
- Both during the war and afterwards, the Hasmoneans also took drastic measures to try to stem the flow of Hellenism among the Jewish populace. The fight was still largely between the wealthy Hellenists on one side and the peasants and common people on the other, but there were plenty of political reasons for the continued fighting, as well.
- John Hyrcanus even forcibly converted the Idumeans (Edomites) to Judaism, an act that will eventually come back to bite the Jews.
- However, in the end, you could say that Hellenism kind of won the fight. Aristobulus I (who reigned as high priest and ethnarch after John Hyrcanus I) actually called himself Philhellene (a lover of Hellenism); and Alexander Jannaeus, the high priest after him, hired Greek mercenaries and inscribed his coins in Greek as well as in Hebrew.
- That being said, Judaism and Jewish culture obviously did not go away, and most Jews, especially of the middle and poorer classes, continued to pursue God. From this pious middle class arose a small group of teachers, possibly related to the Hasideans from the Maccabee period, called the Pharisees. We’ll come back to them later.

Rome

- **[SLIDE]** Meanwhile, Rome was dealing with its own internal problems.

- The history of Rome in the century leading up to the ministry of Jesus is too detailed to cover in this class. Instead of trying to cover everything, I'd like to talk about some of the key rulers and events of the period.
- When we last talked about Rome, they were riding high at the end of the Second Punic War and the defeat of Hannibal.
- **[TIMELINE]** They continued expanding their influence in the Mediterranean basin, and waged another, shorter war with Carthage, the Third Punic War, about 50 years later.
- From 135 to 132 BCE there was a Slave revolt in Sicily known now as the First Servile War. This was really an after-effect of Rome's conquests.
 - The Romans enslaved 5,000 Macedonians in 197 BCE; 5,000 Histri in 177 BCE; 150,000 Epirotes in 167 BCE; 50,000 Carthaginians in 146 BCE; and in 174 an unspecified number of Sardinians, but so many that "Sardinian" became another name for a "cheap" slave....
 - By the end of the republic, Italy was a thoroughgoing slave society with well over one million slaves, according to the best estimates. (<https://www.britannica.com/place/ancient-Rome/Culture-and-religion>)
- A man named Tiberius Gracchus was elected as plebeian tribune in 133 BC, in the middle of the First Servile War, and attempted to fix the problems that came from too many slaves managing the land and not enough citizen landowners who could be drafted into military service.
 - He forcefully got a bill passed in the Assembly that gave him and some of his close allies the ability to determine boundaries of public land, confiscate excess acreage, and divide it in allotments among landless citizens.
 - He was accused of being a traitor for the bill. When he tried to run for another term as Tribune, he was killed in a scuffle in the Assembly.
 - This murder set a precedent for murder and political martyrdom in Roman politics.
- In the late second century, Rome continued to expand its holdings in southern Europe, Spain, and Africa. They also had to fight off barbarian German tribes on their northern frontier. For example, in 105 BCE a group of German tribes led by the Cimbri invaded southern France and defeated the small Roman force protecting a new road from Italy to Spain. These Germans were finally defeated in 101 BCE.
- Social War (90-89 BCE)
 - In 90 BCE, the tribes of central and southern Italy joined forces and fought against Rome in several battles. They had grown restive under Roman autocratic rule, wanting Roman citizenship and the privileges it conferred.
 - The war ended when the Senate passed a law granting citizenship to any Italians who had not participated in the war or who laid down their arms immediately.
- **[SLIDE - Provinces of Rome]** Civil War
 - In 88 BCE, an army commander named Sulla who had been successful in the Social War was elected to consul, the highest elected public office in Rome. He tried to enact social reforms that would help the Italians, but his reforms were rejected. He then convinced his army to occupy Rome, where he killed off one of his main opponents and passed some legislation.
 - Once that was complete, he had himself appointed to the Eastern command, and went to fight in Pontus, in Asia Minor.

- Mithradates VI Eupator was the king of Pontus in northern Anatolia (120–63 BCE). Under his leadership, Pontus expanded to absorb several of its small neighbors and, briefly, contested Rome's hegemony in Asia Minor.
- In 81 BCE, Sulla defeated Mithradates in Greece and chased him back into Anatolia, eventually signing a peace treaty with him. However, back home in Rome his political rival Cinna called for the overthrow of the social reforms Sulla had enacted.
- After wintering in Anatolia, Sulla turned West, crossing through Greece and into Italy with his now veteran army, going straight into Rome and occupying the city in 82 BCE. He had himself elected dictator (an actual title that was legal to hold according to Roman law) and started a reign of terror, killing opponents and stealing land to give to his army.
- While the terror prevailed, Sulla used his powers to put through a comprehensive program of reform, mostly consolidating power in the Senate.
- In 80 BCE, Sulla stepped down from dictatorship, becoming a consul again, and eventually retiring as a private citizen.
- However, his brazen use of his army to march on Rome was not the last time such a tactic would be used, and was another sign of the coming end of the Roman Republic.
- Spartacus
 - In 73 BCE, a slave gladiator named Spartacus led a revolt of 78 other slaves that is now known as the Third Servile War. Spartacus was a former soldier who was originally from Thrace, the area north of Greece. Not much is known about his early life, but he raised an army of 70,000 and even defeated two Roman armies that came against him.
 - He intended to escape home to his home country of Thrace, but his army decided to take on the Romans again.
 - In 72 BCE, the Romans defeated Spartacus' army. Spartacus was killed in the battle, and 6,000 of his men were crucified along the Appian Way, a road 132 miles long reaching from Rome to Capua.
- Between 70 and 60 BCE, Rome was in trouble. Street violence and rioting were not uncommon. The moral decay of the society was evident to most, and a danger to the effectiveness of the Republic.
- **[SLIDE]** Three powerful men—Pompey, Crassus, and Julius Caesar—joined forces to lead the people, but also to gain more power for themselves.
- Pompey
 - Pompey had grown up in the army, fighting in the social Wars and leading three legions in support of Sulla. In 70 BCE he was made consul, a leading military position, and he headed east to defeat Mithradates IV and to solidify Roman control over eastern Anatolia, Syria, and Judah.
 - During this campaign, Pompey came to Jerusalem in 63 BCE as an arbiter in the civil war between John Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II.
 - He sided with Hyrcanus and besieged the city when Aristobulus locked himself and his supporters inside. After about three months he was finally able to break through the walls.
 - After defeating Aristobulus and slaughtering 12,000 Jews, Pompey entered the Temple courts, and even walked right into the Holy of Holies. The next day, he installed John Hyrcanus II as the high priest and ordered that the Temple be cleaned out and sanctified and that the sacrifices be restarted.

- This event essentially spelled the end of the independent Hasmonean kingdom. Hyrcanus was officially only the high priest, not the king. Judea was placed under the authority of the Roman governor in Syria, and it was forced to give up control over Samaria and Idumea (Edom). Additionally, several Greek cities on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee were given independence from the Hasmoneans and formed The Decapolis.
- Pompey returned to Rome and joined a political alliance with Julius Caesar by marrying Caesar's daughter Julia.
- Julius Caesar
 - Gaius Julius Caesar was also born to a wealthy family, and became head of the family at the age of 16 when his father died. He took a job as a priest in the national Roman religion to provide for the family, and he married well so that he could gain additional income from his wife's dowry.
 - When Sulla declared himself dictator, Caesar ran away to avoid being killed in the political purges, but he was given a reprieve as a result of the petitions of his mother's family. However, he lost his position as priest and his wife's dowry, so he had to join the army to make a living.
 - Caesar was successful in the army, but he returned to Rome after the death of Sulla to become an orator (a lawyer) and to take advantage of his speaking skills.
 - In 63 BCE, while Pompey was busy in Judea, Caesar was elected Pontifex Maximus, the chief priest of the Roman religion, with the help of the wealthiest man in Rome, Marcus Licinius Crassus.
 - In 62 BCE, he took an army to fight in Spain, successfully defeating warring tribes and gaining the dedication and respect of his troops.
 - He returned to Rome in 60 BCE, and joined with Crassus and Pompey in what we now call the First Triumvirate.
- First Triumvirate **[TIMELINE]**
 - The triumvirate was really just a political alliance, from which all three men hoped to gain fame, fortune, and power. They all had their own competing agendas, but the end result was an alliance that set them all up very well.
 - However, the triumvirate was not very secure. In 54 BCE, Caesar's daughter (Pompey's wife) Julia died in childbirth, breaking one of the main links between the two men. The entire triumvirate collapsed in 53 BCE when Crassus, the glue that held the three together, was killed by the Parthians in the Battle of Carrhae in Asia Minor.
 - Caesar was on campaign in Gaul (France) when he heard the news. In 49 BCE, hoping to solidify his own power against Pompey, he led his army of 40,000 men across the Alps and crossed the Rubicon River, the traditional boundary which armies were not supposed to cross. According to historians, as he was crossing the Rubicon, Caesar said, "The die is cast." That choice set the stage for civil war.
- Civil war between Pompey and Julius Caesar (c. 49–45 BCE)
 - Pompey and Caesar had never really liked each other, so war was inevitable. Cicero, a leading politician, tried to make peace between the two men to no avail.
 - Pompey took his army to Greece, and Caesar followed him.
 - They met at the Battle of Pharsalus, and Caesar came out on top, so Pompey fled to Egypt. Unfortunately for him, the moment he stepped off the ship in Alexandria, he was beheaded by the Greek Egyptian king Ptolemy XIII.

- Caesar arrived in Egypt not long after this, and feigned outrage over the killing of Pompey. Ptolemy XIII was in the middle of a civil war with his sister Cleopatra. Caesar fell in love with Cleopatra and sided with her against Ptolemy, defeating the Egyptian army and installing Cleopatra as the ruler of Egypt.
- In 47 BCE, Cleopatra gave birth to Caesar's son, naming him Ptolemy Caesar (he was known as Caesarion) and proclaiming him the heir of the Egyptian throne.
- Meanwhile, Caesar left Egypt to put down a rebellion in Asia Minor and to consolidate power in Rome against a faction that wanted him ousted.
- He succeeded, and eventually brought Cleopatra and Caesarion to Rome and set them up in comfort. However, he did not claim Caesarion as his heir, choosing his grandnephew Octavian instead. He also was not allowed to marry Cleopatra due to already being married at the time (Rome had strict laws against polygamy).
- In 44 BCE, Caesar was declared *Dictator Perpetuus*, Dictator for Life, but he never held the title Emperor.
- One of the key actions Caesar took (from the context of the Bible) was the freedoms he gave the Jewish people at this time.
 - In honor of the support the Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus II had given Caesar when he was fighting against Ptolemy's forces in Egypt, Caesar decreed, "that the Jews shall possess Jerusalem; and may encompass that city with walls." ([Antiquities 14.10.5](#)) He also declared synagogues to be official *collegia*, giving them the ability to meet legally and to maintain legal authority over the Jewish people. Additionally, he decreed that the Roman army could not force the Jewish populace to winter soldiers in their houses, and gave them a reprieve on their tribute during sabbatical years.
 - Most importantly, Caesar's edicts also granted the Jewish community permission to follow the customs of their ancestors, and provided them with an exemption from the Roman religious practices that were required for all other peoples under Roman rule. ([Antiquities 14.10.8](#))
- On March 15, 44 BCE, Julius Caesar was assassinated by a group of as many as 60 senators, dying at the foot of a sculpture of Pompey.
- The conspirators did not really plan out the assassination very well, leaving Mark Antony, Caesar's cousin and right hand man alive. Mark Antony swayed public opinion against the conspirators, and, with the help of Caesar's grandnephew and heir Octavius, defeated an army led by two of the main conspirators, Brutus and Cassius, in 42 BCE.
- **[SLIDE]** Not long after that victory, Octavian and Mark Antony divided control of the empire in two. Mark Antony took the eastern half, and eventually moved to Egypt and married Cleopatra, Julius Caesar's old lover. However, during this time he made some choices that were deemed to be a threat to Rome (or, really, to Octavian). Mark Antony and Cleopatra ended up rebelling against Octavian, but it was a short lived fight. Octavian defeated their army at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, and finally defeated them completely in August of 30 BCE when they committed suicide after being cornered. Octavian also killed Cleopatra's son Caesarion, a potential rival to his throne, famously saying that "two Caesars are one too many."
- After that victory, Octavian returned to Rome, and, playing the political game perfectly, officially stepped down from his role of leader in January 27 BCE, making it clear that everything he had done he did "for the good of the Roman Republic." However, according to most historians, the republic had been dead for a while now.
- The Roman senate quickly reinstated Octavian, giving him the title "Augustus." With the crowning of Caesar Augustus, the Roman Empire was now in full force.

Herod the Great

- **[SLIDE] [TIMELINE]** Meanwhile, things in Israel were not that great.
- Around 49 BCE, during the civil war between Ptolemy and Julius Caesar, an Idumean (Edomite) named Antipater ingratiated himself with Caesar and was rewarded by being made governor of Judea. As with most other Idumeans, Antipater's family had been forcibly converted to Judaism under John Hyrcanus.
- In 47 BCE, while Julius Caesar was in Egypt with Cleopatra, Antipater set up his son Herod as the governor of Galilee. Herod's mother was a Nabatean princess (making him legally not Jewish), but he was raised with an understanding of Judaism and ostensibly as a Jew. However, he was the furthest thing from a pious Jew, and had no regard for the Jewish religion.
- Herod was a brutal man. Immediately after becoming governor of Galilee, he defeated and executed a gang of bandits led by a man named Ezekias. However, this incensed the Hasmonean High Priest, John Hyrcanus II, and the Sanhedrin, who called Herod to stand trial for the summary execution (which was against the Torah's requirements).
- The 25-year-old Herod appeared in front of the Sanhedrin in a purple kingly robe with a bodyguard and was arrested by the court. Unfortunately, Hyrcanus was forced by the Roman governor of Syria to release Herod, who fled to Syria and entrenched himself even more deeply in Roman politics.
- **[SLIDE]** After the death of Caesar in 44 BCE, Herod's father Antipater was also killed when trying to collect taxes in support of Caesar's killers Brutus and Cassius. However, when Mark Antony finally defeated the assassins, Herod managed to get on his good side and was rewarded with the title of Tetrarch of Galilee, a title normally reserved for vassal kings. Meanwhile, Hyrcanus continued in his role as the High Priest in Jerusalem.
- In 40 BCE, Antigonus, Hyrcanus' nephew, took the Judean throne from his uncle with the help of the Parthians. Herod fled to Rome to plead with the Romans to restore Hyrcanus II to power. In Rome, Herod was unexpectedly appointed King of the Jews by the Roman Senate.
- He returned to Judea to take over his newly acquired kingdom. The battle against the Parthians lasted for almost three years, during which Herod married Hyrcanus' granddaughter Mariamne in a bid to make himself more favorable to the Jews.
- In 37 BCE, Mark Antony sent support to Herod, and he finally beat the Parthians and took over Jerusalem. However, once he did, Herod put to death 45 members of the Sanhedrin who had backed the Hasmoneans, in effect ending the civil authority of the Sanhedrin and limiting it to religious rulings.
- When Octavian defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra, Herod convinced him to confirm his kingship over Judea, and even to add the coastland and Samaria back into his domain.
- As King of Judea, Herod continued to be a brutal but effective ruler. His building projects were really the core of the impact he had on Israel. In Jerusalem, he built a new market, an amphitheater, a theater, and a new royal palace.
- He also built an entirely new port city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea called Caesarea Maritima in honor of Augustus Caesar. Caesarea was designed to be a thoroughly Roman city, with **[SLIDE]** a massive aqueduct to bring in fresh water, **[SLIDE]** an amphitheater, **[SLIDE]** a theater, and **[SLIDE]** a large palace that included a pool overlooking the Mediterranean.
- **[SLIDE]** It also boasted a completely man-made harbor, one of the most impressive harbors of its time, rivaling Cleopatra's harbor at Alexandria. It was also the largest artificial harbor built in the open sea, enclosing around 100,000 square meters. Herod shipped more than 17 tons of special volcanic ash concrete from Italy, and used a complex and difficult process to construct the harbor's breakwaters.

- **[SLIDE]** He also renovated and significantly improved the fortress at the top of Masada, a flat-topped mountain on the shore of the Dead Sea, **[SLIDE]** building two palaces in the Roman style there.
- **[SLIDE]** To cap it all off, in 20 BCE Herod started to rebuild and expand the Temple and the Temple Mount.
 - This rebuilding project was a major endeavor, and took literally decades to complete.
 - In addition to refinishing the exterior and interior of the Temple building itself, **[SLIDE]** Herod expanded the size of the Temple Mount plaza, building a massive retaining wall around the sides of the mount and filling all of that in with fill dirt. **[SLIDE]** The Western Wall is called that because it is the western retaining wall of the Temple Mount. Those stones you see are the ones Herod used to build the wall.
 - **[SLIDE]** If you go to Israel today you can take a tour of the tunnels underneath the old city along the bottom of the western wall, and see the stones that were used to build this impressive structure. These massive limestone blocks were moved from a quarry outside the city and stacked on top of one another with perfect precision and with no mortar.
 - **[SLIDE]** You can also take a tour of the outside Southwestern corner of the wall, where the Herodian street has been excavated, along with piles of stones that were thrown down by the Romans when they destroyed the Temple in 70 CE.
- However, while the temple was a grand structure and Herod built it with the goal of making the Jews like him more, his efforts had a tone deafness to them that was surprising for someone of his political understanding. On top of the gate of the new Temple he had a golden eagle erected, a symbol of Roman power in the heart of the holy city of God.
- An admirer of Greek culture, Herod supported a cult worshipping the emperor and built temples to Augustus in non-Jewish cities around Israel.
- He also began the custom of appointing high priests for political and financial reasons. That practice ultimately led to class warfare between the chief priests (who were all Sadducees) on one side and the regular priests and the Pharisees on the other.
- As a result of his policies, he sometimes had to revert to violence, employing mercenaries and a secret police to enforce order.
- In 7 BCE and 4 BCE he executed his sons Aristobulus and Antipater, causing the emperor Augustus to joke that it was preferable to be Herod's pig (*hus*) than his son (*huios*). [Macrobius, Saturnalia 2.4.11.]
- **[SLIDE]** In his will, Herod left the area he controlled to his three remaining sons: Herod Antipas was given control of the Galilee and the east bank of the Jordan; Philip was given control over the Golan heights in the north-east; and Archelaus of Samaria and Judea. However, after Archelaus died in 6 CE, the Romans decided not to install another son of Herod as king over Judea and Samaria, instead giving the job to an ever-changing list of Roman procurators.
- Some time in the decades after the death of Herod the Great, a political and religious group call the Herodians cropped up in Israel. Not much is known about this group, because they are really only mentioned in the Gospels. However, some scholars say that the Herodians apparently believed Herod had been the Jewish Messiah (despite any potential for that to be true given his complete lack of connection to the tribe of Judah or the family of David).
 - The Herodians wanted to re-establish the rule of Herod's descendants over Judea and Samaria and saw that as a prerequisite of the coming redemption of Israel. Obviously, they picked the wrong messiah...

Influential Texts

- **[SLIDE]** I'd now like to talk about some of the books and writings that come from this period of time, writings that were well known in the Jewish world and that influenced the teaching and writing of Jesus and the Apostles. I'm sure we could teach entire classes on most of these books, so this will only be a brief summary. However, I do recommend you go and read these texts, most of which you can access very easily online.
- **[SLIDE]** In the time leading up to and during the Apostolic period, there were a few important types of writing that were common in the Jewish world.
 - Aggadic works: These are teachings based in story, including parables.
 - Halachic works: Works of Jewish law, like the Mishnah and the Tosefta.
 - Wisdom literature: Aphorisms, proverbs, sayings, moral guidance, and principles for life.
 - Apocalyptic literature: Narrative texts that take a pessimistic view of the present age and foretell of imminent cataclysmic events.
- In addition to Jewish forms of writing, the Greek and Roman world provided an important writing format that we recognize today from the writings of the Paul, John, James, Jude, and Peter:
 - Epistles: Epistles are personal letters, written either to a single person or a group of people. These letters, thousands of which have been found by archaeologists and scholars, follow a standard structure and writing convention.
- Okay, now that we have talked about types of literature, let's talk about some specific books.
 - Two primary Jewish writings that come from this period are **the Midrash and the Mishnah**. Unlike the other writings we are going to talk about, these are compilations of teachings that were still being passed down orally at the time of the Apostles, and were not written down until about 100 years after the time of the New Testament. However, this oral transmission was very common in the ancient world, and these teachings were likely well known by Jesus and the disciples, since they were engaged in the same conversations and debates as we see in these books.
 - **[SLIDE] The Midrash** is a collection of exegetical teachings that attempts to understand the text of the Bible by expounding on it from various angles, often making up new stories that help the reader better understand the Biblical text. The name Midrash comes from the word מְדַרְשׁ, *darash*, which means "to seek with care, to enquire." There are many compilations of Midrash, including the Midrash Rabbah, but you will also find much midrashic material in other texts.
 - **[SLIDE] The Mishnah** (which means "repetition") is a compilation of the oral teachings of the rabbis who lived from about 50 BCE until about 200 CE. These teachings were passed down by oral repetition from generation to generation, and were memorized by boys as young as the age of 10 (see [m. Avot 5:21](#)). The Mishnah was finally written down around 200 CE by Yehudah HaNasi, a rabbi who was concerned that the teachings would be lost as the Jewish community dealt with the detrimental effects of the exile. The Mishnah follows a specific order and focuses on *halakha*, legal rulings and interpretations of the scriptures.
- **[SLIDE] The Targums** are also extremely important for understanding the New Testament writers. [Pentateuch with Onkelos on the side (MS Harley 5709, 191r)]
 - The word תַּרְגּוּם (*targum*) means "translation," so a Targum is a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic, the common spoken language in Israel in the Apostolic period.
 - Hebrew and Aramaic are very similar languages, but since Aramaic was the common tongue and Hebrew was used mostly in religious circumstances, it was helpful for the text of the Torah, after it had

been read publicly in the synagogue in Hebrew, to be translated and interpreted for the average listener.

- These translations also initially passed down orally and were not written down until the middle of the first century. However, they were understood and memorized like the Hebrew text.
- The Targums are more like paraphrases than literal translations, and the writers would commonly include their own theologies and interpretations into the text. This can be helpful to us as we interpret the Hebrew Bible, since the Targums can help us understand how ancient Jews understood the text. They also had a tendency to replace anthropomorphisms in the text with allegorical interpretations. For example, in Genesis 1, the Word (Aramaic מִימְרָא, *Memra*) of the LORD is spoken of as the one doing the work of creation.
 - And the Word of the LORD said: “Let there be light”; and there was light by his *Memra*. (Genesis 1:3)
- **[SLIDE]** Another extremely important book that heavily influenced the Apostles was **the Septuagint**.
 - Around 250 BCE, as the Romans were fighting the first Punic War and the Ptolemaic Greeks were in control of Israel, the Torah was translated from Hebrew into Greek.
 - According to [the Letter of Aristeas](#), a Hellenistic book written around 200 BCE, the Septuagint translation was commissioned by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (the Greek Pharaoh of Egypt).
 - The name of the work (from the Latin *septuaginta*, “70”) derived from the belief that 72 translators, 6 from each of the 12 tribes, worked independently on the entire text and produced identical translations (cf. [b. Megillah 9a](#)). You’ll often see the Septuagint referenced with the capital letters LXX, which are the Roman numerals for “70.”
 - The Septuagint was regarded by many Hellenized Jews as inspired just like the Hebrew text, and it was used extensively in the ancient Jewish world, even among non-Hellenized Jews.
 - The majority of Old Testament references in the New Testament are taken from the Septuagint, which was also written in Greek.
 - Much like the Targums, the Septuagint is not a word-for-word translation of the Hebrew, and there are times when it’s language is used by the New Testament writers to make their point more clear.
 - For example, in Isaiah 7:14, the Hebrew word עַלְמָה (*almah*), which translates into English as “young woman,” is translated into the Septuagint as παρθένος (*parthenos*), which translates into English as “virgin.”
 - The Septuagint is also where we first see the word Torah, which means “instruction,” translated as the Greek word νόμος, *nomos*, meaning “law” or “rule,” a convention that is continued in the New Testament.
 - Another key element we get from the Septuagint is the order we use in the Christian Old Testament, as well as the naming of its books. For example, Deuteronomy, called דְּבָרִים (*Devarim*) or “Words” in the Hebrew Bible, is called Δευτερονόμιον (*Deuteronomion*) or “Second Law” in the Septuagint.
 - In addition to translations of the entirety of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint includes some additional pieces that are not available in the Hebrew, which we call the Apocrypha.
- **[SLIDE]** **The Apocrypha** are religious texts whose authenticity is not officially recognized.
 - The list of Apocryphal books is pretty long, and basically includes any text that is not accepted as part of the canon of Hebrew Scripture.

- A subset of the Apocrypha are the **Pseudepigrapha** (from the Greek word for "false authorship"), which are apocryphal books that spuriously claim to have been written by someone else.
- Some of the Apocryphal texts are called “Deuterocanonical,” which means ("second canon,") They are texts that were recognized by the Catholic church as canonical in the Councils of Rome (382 AD), Hippo (393 AD), Carthage (397 AD and 419 AD), Florence (1442 AD) and Trent (1546 AD). They are still considered to be canonical books of the Old Testament in the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Oriental Orthodox Church. Protestants tend to side with the Jewish canon and exclude the Apocrypha.
- The Apocrypha includes: Tobit, Judith, Baruch (including the Letter of Jeremiah, a.k.a. Baruch chapter 6), Wisdom of Yeshua Ben Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus), 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, The Wisdom of Solomon, and some Greek additions to Esther and Daniel.
- Additionally, there are a few other Apocryphal books that are considered canonical only by the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Church, including Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, and Psalm 151.
- The Apocrypha were known by the New Testament writers, and are quoted and referenced in quite a few places in the New Testament. ([See an interesting list here.](#))
 - For example, the reference to the "better resurrection" in Hebrews 11:35 seems to be referring to the second century BCE account in 2 Maccabees 7 about the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons.
 - And Hebrews 11:37, speaking of the righteous people who came before, says “they were sawn in two,” appears to be a reference the death of Isaiah that is recorded in the apocryphal book Martyrdom of Isaiah 5:12: “And they seized and sawed in sunder Isaiah, the son of Amoz, with a wood-saw.”
- From a New Testament perspective, two important Apocryphal works are the Book of Sirach and the Book of Enoch.
- **[SLIDE] The Book of Sirach**, or more accurately, *The Wisdom of Yeshua Ben Sira* was written around 180–175 BCE in Alexandria, Egypt. It is also called *Ecclesiasticus* in some Christian circles.
 - The Book of Sirach was translated into Greek by the author’s grandson around 117 BCE.
 - It is classified as Wisdom literature, and is modeled on the book of Proverbs. Just like the book of Proverbs, it talks specifically about Wisdom, personifying it in a sense, and also identifying Wisdom with the observance of the Torah.
 - In the course of his dissertation, Ben Sirach used his text to denounce the Hellenizers in Jerusalem, which were a growing concern in his day.
 - Both Jesus and James quote or paraphrase the Book of Sirach in their teachings. For example:
 - Matthew 6:19-20 – “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal”
 - and James 5:3 – “Your gold and your silver have corroded, and their corrosion will serve as a testimony against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!”
 - Sirach 29:10-11 – Lose your money for relative or friend; do not hide it under a stone to rot. Dispose of your treasure according to the commandments of the Most High, and that will profit you more than the gold. ([source](#))
 - Of all the apocryphal books, only Ben Sira is mentioned by name in rabbinic sources.

- **[SLIDE] The Book of Enoch**, written sometime between 300 and 200 BCE, is the oldest known Jewish work not included in the Bible. It is what we would call apocalyptic literature.
 - It describes the fall of the Watchers, the angels who fathered the angel-human hybrids known as the Nephilim. It puts emphasis on the terrible punishment inflicted upon sinners in the Last Judgment, the imminent coming of the messiah and his kingdom, and the role of angels.
 - Jude, the brother of Jesus, quotes the [Book of Enoch 1:9](#) in his epistle:
 - Jude 14–15 — It was also about these people that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord has come with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”
 - Peter was also heavily influenced by the book of Enoch. Michael Heiser in his stellar book *The Unseen Realm*, says, “First Enoch and other works are part of the thinking of Peter and Jude because they were well known and taken seriously by contemporaries... It is obvious to those who study all these texts, especially in Greek, that Peter and Jude knew 1 Enoch very well.” (p. 98n14)
 - The Gospel of Luke also agrees with the Book of Enoch’s counting of generations, showing 70 generations from Enoch to Jesus in his recounting of Jesus’ genealogy in Luke 3.
- One more note about important texts before we move on.
- **[SLIDE]** In 1948 a Bedouin shepherd threw a rock in a cave in the desert near the Dead Sea. The rock hit something that sounded like pottery, so he climbed up into the cave to take a look. Inside the cave he saw clay jar with lids that contained scrolls of parchment. He took the scrolls he found to an antiquities dealer, who recognized them as ancient texts. Eventually a professor at Hebrew University found out about them. Over the next 9 years all of the caves in the area were excavated.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls, as they were called, includes a small number of near-complete Scrolls and tens of thousands of Scroll fragments, representing over 900 different texts written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.
- The texts found come both Biblical manuscripts and non-Biblical manuscripts, including some that were written by the group that stored the scrolls in the caves. The dates of the scrolls range from the third century BCE to the first century CE, before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.
- Among the Scrolls are partial or complete copies of every book in the Hebrew Bible except the book of Esther. About a dozen copies of some of these books were written in ancient paleo-Hebrew, the script of the First Temple era, not the standard script of the time.
- The Qumran Scrolls are over a thousand years older than the oldest biblical manuscripts we had before they were found. However, the text in these ancient manuscripts is virtually identical to the text in the later manuscripts, a testament to the attention to detail that scribes followed when copying from one scroll to the next.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls have had, and continue to have, a dramatic impact on our understanding of the scriptures and of Judaism in the time of Jesus.

The Apocalyptic Worldview of the Bible

- Before we close, I’d like to talk about one of the most important contextual elements of the entire Bible, and one that should heavily influence how you read the New Testament.

- The teaching of the New Testament has an eschatological orientation, an apocalyptic orientation that we have become uncomfortable with in the modern world. However, that apocalyptic worldview is what was handed down to the Apostles. It is a worldview that starts all the way back in Genesis.
 - Genesis 49:1, 10 — Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves, so that I may tell you what will happen to you in the last days [בְּאַחַר יְהִימִים, *b’acharit hayamim*].... “The scepter will not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”
 - Numbers 24:14, 17 — “So now, behold, I am going to my people; come, and I will advise you of what this people will do to your people in the last days.... I see him, but not now; I look at him, but not near; A star shall appear from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall smash the forehead of Moab, And overcome all the sons of Sheth.”
 - Deuteronomy 4:30-31 — “When you are in distress and all these things happen to you, in the last days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not abandon you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.”
- The Torah described the coming day of the LORD, the last days, the *acharit hayamim* to the patriarchs. However, these things did not happen in their lifetimes, so the expectation was passed down to their children and grandchildren. The *acharit hayamim*, the last days, were still coming.
- As we studied in our teachings on the prophetic books, the prophets continued to prophecy that the Day of the LORD was coming, the ultimate redemption, the day when the Jewish people would be returned to their land, the nations who ruled over them would be defeated, and the LORD would institute a new covenant with them. Throughout the prophets, the LORD tells His people to anticipate that coming “Day of the LORD.”
 - Isaiah 13:6-9 — Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every human heart will melt. They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame. Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.
 - Ezekiel 30:2-3 — “Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘This is what the Lord GOD says: “Wail, ‘Woe for the day!’ “For the day is near, Indeed, the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time of doom for the nations.”
- Look also at Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Zephaniah. Look at how the prophets describe the coming of that Day, and how they describe the Messiah who will bring the wrath of God on that day.
- The Babylonian Exile brought this feeling to a head. But as we have learned over the last two weeks, the Day of the LORD did not come to pass at the end of the Babylonian Exile. Yes, some of the people came back, but not all. The nations still ruled over Israel. The prophesied king in the line of David did not come to rule. The new covenant was not instituted.
- In the years that followed, this developed into the apocalyptic understanding that was prevalent in the time of the Messiah and the Apostles.
- The Maccabees only intensified this apocalyptic feeling. They were fighting for the cause of God, and working to bring about the independence of then Jewish people from the oppression of the other nations.
 - In the days of the Apostles, the Maccabees were the superheroes of the past, the people you named your kids after and wanted to emulate.

- Jesus and the Apostles were completely enmeshed in this apocalyptic worldview. Their teachings are embedded in it.
- What is the Gospel? What do you understand the Gospel to be?
 - Most people would say something to the effect of, “Jesus came to die for our sins so that we can go to Heaven when we die.”
- But that’s not the message that Jesus or the Apostles taught. The message of the Gospel is an apocalyptic message, a message directly tied to the coming Day of the LORD.
 - Matthew 4:17 — From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- The Kingdom of Heaven is not in heaven. “Heaven” in this context is just a circumlocution for “God.” The Kingdom of Heaven is the rule and reign of the King Messiah on the earth, a rule which comes **after** the Day of the LORD.
- So, the gospel, the good news, the message we are supposed to be teaching, is a message not just of redemption from sin, but a message that we can be saved from the wrath that is coming on the Day of the LORD.
- The Apostle Paul, when praising the believers in Thessalonica for their willingness to accept the message he brought to them, says, other people tell us all the time “how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is, Jesus who rescues us from the wrath to come.” (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10)
- The Day of the LORD, the *acharit hayamim*, the latter days, are still coming. The wrath of the LORD will be poured out on the nations that oppress the people of Israel, the covenant people of God. Read Isaiah 2 and Micah 5. The redemption of the Jewish people is coming, and those of us from among the nations who have attached ourselves to the Messiah of Israel, who swear our allegiance to Him, will be delivered from His wrath alongside His people.