

The Intertestamental Period

PODCAST 2 - WHO IS OUR KING? (B)

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Exploring the Intertestamental Period

Over 6 lessons we will discuss three categories that shaped Jewish belief during the period up to the time of Jesus

1. Political changes and the new ways of understanding YHWH's reign over the Jewish people (and the world!)
2. The new cultural impulse of Hellenism and how it affected Jewish identity
3. Religious beliefs that developed during the period as well as different groups within Judaism that sprang up

We will also discuss specifically how these changes are reflected in the New Testament

New Political Challenges

The loss of local political control and independent nationhood caused a re-evaluation of what it meant to worship YHWH and live as a “people that dwells apart.”

- The transition from detached, distant rulers to localized “foreign” rulers spurred new thinking about what it meant to be YHWH’s special people in a Gentile world
- The actions of these rulers created pressure points with Hellenistic Judaism, either soothing or antagonizing groups

Our focus for today:

- Hasmonean Dynasty (167 to 63 BCE)
- Roman Arrival to Herod the Great (63 to 37 BCE)

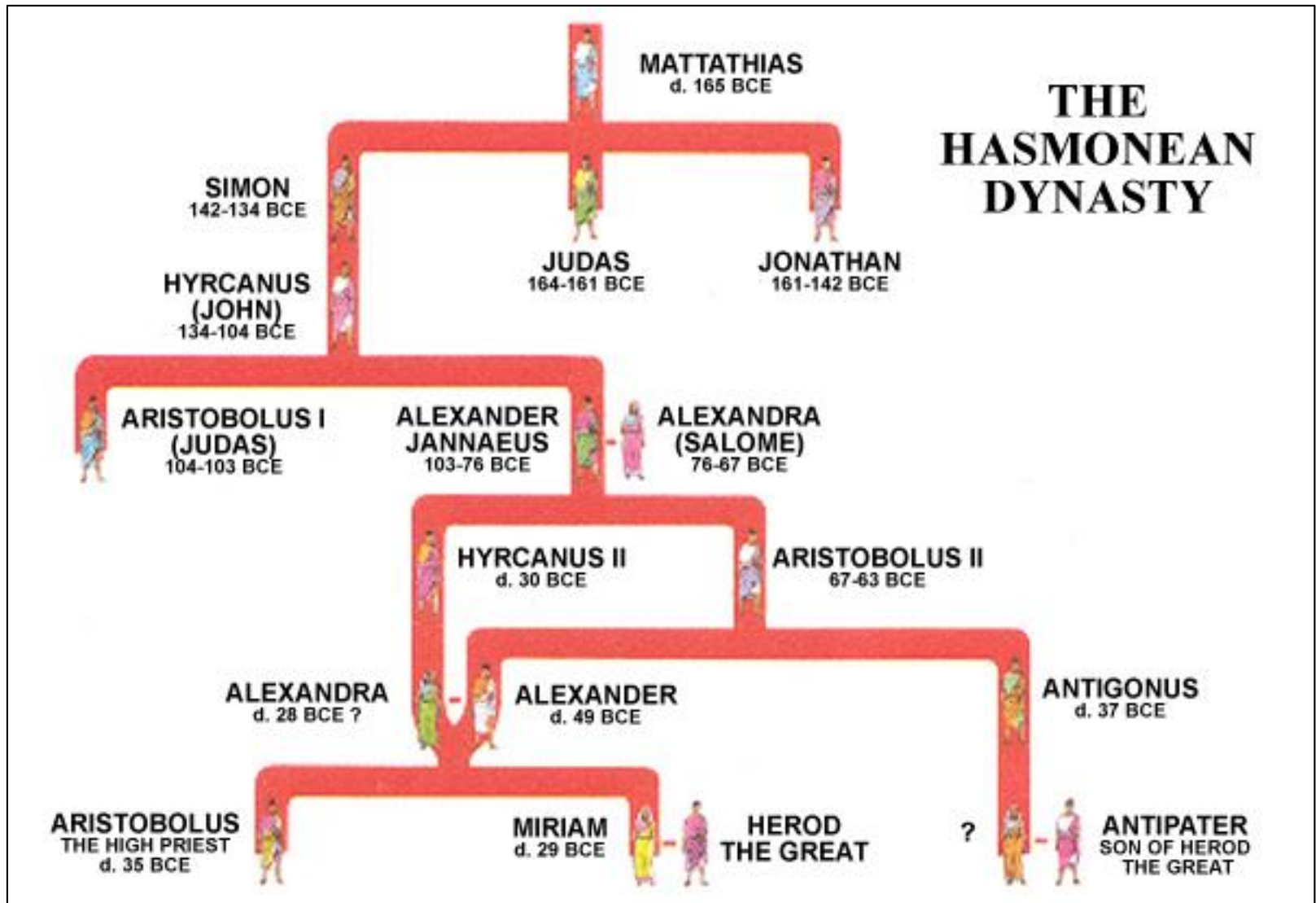
Last Session Review

- 1. A switch occurred from relatively detached foreign rulers (Persians, Ptolemies) to kings who intimately directed society to further political objectives (Seleucids)*
- 2. Where this more direct control clashed with Jewish belief, it was seen as a threat by some groups; however other groups mitigated these cultural conflicts with various strategies*
- 3. These clashes highlighted the difference between political reality and the ideal of the Old Testament*

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The Hasmonean Dynasty



Mattathias' Sons Establish a Dynasty

- Mattathias – dies early on in the rebellion (165 BCE)
- Judas – also called “Maccabeus” (the Hammer) succeeds him
 - Recaptures Jerusalem and cleans Temple
 - Signs treaty with Rome against Seleucids
 - Killed in 161 BCE
- 2nd son Jonathan succeeds Judas
 - Allied with Jewish group called the Hasidim (“pious ones”) against the Seleucids; group helps him win form of religious independence from Seleucids
 - Depos the existing high priest and takes office for himself in 152 BCE
 - Hasmonean family not a high priestly family
 - Splits temple hierarchy politically into two groups
 - Killed by Seleucids in 143 BCE

Mattathias' Sons Establish a Dynasty

- 3rd son Simon succeeds Jonathan from 143 to 134 BCE
 - Named both “prince of Israel” and high priest
 - Enters into Seleucid wars of succession in return for political freedom
 - Attacks Jamnia, Joppa, Tyre, Sidon, Galilee, the Transjordan
 - Justified attacks with the idea of “rescuing” fellow Jews
 - Aggressively expands control over new territory
 - Forced Gentiles to convert to Judaism
- Simon’s son John Hyrcanus continues policies (134 – 104 BCE)
 - Ruled as a despot
 - Forced Idumeans to take Jewish customs and law
 - Destroyed Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerazim and city of Samaria in 107 BCE (cf. Samaritan woman in John 5)

Mattathias' Sons Establish a Dynasty

- Aristobolous ascends in 104 BCE
 - For the first time, names himself as “king”
 - Merges offices of priest and king – never happened before
 - Figure of Melchizedek from Genesis 14 used to justify the arrangement (cf. Hebrews 7) – religious parties not satisfied
 - Dies after 1 year
- Alexander Jannaeus rules from 104 – 76 BCE
 - Played the Pharisees and Saduccees off against each other; eventually sided with Saduccees
 - Pelted with citrus at Feast of Tabernacles for not following Pharisee version of the ritual
 - Crucified 800 Pharisees after learning they talked to Seleucid king about revolting

Mattathias' Sons Establish a Dynasty

- Alexander's wife Salome Alexandra ascends to throne in 76 BCE
 - Only queen in Israel's history
 - Follows husband's deathbed advice and aligns with Pharisees
 - Pharisees begin to take vengeance on enemies, forcing many Sadducees to leave Judea
 - She names her son Hyrcanus as high priest and heir
- Aristobolus deposes Hyrcanus and takes total control in 67 BCE

Over the approximately 100 years of the Hasmonean dynasty it has moved from rebellion leadership to increasing secular rulers, albeit with a formal religious capacity.

The Romans Arrive

- The Idumean ruler Antipater stirs the pot to create conflict
- Roman general Pompey agreed to support Antipater/Hyrchanus and conquered Jerusalem after a siege in 63 BCE
- Aristobolus sent to Rome and later poisoned
- Antipater continued to rise in Roman favor by supporting Julius Caesar in the Roman civil war
- Antipater was rewarded Roman Procurator and two sons, Phasael and Herod, received governorships
- Hyrchanus re-installed with very little real power (even this taken away later by Mark Antony)



Herod the Great

The Romans Arrive

- Antigonus, the son of Aristobolus, convinced the Parthians to attack Jerusalem in 43 BCE
- Under flag of truce, Phasael murdered and Hyrcanus mutilated
- Herod flees to Rome and is given troops and title “King of the Jews” in 40 BCE by Roman Senate
- Herod retakes Jerusalem from Antigonus in 37 BCE
- Herod puts to death all rivals as well as 3 sons and wife over the course of his reign
- Herod retains ability to appoint High Priests and begins building program

**Herod's palace outside
Jerusalem, Herodium**



Additional Political Pressure Points

- Loss of political and social status
 - Destruction and enslavement of Sepphoris – 4 BCE
 - Poll tax in Egypt – 20 BCE
 - Appeal to Gaius to uphold Jewish citizenship (lost) – 39 CE
- Affronts to Jewish belief
 - Herod's Roman eagle on Temple gate – 4 BCE

Additional Political Pressure Points

Josephus in *Jewish War* 1.33.1 (Late 1st c. CE) –

“Now when these men were informed that the king was wearing away with melancholy, and with a distemper, they dropped words to their acquaintance, how **it was now a very proper time to defend the cause of God**, and to pull down **what had been erected contrary to the laws of their country**; for it was unlawful there should be any such thing in the temple as images, or faces, or the like representation of any animal whatsoever. Now **the king had put up a golden eagle over the great gate of the temple**, which these learned men exhorted them to cut down; and told them, that if there should any danger arise, **it was a glorious thing to die for the laws of their country**; because that the **soul was immortal**, and that **an eternal enjoyment of happiness did await** such as died on that account”

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- Affronts to Jewish belief
 - Herod's Roman eagle on Temple gate – 4 BCE
 - Gaius wants to place his statue in Temple – 39 CE
 - Altar to Emperor in Jamnia destroyed – 39 CE
 - Regular confiscation of Temple tax revenue from Diaspora
- Forced exiles target Jews specifically
 - Tiberius conscripts 4k into army; exiles others – 19 CE
 - Claudius expels Jews from Rome – late 40s CE

Political Effects on the 1st c. CE

Current status under direct Roman rule not seen as ideal – the notion of the “restoration of Israel” gained traction

Psalms of Solomon 17:21 – 15 (1st c. BCE) –

“See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God. Undergird him with strength to **destroy the unrighteous rulers**, to **purge Jerusalem** from gentiles who trample her to destruction; in wisdom and in righteousness **to drive out sinners from the inheritance**; to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter’s jar; to shatter all their substance **with an iron rod**; to **destroy the unlawful nations** with the word of his mouth; at his warning **the nations will flee** from his presence; and **he will condemn sinners** by the thoughts of their hearts.”

Political Effects on the 1st c. CE

Political/social/religious divisions between Jews and Gentiles created conflict as seen in the New Testament's dialogue on meta-ethnic salvation

Luke 4:18 - 19, 28 – 29 (NIV)

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to **preach good news to the poor**. He has sent me to **proclaim freedom** for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to **release the oppressed**, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

“All the people in the synagogue **were furious** when they heard this. They got up, **drove him out** of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, **in order to throw him down.**”

The crowd liked Jesus' message until it was directed to the Gentiles

Political Effects on the 1st c. CE

Distrust of political and religious leaders rose

Testament of Moses 5.3 – 6 (1st c. BCE)

“**They will pollute** the houses of their worship **with the customs of the nations**; and they will play the harlot after foreign gods. For they will not follow the truth of God, but certain of them will pollute the high altar by [four to six letters are lost] the offerings which they place before the Lord. They are **not truly priests at all but slaves, yea, sons of slaves**. For those who are the leaders, their teachers, in those times will become **admirers of avaricious persons**, accepting polluted offerings, and they will **sell justice by accepting bribes**.”

Political Effects on the 1st c. CE

Created economic and social instability

- Hellenism impacted the kinship structure that undergirded the entire Old Testament
- Central governments imposed large taxes (over 50%)
- New rulers confiscated large swaths of land, breaking up family economic and social wealth and leading to a whole class of dispossessed Judeans
- Resulted in a rise of banditry and social ills
(Parable of the Good Samaritan)

Masada, last stronghold of the Zealots in 73 CE



Today's Takeaways

- Despite the successful rebellion, the new Jewish dynasty ended up looking just like their old rulers, not the idealized vision of David and Solomon
- The final subjugation under Roman rule and Herod further enhanced this conflict between the ideal and the political reality
- The political changes of the Period created multiple issues in the 1st century CE around civic, religious, social, and economic lines

Next Time – Dear Miss Manners, What is the proper response when my Gentile party host serves pig for dinner?

Questions and Feedback

I hope you were blessed by this study. I pray that God might deepen your knowledge and faith through it.

For any questions or feedback, I can be reached at:
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Charis!

Thom Rowe, March 2017

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