

Silent Night

Acts 4:27-28

Dr. Pierre Cannings

I. Played Your Role v. 27

- a. City Gathered Against
- b. Your Holy Servant Jesus
 - i. You Anointed - Jesus, the Christ, for his work or mission
 - ii. *Messiah* is the term for “anointed one” derived directly from the Hebrew word for anointed; *Christ* is the same title derived from the Greek word for “anointee.” The true anointing of Messiah (Ps 2:2)
 - iii. This psalm, with its explicit reference to Yahweh’s anointed one (Messiah), had been interpreted of the coming deliverer of David’s line at least as early as the middle of the first century B.C.; the words “You are my Son” (Ps. 2:7)
- c. Herod
 - i. kings” who set themselves in array are represented by Herod Antipas;
 - ii. Herod might have wished to be regarded as a Jew, but Luke probably thought of him as a Gentile ruler. One of the few sons of Herod the Great to survive him, Herod Antipas ruled as tetrarch over Galilee
 - iii. The Roman period (63–4 BC). Judaea now became a Rom province. Hyrcanus, stripped of the hereditary royal power, retained only the high-priestly office. Rome exacted an annual tribute, and Aristobulus was sent as a captive to the capital. He contrived however to escape and renewed the unequal struggle, in which he was succeeded by his sons Alexander and Antigonus. In the war between Pompey and Caesar, Judaea was temporarily forgotten, but after Caesar’s death, under the triumvirate of Octavius, Antony and Lepidus, Antony, the eastern triumvir, favored Herod the Great, whose intrigues secured for him at last the crown of Judaea and enabled him completely to extinguish the old Maccabean line of Judaeian princes.
 - iv. *Herod*. Herod Antipas represents “the kings of the earth” mentioned in the psalm. He was the younger son of Malthace and Herod the Great, who received part of his father’s realm at his death and ruled over Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. until A.D. 39. In Luke 3:1 he is called “tetrarch of Galilee.” See NOTES on Luke 2:2; 3:1. He is mentioned now because of his involvement in Jesus’ trial before Pilate in the Lucan passion narrative (Luke 23:6–12, 15). The Herodian family was considered by Josephus to

be “half-Jewish” (and this Jewish connection is probably part of the reason why Herod Antipas is mentioned along with the Roman Pilate.

d. Pontius Pilate

- i. “rulers” are represented by Pontius Pilate.
- ii. Pilate undoubtedly represented the Gentiles;
- iii. The prophetic language of the psalm showed that Pilate, Herod, and the others, in uniting against Jesus, were simply carrying out “God’s appointed counsel and foreknowledge” (as it was called in 2:23),
- iv. *Pontius Pilate*. Pilate represents the “rulers” mentioned in the psalm. See NOTE on 3:13. He figures in the passion narratives as involved in Jesus’ death, but as one who tried to release Jesus (Luke 23:4, 14–15, 22). Here, however, Pilate is more involved as responsible for the death of Jesus.

e. Gentiles

- i. The “Gentiles” raged against Jesus in the person of the Romans who sentenced him to the cross and carried out the sentence; the “peoples” who plotted against him
- ii. Luke neatly underlines that though Herod and Pilate no doubt came together in order to do what they thought fit they were in fact tools in the hand of God who used them to carry out his own purposes. Cf. 3:18: God fulfilled the purposes he had previously disclosed through the prophets by means of the ignorance of his people; here he does so by means of Gentile political maneuverings.
- iii. *together with Gentiles and peoples of Israel*. “Gentiles” may refer to the Roman soldiers involved in the crucifixion of Jesus (see NOTE on Luke 23:36), or more broadly the Roman occupiers of Judea at the time.
- iv. The raging nations represented the Gentile rulers and their cohorts, the soldiers who executed Jesus.

f. People of Israel - The people of Israel were those who plotted in vain.

- i. The rancor between the Pharisees and the Sadducees that is evident in the New Testament is traceable to Hasmonean political manipulation of these two groups during this period. The Hasmoneans favored the politically minded aristocratic Sadducees, who proudly traced their roots to Zadok, the priest in the days of King David (2 Sam 20:25). The Sadducees were a small but influential portion of the Jewish population who accepted, even embraced, the excesses of their politicians. A large number of people denounced them, however, including the Pharisees, who preferred traditional Judaism. The Pharisees (or Hasidim in days of the Maccabees) strongly disapproved of the cruelty and Greek orientation of the Hasmonean rulers (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.288 [Whiston]). In an extreme response to their disapproval, Jannaeus crucified 800 Pharisees in Jerusalem (Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.380 [Whiston]). Yet before his death, Jannaeus advised his wife, Alexandra, to support the Pharisees and gain the popular support that he did not have.

- ii. The return from Babylon marked a turning point in the spiritual history of the Jews. From that time onward, the lust of idolatry, which had marked their whole previous history, utterly disappears. In the place of it came an almost intolerable spirit of exclusiveness, a striving after legal holiness, these two in combination forming the very heart and core of the later Pharisaism. The holy books, but especially the law, became an object of almost idolatrous reverence; the spirit was utterly lost in the form. And as their own tongue, the classic Heb, gradually gave way to the common Aram., the rabbis and their schools strove ever more earnestly to keep the ancient tongue pure, worship and life each demanding a separate language. Thus the Jews became in a sense bilingual, the Heb tongue being used in their synagogues, the Aram. in their daily life, and later on, in part at least, the Gr tongue of the conqueror,
- iii. Thus tithes were zealously paid by the believer (cf Mt 23:23), the Sabbath became a positive burden of sanctity, the simple laws of God were replaced by cumbersome human inventions, which in later times were to form the bulk of the Talm, and which crushed down all spiritual liberty in the days of Christ (Mt 11:28; 23:4, 23).
- iv. During the Gr period the more conservative and zealous of the Jews were all the time confronted with a tendency of a very considerable portion of the people, especially the younger and wealthier set, to adopt the manners of life and thought and speech of their masters, the Greeks. Thus the Hellenistic party was born, which was bitterly hated by all trueblooded Jews, but which left its mark on their history
- v. Thus the party of the Pharisees came into existence See PHARISEES. They were opposed by the more secular-minded Sadducees wealthy, of fine social standing, wholly free from the restraints of tradition, utterly oblivious of the future life and closely akin to the Gr Epicureans. See SADDUCEES. These parties bitterly opposed each other till the very end of the national existence of the Jews in Pal, and incessantly fought for the mastery, through the high-priestly office. Common hatred for Christ, for a while, afforded them a community of interests.

II. On Purpose v. 28

a. Your Hand

- i. The hand of deity means divine power as ruler, helper, worker of wonders, regulator of the universe
- ii. Peter ascribes to God's "hand" what has been determined, using an OT phrase (see Exod 13:3, 14, 16; Ps 55:21) to denote God's sovereign control. What the just-named adversaries of Jesus have accomplished is

something that was foreseen in God's providence; indeed, it has fitted into the implementation of the divine salvific plan.

b. Your Purpose- of the divine will

i. Predestined to Occur

1. **Predestined - decide upon beforehand, *predetermine***, of God

2. Throughout this entire dark period of Israel's history, God was working out His own Divine plan with them. Their Scriptures were into Gr, after the conquest of Alexander the Great the common language in the East. Thus the world was prepared for the word of God, even as the latter in turn prepared the world for the reception of the gift of God, in the gospel of His Son. The LXX thus is a distinct forward movement in the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise (Gen 12:3; 18:18). As the sacrificial part of Jewish worship declined, through their wide separation from the temple, the eyes of Israel were more firmly fixed on their Scriptures, read every Sabbath in their synagogues, and, as we have seen, these Scriptures, through the rendering of the LXX, had become the property of the entire world. Thus the synagogue everywhere became the great missionary institute, imparting to the world Israel's exalted Messianic hopes. On the other hand, the Jews themselves, embittered by long-continued martyrdoms and suffering, utterly carnalized this Messianic expectation in an increasing ratio as the yoke of the oppressor grew heavier and the hope of deliverance grew fainter. And thus when their Messiah came, Israel recognized Him not, while the heart-hungry heathen, who through the LXX had become familiar with the promise, humbly received Him (Jn 1:9-14). The eyes of Israel were blinded for a season, 'till the fulness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in' (Rom 9:32; 11:25).

Background

At the close of the Old Testament, the Jews were under Persian control, yet they were able to maintain relative autonomy. Thanks to King Cyrus of Persia, the Jews were in their own land (559–529 BC; Ezra 1:1–4) and worshipping freely in the reconstructed temple behind the completed wall of Jerusalem

During his reign, Antiochus undertook an ambitious program of Hellenizing the Jews (2 Macc 4:9–19). He introduced a law prohibiting various Jewish religious activities on penalty of death, including offering sacrifices in the temple, worshipping on the Sabbath, practicing circumcision, and not eating pork (1 Macc 1:44–50). His harsh restrictions incited the Jews to revolt

In the Persian era, the Jewish people returned to their land.

- Construction on the second temple was completed in this period.
- In the Ptolemy era, the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint).
- During this period, the position of high priest was bestowed (by a foreign government) to the highest bidder (2 Macc 4:7–13).
- The Seleucid era saw the revolt of the Maccabees. Most significantly, the high priesthood became a political (within the nation of Israel) appointment (1 Macc 14:25–49).
- In the Hasmonean era, serious conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees developed. The Hasmonean rulers used these conflicts for political intrigue.
- Synagogue worship in this period grew in importance, coupled with a lack of integrity in the office of high priest.
- The conflict that raged throughout this period influenced a military concept of the Messiah.
- In the Roman era, Rome appointed Jewish leadership. This was not new, but the extent was pervasive. Roman rule ended with the war that culminated in the destruction of the temple.

cessation of OT prophecy to the beginning of the Christian era.

return to the land of their fathers was marked by the last rays of the declining sun of prophecy. With Malachi it set

The interval between the Old and the New Testaments is the dark period in the history of Israel. It stretches itself out over about four cents., during which there was neither prophet nor inspired writer in Israel

First, he sought to introduce Greek ideas and culture into the conquered territory. This is called Hellenization. He believed that the way to consolidate his empire was for the people to have a common way of life. However, he did not seek to change the religious practices of the Jews. Second, he founded Greek cities and colonies throughout the conquered territory. Third, he spread the Greek language into that entire region so that it became a universal language during the following centuries.

Herod represented the “kings of the earth”; Pilate, the “rulers”; and Christ, the “anointed” of God.

Cross References

Acts 2:23

Acts 13:27

Word Studies

Anointed - Jesus, the Christ, for his work or mission **Ac 4:27**¹ ***The Anointed One***. In the N²T, Jesus Christ is portrayed as fulfilling the three offices of prophet, priest, and king. He is, supremely, God’s Anointed One. *Messiah* is the term for “anointed one” derived directly from the Hebrew word for anointed; *Christ* is the same title derived from the Greek word for “anointee.” The true anointing of Messiah (Ps 2:2; Dn 9:25, 26) is spiritual; that is, it is done by the Holy Spirit (Is 61:1; Lk 4:1, 18, 19). That Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Anointed One (Messiah) of O³T prophecy was evidenced in his anointing by the Holy Spirit and by the miracles that followed (Jn 1:32–51; Lk 4:33–37). By extension, Christians also are said to be anointed by the Holy Spirit, enabling them to understand their faith and to live godly lives (2 Cor 1:21, 22; 1 Jn 2:20, 27).⁴

¹ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1091.

²NT New Testament

³OT Old Testament

⁴ Robert D. Culver, [*“Anoint, Anointed,” Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 116–117.

Hand - The hand of deity means divine power⁵ as ruler, helper, worker of wonders, regulator of the universe⁶

Purpose - of the divine will

Predestined - **decide upon beforehand, *predetermine***, of God⁷

13:27–28 Verses 27–31 tell the story of Jesus' rejection, death, and resurrection in the basic kerygmatic form already familiar from Peter's speeches earlier in Acts. The people of Jerusalem, and especially their rulers, did not recognize Jesus as their God-sent Messiah. What they did to him was done in ignorance (cf. 3:17). And yet, in condemning him to death, they unknowingly fulfilled the prophecies that the Messiah must suffer and die (cf. Luke 24:46; Acts 3:18). The irony of it all was that they were the very ones who should have understood who Jesus was, who read those very prophecies in their synagogues every sabbath (v. 27b). Paul highly compressed his summary. His reference to their finding no real legal basis for the death penalty (v. 28a) recalls Pilate's protest of Jesus' innocence (cf. Luke 23:4; Acts 3:13).⁸

The Persian Era

At the close of the Old Testament, the Jews were under Persian control, yet they were able to maintain relative autonomy. Thanks to King Cyrus of Persia, the Jews were in their own land (559–529 BC; Ezra 1:1–4) and worshipping freely in the reconstructed temple behind the completed wall of Jerusalem (sanctioned by Darius, 540–486 BC; Ezra 6:1–12).

The Greek Era

When Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) approached Jerusalem during his siege against the Persian Empire, the Jews offered no resistance. Rather, the high priest met Alexander and showed him Daniel's prophecy predicting that Greece would defeat Medio-Persia (Dan 7:6; 8:3–8, 19–21; 11:3). Alexander claimed that he had dreamed about meeting a person just like the high priest, so he did not destroy Jerusalem (Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.327 [Whiston]). Since Alexander had no heir upon his death in 323 BC, four of his generals divided his empire among themselves. Two of these successors figure greatly in the history of the Jews:

1. Ptolemy I (306–283 BC) controlled Egypt, which included Palestine.
2. Seleucus I Nicator (312–280 BC) controlled Syria.

The Ptolemaic Era

⁵ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1082.

⁶ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1083.

⁷ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 873.

⁸ John B. Polhill, [*Acts*](#), vol. 26, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 302.

Leader	Ruled
Ptolemy I Soter	320–283 BC
Ptolemy II Philadelphus	283–246 BC
Ptolemy III Eurgetes	246–221 BC
Ptolemy IV Philopater	221–204 BC
Ptolemy V Epiphanes	204–181 BC

(Dates are from Bo Reicke, *New Testament*, 46.)

Under the Ptolemies, who ruled Palestine from 320–198 BC, the Jews began to lose their fluency in the Hebrew language. Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BC) commissioned 72 Jewish scholars to translate the Pentateuch into Greek, a translation that became known as the Septuagint. The “Letter of Aristeas” records details of this translation project (Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*), though parts of the account are likely mythological. The Septuagint later lost favor with Jews because the early Christians, including many New Testament writers, used it extensively (Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*, 1.23).

The Seleucid Era

Leader	Ruled
Antiochus III the Great	222–187 BC
Seleucus IV Philopater	187–175 BC
Antiochus IV Epiphanes	175–164 BC
Antiochus V Eupator	164–162 BC
Demetrius I	162–150 BC

(Dates are from Bo Reicke, *New Testament*, 50.)

Antiochus III gained control of the Ptolemies’ region at the Battle of Panium in 198 BC, ushering in the era of Seleucid control, which would last until 167 BC.

The most extreme of the Seleucids was Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whom the Jews called “madman.” Under Antiochus’ rule, the Jewish high priesthood experienced great instability. In 175 BC, when Antiochus became the ruler of the Seleucid Empire, Jason, the brother of the then high priest Onias III, bribed Antiochus to make him high priest instead of Onias. As high priest, Jason built a gymnasium and aided in Hellenization of the Jews (2 Maccabees 4:7–13). Menelaus, who was not of priestly ancestry, then bribed Antiochus so that he could become

high priest in place of Jason. Menelaus had Onias assassinated and was arrested for Onias' murder. Jason subsequently drove out Menelaus and took the office of high priest again. The issue was handled by Syrian rulers (Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 69). The Jewish high priesthood's interception with the realm of politics during this period led Jews to suspect the integrity of the priests and whether they may be under the influence of foreign rulers (R.A. Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of the Second Temple Judea*, 16–22).

During his reign, Antiochus undertook an ambitious program of Hellenizing the Jews (2 Macc 4:9–19). He introduced a law prohibiting various Jewish religious activities on penalty of death, including offering sacrifices in the temple, worshiping on the Sabbath, practicing circumcision, and not eating pork (1 Macc 1:44–50). His harsh restrictions incited the Jews to revolt.

The Maccabean Era

In 167 BC, after refusing to publicly sacrifice a pig to the Greek gods and killing the general who had ordered him to do it, Mattathias and his five sons fled to the countryside, encouraging others (called the Hasidim, “the pious,” forerunners of the Pharisees) to join them in fighting Syrian oppression. Following Mattathias' death, his son Judas began a series of successful military raids against the Syrian forces. This success influenced the later Jewish belief that the coming Messiah would be a military leader (Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 2:323–76; Klausner, *Messianic Idea in Israel*, 19, 392, 506). The celebration of Hanukkah (חנוכה, *chnwkh*; also called the Festival of Lights) originated with an eight-day ceremony to rededicate the temple in Jerusalem, which Antiochus IV had profaned when he sacrificed a pig to Zeus on the altar (Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.253 [Whiston]; 1 Macc 4:36–56; 2 Macc 1:18; Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, et al., *Chanukah*).

Upon Judas' death in 160 BC, his brother Jonathan assumed leadership of the Jews (160–143 BC). During his time in power, Jonathan Maccabeus, also called Apphus, “the dissembler” (1 Maccabees. 2:5), was made high priest by Alexander Balas, a Syrian ruler (1 Macc 10: 20; Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.43–45 [Whiston]). Many Jews considered this appointment “overt corruption of the priesthood”; the decision contributed to a “problematic status of the temple” in the minds of the Jews, especially the more conservative groups (Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 154). Additionally, the appointment may have contributed to the formation of the Qumran community. It may have been Jonathan Maccabeus that they called “the Wicked Priest” (Schürer, *Jewish History in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 2:587).

After Jonathan was killed (1 Macc 12:48), his brother Simon became leader (143–134 BC). The ultimate insult in the minds of the scrupulous members of the Jews was when Simon Maccabeus was declared the “supreme leader: High Priest, commander of the armies, and governor of the Jews and the priests” (1 Maccabees 14:25–49). However, the Jewish people themselves, not a foreign power, gave him this position. According to Van Henten, “The people gave their unanimous approval” (1 Macc 14:46; Van Henten, “The Honorary Decree for Simon the Maccabee,” 116–45; Krent, “The Honorary Decree for Simon the Maccabee,” 146–53).

Each of the Maccabeus brothers died a violent death, whether on the battlefield or by treachery (Surburg, *Intertestamental Period*, 40). But they made great efforts on behalf of the Jewish people. Judas gained freedom of religion in 162 BC, Jonathan became high priest in 152 BC, and Simon obtained tax exemption in 142 BC (Bo Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 61).

The Hasmonean Era

Leader	Ruled
Hyrchanus I	134–105
Aristobulus I	104
Alexandar Jannaeus	103–76
Alexandra (queen)	76–67
Hyrchanus II	67
Aristobulus II	66–63

(Dates are from Bo Reicke, *New Testament*, 64.)

In 134 BC Simon Maccabee's rule came to an end when he, along with nearly his entire family, was assassinated by his son-in-law. Simon Maccabeus was succeeded by his sole surviving son, John Hyrcanus, ushering in the era of Hasmonean rule (142–63 BC). Their rule was a time of ruthless family intrigue. Aristobulos I, son of John Hyrcanus, imprisoned his mother and let her die of starvation. He then killed his brother, Antigonus. When Aristobulos died, his widow, Alexandra, married his brother, Alexander Jannaeus (Surburg, *Intertestamental Period*, 41–42).

The rancor between the Pharisees and the Sadducees that is evident in the New Testament is traceable to Hasmonean political manipulation of these two groups during this period. The Hasmoneans favored the politically minded aristocratic Sadducees, who proudly traced their roots to Zadok, the priest in the days of King David (2 Sam 20:25). The Sadducees were a small but influential portion of the Jewish population who accepted, even embraced, the excesses of their politicians. A large number of people denounced them, however, including the Pharisees, who preferred traditional Judaism. The Pharisees (or Hasidim in days of the Maccabees) strongly disapproved of the cruelty and Greek orientation of the Hasmonean rulers (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.288 [Whiston]). In an extreme response to their disapproval, Jannaeus crucified 800 Pharisees in Jerusalem (Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.380 [Whiston]). Yet before his death, Jannaeus advised his wife, Alexandra, to support the Pharisees and gain the popular support that he did not have.

The Roman Era

Recognizing the growing power of Rome, Antipater, the governor of Galilee, sought foreign assistance to challenge the jurisdiction of Alexandra's son, Aristobulos II (Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.10 [Whiston]). The Roman general Pompey invaded Palestine, subdued the Hasmonean ruler in 63 BC, and made Antipater governor of Judaea. Antipater appointed his son, Phasel, military governor of Judaea, and his other son, Herod (Herod the Great, 37–4 BC), tetrarch of Galilee (Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.326 [Whiston]).

In the ensuing international confusion following Julius Caesar's murder in 44 BC, Syria unsuccessfully attempted to move into Palestine. Phasel committed suicide while in captivity, and Herod fled to Rome, where he bribed Mark Anthony to appoint him tetrarch of Judaea. Herod was an Idumaeen (i.e., from the line of Esau not Jacob) and, therefore, not a popular choice with the Jews (Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.403 [Whiston]; *Jewish War* 1.123–24 [Whiston]).

After Caesar's nephew Octavian (later called Augustus, "the majestic one") defeated the competing alliance of Cleopatra and Mark Anthony in 31 BC, he solidified his power in Rome. When the New Testament story began, Caesar Augustus was in control of Rome, and Herod held power in Jerusalem (Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 344–45).

Significant Developments for New Testament Studies

The following major issues in the intertestamental period are considered especially relative to New Testament studies:

- In the Persian era, the Jewish people returned to their land.
- Construction on the second temple was completed in this period.
- In the Ptolemy era, the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint).
- During this period, the position of high priest was bestowed (by a foreign government) to the highest bidder (2 Macc 4:7–13).
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Bibliography⁹

As the title indicates, the historical period in the life of Israel extends from the cessation of OT prophecy to the beginning of the Christian era.

I. The Period in General.—The Exile left its ineffaceable stamp on Judaism as well as on the Jews. Their return to the land of their fathers was marked by the last rays of the declining sun of prophecy. With Malachi it set. Modern historical criticism has projected some of the canonical books of the Bible far into this post-exilic period. Thus Kent (*HJ¹⁰P*, 1899), following the lead of the Wellhausen-Kuenen hypothesis, with all its later leaders, has charted the period between 600 BC, the date of the first captivity, to 160 BC, the beginning of the Hasmonean period of Jewish history, in comparative contemporaneous blocks of double decades. Following the path

⁹ Lorne A. McCune, "[Second Temple Period](#)," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

¹⁰ *HJP* Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*

of Koster, the historical position of Ezr and Neh is inverted, and the former is placed in the period 400–380 BC, contemporaneously with Artaxerxes II; Joel is assigned to the same period; portions of Isa (chs 63–66, 24–27) are placed about 350 BC; Zec is assigned to the period 260–240, and Dnl is shot way down the line into the reign of the Seleucidae, between 200 and 160 BC. Now all this is very striking and no doubt very critical, but the ground of this historical readjustment is wholly subjective, and has the weight only of a hypothetical conjecture. Whatever may be our attitude to the critical hypothesis of the late origin of some of the OT lit¹¹., it seems improbable that any portion of it could have reached far into the post-exilic period. The interval between the Old and the New Testaments is the dark period in the history of Israel. It stretches itself out over about four cents., during which there was neither prophet nor inspired writer in Israel. All we know of it we owe to Jo¹²s, to some of the apocryphal books, and to scattered references in Gr and Lat historians. The seat of empire passed over from the East to the West, from Asia to Europe. The Per¹³s Empire collapsed, under the fierce attacks of the Macedonians, and the Gr Empire in turn gave way to the Rom rule.

II. A Glance at Contemporaneous History.—For the better understanding of this period in the history of Israel, it may be well to pause for a moment to glance at the wider field of the history of the world in the cents, under contemplation, for the words fulness of time” deal with the all-embracing history of mankind, for whose salvation Christ appeared, and whose every movement led to its realization.

1. The Egyptian Empire

(1) In the four cents. preceding Christ, the Egy¹⁴p empire, the oldest and in many respects the most perfectly developed civilization of antiquity, was tottering to its ruins. The 29th or Mendesian Dynasty, made place, in 384 BC, for the 30th or Sebennitic Dynasty, which was swallowed up, half a century later, by the Per¹⁵s Dynasty. The Macedonian or 32d replaced this in 332 BC, only to give way, a decade later, to the last or 33d, the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The whole history of Egypt in this period was therefore one of endless and swiftly succeeding changes. In the Ptolemaic Dynasty there was a faint revival of the old glory of the past, but the star of empire had set for Egypt, and the mailed hand of Rome finally smote down a civilization whose beginnings are lost in the dim twilight of history. The Caesarian conquest of 47 BC was followed, 17 years later, by the annexation of Egypt to the new world-power, as a Rom province. Manetho’s history is the one great literary monument of Egy¹⁶p history in this period. Her priests had been famous for their wisdom, to which Lycurgus and Solon, the Gr legislators, had been attracted, as well as Pythagoras and Plato, the world’s greatest philosophers.

2. Greece

(2) In Greece also the old glory was passing away. Endless wars sapped the strength of the national life. The strength of Athens and Sparta, of Corinth and Thebes had departed, and when

¹¹lit. literature, or literally

¹²Jos Josephus

¹³Pers Persian

¹⁴Egyp Egyptian

¹⁵Pers Persian

¹⁶Egyp Egyptian

about the beginning of our period, in 337 BC, the congress of Gr states had elected Philip of Macedon to the hegemony of united Greece, the knell of doom sounded for all Gr liberty. First Philip and after him Alexander wiped out the last remnants of this liberty, and Greece became a fighting machine for the conquest of the world in the meteoric career of Alexander the Great. But what a galaxy of illustrious names adorn the pages of Gr history, in this period, so dark for Israel! Think of Aristophanes and Hippocrates, of Xenophon and Democritus, of Plato and Apelles, of Aeschines and Demosthenes, of Aristotle and Praxiteles and Archimedes, all figuring, amid the decay of Gr liberty, in the 4th and 3d cents. before Christ! Surely if the political glory of Greece had left its mark on the ages, its intellectual brilliancy is their pride.

3. Rome

(3) Rome meanwhile was strengthening herself, by interminable wars, for the great task of world conquest that lay before her. By the Lat and Samnite and Punic wars she trained her sons in the art of war, extended her territorial power and made her name dreaded everywhere. Italy and north Africa, Greece and Asia Minor and the northern barbarians were conquered in turn. Her intellectual brilliancy was developed only when, the lust of conquest was sated after a fashion, but in the cent. immediately preceding the Christian era we find such names as Lucretius and Hortentius, Cato and Cicero, Sallust and Diodorus Siculus, Virgil and Horace. At the close of the period between the Testaments, Rome had become the mistress of the world and every road led to her capital.

4. Asia

(4) In Asia the Per¹⁷s empire, heir to the civilization and traditions of the great Assy¹⁸r-Bab world-power, was fast collapsing and was ultimately utterly wiped out by the younger Gr empire and civilization. In far-away India the old ethnic religion of Brahma a cent. or more before the beginning of our period passed through the reformatory crisis inaugurated by Gatama Buddha or Sakya Mouni, and thus Buddhism, one of the great ethnic religions, was born. Another reformer of the Tauistic faith was Confucius, the sage of China, a contemporary of Buddha, while Zoroaster in Persia laid the foundations of his dualistic world-view. In every sense and in every direction, the period between the Testaments was therefore one of political and intellectual ferment.

III. Historical Developments.—As regards Jewish history, the period between the Testaments may be divided as follows: (1) the Per¹⁹s period; (2) the Alexandrian period; (3) the Egy²⁰p period; (4) the Syrian period; (5) the Maccabean period; (6) the Rom period.

1. The Persian Period

(1) The Per²¹s period extends from the cessation of prophecy to 334 BC. It was in the main uneventful in the history of the Jews, a breathing spell between great national crises, and

¹⁷Pers Persian

¹⁸Assyr Assyrian

¹⁹Pers Persian

²⁰Egy^p Egyptian

²¹Pers Persian

comparatively little is known of it. The land of Pa²² was a portion of the Syrian satrapy, while the true government of the Jewish people was semitheocratic, or rather sacerdotal, under the rule of the high priests, who were responsible to the satrap. As a matter of course, the high-priestly office became the object of all Jewish ambition and it aroused the darkest passions. Thus John, the son of Judas, son of Eliashib, through the lust of power, killed his brother Jesus, who was a favorite of Bagoses, a general of Artaxerxes in command of the district. The guilt of the fratricide was enhanced, because the crime was committed in the temple itself, and before the very altar. A storm of wrath, the only notable one of this period, thereupon swept over Judaea. The Persians occupied Jeru²³s, the temple was defiled, the city laid waste in part, a heavy fine was imposed on the people and a general persecution followed, which lasted for many years (*An²⁴t*, XI, 7; Kent, *HJ²⁵P*, 231). Then as later on, in the many persecutions which followed, the Samaritans, ever pliable and willing to obey the tyrant of the day, went practically scot free.

2. The Alexandrian Period

(2) The Alexandrian period was very brief, 334–323 BC. It simply covers the period of the Asiatic rule of Alexander the Great. In Greece things had been moving swiftly. The Spartan hegemony, which had been unbroken since the fall of Athens, was now destroyed by the Thebans under Epaminondas, in the great battles of Leuctra and Mantinea. But the new power was soon crushed by Philip of Macedon, who was thereupon chosen general leader by the unwilling Greeks. Persia was the object of Philip's ambition and vengeance, but the dagger of Pausanias (*An²⁶t*, XI, viii, 1) forestalled the execution of his plans. His son Alexander, a youth of 20 years, succeeded him, and thus the "great he-goat," of which Daniel had spoken (Dnl 8:8; 10:20), appeared on the scene. In the twelve years of his reign (335–323 BC) he revolutionized the world. Swift as an eagle he moved. All Greece was laid at his feet. Thence he moved to Asia, where he defeated Darius in the memorable battles of Granicus and Issus. Passing southward, he conquered the Mediterranean coast and Egypt and then moved eastward again, for the complete subjugation of Asia, when he was struck down in the height of his power, at Babylon, in the 33d year of his age. In the Syrian campaign he had come in contact with the Jews. Unwilling to leave any stronghold at his back, he reduced Tyre after a siege of several months, and advancing southward demanded the surrender of Jeru²⁷s. But the Jews, taught by bitter experience, desired to remain loyal to Persia. As Alexander approached the city, Jaddua the high priest, with a train of priests in their official dress, went out to meet him, to supplicate mercy. A previous dream of this occurrence is said to have foreshadowed this event, and Alexander spared the city, sacrificed to Je²⁸h, had the prophecies of Daniel concerning him rehearsed in his

²²Pal Palestine

²³Jerus Jerusalem

²⁴*Ant Josephus, Antiquities*

²⁵*HJP Schürer, History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*

²⁶*Ant Josephus, Antiquities*

²⁷Jerus Jerusalem

²⁸Jeh Jehovah (Yahweh)

hearing, and showed the Jews many favors (*Ant*²⁹t, XI, viii, 5) From that day on they became his favorites; he employed them in his army and gave them equal rights with the Greeks, as first citizens of Alexandria, and other cities, which he founded. Thus the strong Hellenistic spirit of the Jews was created, which marked so large a portion of the nation, in the subsequent periods of their history.

3. The Egyptian Period

(3) The Egyptian period (324–264 BC). The death of Alexander temporarily turned everything into chaos. The empire, welded together by his towering genius, fell apart under four of his generals—. Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Cassander, and Selenus (Dnl 8:21, 22). Egypt fell to the share of Ptolemy Soter and Judaea was made part of it. At first Ptolemy was harsh in his treatment of the Jews, but later on he learned to respect them and became their patron as Alexander had been. Hecataeus of Thrace is at this time said to have studied the Jews, through information received from Hezekiah, an Egy³⁰p Jewish immigrant, and to have written a Jewish history from the time of Abraham till his own day. This book, quoted by Jo³¹s and Origen, is totally lost. Soter was succeeded by Ptolemy Philadelphus, an enlightened ruler, famous through the erection of the lighthouse of Pharos, and esp. through the founding of the celebrated Alexandrian library. Like his father he was very friendly to the Jews, and in his reign the celebrated Gr t³²r of the OT Scriptures, the LX³³X, was made, according to tradition (*Ant*, XII, ii). As however the power of the Syrian princes, the Seleucidae, grew, Pa³⁴l increasingly became the battle ground between them and the Ptolemies. In the decisive battle between Ptolemy Philopator and Antiochus the Great, at Raphia near Gaza, the latter was crushed and during Philopator's reign Judaea remained an Egy³⁵p province. And yet this battle formed the turning-point of the history of the Jews in their relation to Egypt. For when Ptolemy, drunk with victory, came to Jeru³⁶s, he endeavored to enter the holy of holies of the temple, although he retreated, in confusion, from the holy place. But he wreaked his vengeance on the Jews, for opposing his plan, by a cruel persecution. He was succeeded by his son Ptolemy Epiphanes, a child of 5 years. The long-planned vengeance of Antiochus now took form in an invasion of Egypt. Coele-Syria and Judaea were occupied by the Syrians and passed over into the possession of the Seleucidae.

4. The Syrian Period

(4) The Syrian period (204–165 BC). Israel now entered into the valley of the shadow of death. This entire period was an almost uninterrupted martyrdom. Antiochus was succeeded by Seleucis Philopator. But harsh as was their attitude to the Jews, neither of these two was notorious for his cruelty to them. Their high priests, as in former periods, were still their

²⁹*Ant* Josephus, *Antiquities*

³⁰Egy^p Egyptian

³¹Jos Josephus

³²tr translation, or translate

³³LXX Septuagint

³⁴Pal Palestine

³⁵Egy^p Egyptian

³⁶Jerus Jerusalem

nominal rulers. But the aspect of everything changed when Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 BC) came to the throne. He may fitly be called the Nero of Jewish history. The nationalists among the Jews were at that time wrangling with the Hellenists for the control of affairs. Onias III, a faithful high priest, was expelled from office through the machinations of his brother Jesus or Jason (2 Macc 4:7–10). Onias went to Egypt, where at Heliopolis he built a temple and officiated as high priest. Meanwhile Jason in turn was turned out of the holy office by the bribes of still another brother, Menelaus, worse by far than Jason, a Jew-hater and an avowed defender of Greek life and morals. The wrangle between the brothers gave Antiochus the opportunity he craved to wreak his bitter hatred on the Jews, in the spoliation of Jerusalem³⁷, in the wanton and total defilement of the temple, and in a most horrible persecution of the Jews (1 Macc 1:16–28; 2 Macc 5:11–23; Dnl 11:28; *Ant*³⁸, XII, v, 3, 4). Thousands were slain, women and children were sold into captivity, the city wall was torn down, all sacrifices ceased, and in the temple on the altar of burnt offering a statue was erected to Jupiter Olympius (1 Macc 1:43; 2 Macc 6:1–2). Circumcision was forbidden, on pain of death, and all the people of Israel were to be forcibly paganized. As in the Persian³⁹ persecution, the Samaritans again played into the hands of the Syrians and implicitly obeyed the will of the Seleucidae. But the very rigor of the persecution caused it to fail of its purpose and Israel proved to be made of sterner stuff than Antiochus imagined. A priestly family dwelling at Modin, west of Jerusalem⁴⁰, named Hasmonean, after one of its ancestors, consisting of Mattathias and his five sons, raised the standard of revolt, which proved successful after a severe struggle. See ASMONAEAN.

5. The Maccabean Period

(5) The Maccabean period (165–63 BC). The slaying of an idolatrous Jew at the very altar was the signal of revolt. The land of Judaea is specially adapted to guerilla tactics, and Judas Maccabaeus, who succeeded his father, as leader of the Jewish patriots, was a past master in this kind of warfare. All efforts of Antiochus to quell the rebellion failed most miserably, in three Syrian campaigns. The king died of a loathsome disease and peace was at last concluded with the Jews. Though still nominally under Syrian control, Judas became governor of Palestine⁴¹. His first act was the purification and rededication of the temple, from which the Jews date their festival of purification (see PURIFICATION). When the Syrians renewed the war, Judas applied for aid to the Romans, whose power began to be felt in Asia, but he died in battle before the promised aid could reach him (*Ant*⁴², XII, xi, 2). He was buried by his father's side at Modin and was succeeded by his brother Jonathan. From that time the Maccabean history becomes one of endless cabals. Jonathan was acknowledged by the Syrians as meridarch of Judaea, but was assassinated soon afterward. Simon succeeded him, and by the help of the Romans was made hereditary ruler of Palestine⁴³. He in turn was followed by John Hyrcanus. The people were torn by

³⁷Jerusalem

³⁸*Ant* Josephus, *Antiquities*

³⁹Persian

⁴⁰Jerusalem

⁴¹Palestine

⁴²*Ant* Josephus, *Antiquities*

⁴³Palestine

bitter partisan controversies and a civil war was waged, a generation later, by two grandsons of John Hyrcanus, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. In this internecine struggle the Rom general Pompey participated by siding with Hyrcanus, while Aristobulus defied Rome and defended Jeru⁴⁴s. Pompey took the city, after a siege of three months, and entered the holy of holies, thereby forever estranging from Rome every loyal Jewish heart.

6. The Roman Period

(6) The Roman period (63–4 BC). Judaea now became a Rom province. Hyrcanus, stripped of the hereditary royal power, retained only the high-priestly office. Rome exacted an annual tribute, and Aristobulus was sent as a captive to the capital. He contrived however to escape and renewed the unequal struggle, in which he was succeeded by his sons Alexander and Antigonus. In the war between Pompey and Caesar, Judaea was temporarily forgotten, but after Caesar's death, under the triumvirate of Octavius, Antony and Lepidus, Antony, the eastern triumvir, favored Herod the Great, whose intrigues secured for him at last the crown of Judaea and enabled him completely to extinguish the old Maccabean line of Judaeian princes.

IV. Internal Developments in This Period.—One thing remains, and that is a review of the developments within the bosom of Judaism itself in the period under consideration. It is self-evident that the core of the Jewish people, which remained loyal to the national traditions and to the national faith, must have been radically affected by the terrible cataclysms which mark their history, during the four cents. before Christ. What, if any, was the literary activity of the Jews in this period? What was their spiritual condition? What was the result of the manifest difference of opinion within the Jewish economy? What preparation does this period afford for the "fulness of time"? These and other questions present themselves, as we study this period of the history of the Jews.

1. Literary Activity

(1) The voice of prophecy was utterly hushed in this period, but the old literary instinct of the nation asserted itself; it was part and parcel of the Jewish traditions and would not be denied. Thus in this period many writings were produced, which although they lack canonical authority, among Protestants at least, still are extremely helpful for a correct understanding of the life of Israel in the dark ages before Christ.

(a) *The Apocrypha.*—First of all among the fruits of this literary activity stand the apocryphal books of the OT. It is enough here to mention them. They are fourteen in number: 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, 2 Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Song of the Three Holy Children, History of Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasses, 1 and 2 Maccabees. As 3 and 4 Maccabees fall presumably within the Christian era, they are not here enumerated. All these apocryphal writings are of the utmost importance for a correct understanding of the Jewish problem in the day in which they were written. For fuller information, see APOCRYPHA.

(b) *Pseudepigrapha.*—Thus named from the spurious character of the authors' names they bear. Two of these writings very probably belong to our period, while a host of them evidently belong to a later date. In this class of writings there is a mute confession of the conscious poverty of the day. First of all, we have the Psalter of Solomon, originally written in Heb and

⁴⁴Jerus Jerusalem

t⁴⁵r^{46d} into Gr—a collection of songs for worship, touching in their spirit, and evincing the fact that true faith never died in the heart of the true believer. The second is the Book of Enoch, a production of an apocalyptic nature, named after Enoch the patriarch, and widely known about the beginning of the Christian era. This book is quoted in the NT (Jude ver 14). It was originally written in Heb or Aram. and t⁴⁷r^{48d} into Gr. As there is no trace of a Christian influence in the book, the presumption is that the greater part of it was written at an earlier period. Both Jude and the author of Revelation must have known it, as a comparative study of both books will show. The question of these quotations or allusions is a veritable *crux interpretum*: how to reconcile the inspiration of these books with these quotations?

(c) *The Septuagint*.—The tradition of the LX⁴⁹X is told by Jo⁵⁰s (*An⁵¹t*, XII, ii, 13). Aristeas and Aristobulus, a Jewish priest in the reign of Ptolemy Philometor (2 Macc 1:10), are also quoted in support of it by Clement of Alexandria and by Euseius. See SEPTUAGINT. The truth of the matter is most probably that this great t⁵²r of the OT Scriptures was begun at the instance of Ptolemy Philadelphus 285–247 BC, under the direction of Demetrius Phalereus, and was completed somewhere about the middle of the 2d cent. BC. Internal evidence abounds that the t⁵³r was made by different hands and at different times. If the t⁵⁴r was in any way literal, the text of the LX⁵⁵X raises various interesting questions in regard to the Heb text that was used in the t⁵⁶r, as compared with the one we now possess. The LX⁵⁷X was of the utmost missionary value and contributed perhaps more than any other thing to prepare the world for the “fulness of time.”

2. Spiritual Conditions

The return from Babylon marked a turning point in the spiritual history of the Jews. From that time onward, the lust of idolatry, which had marked their whole previous history, utterly disappears. In the place of it came an almost intolerable spirit of exclusiveness, a striving after legal holiness, these two in combination forming the very heart and core of the later Pharisaism. The holy books, but especially the law, became an object of almost idolatrous reverence; the spirit was utterly lost in the form. And as their own tongue, the classic Heb, gradually gave way to the common Aram., the rabbis and their schools strove ever more earnestly to keep the ancient tongue pure, worship and life each demanding a separate language. Thus the Jews became in a sense bilingual, the Heb tongue being used in their

⁴⁵tr translated

^{46d} translated

⁴⁷tr translated

^{48d} translated

⁴⁹LXX Septuagint

⁵⁰Jos Josephus

⁵¹*Ant* Josephus, *Antiquities*

⁵²tr translation, or translate

⁵³tr translation, or translate

⁵⁴tr translation, or translate

⁵⁵LXX Septuagint

⁵⁶tr translation, or translate

⁵⁷LXX Septuagint

synagogues, the Aram. in their daily life, and later on, in part at least, the Gr tongue of the conqueror, the *lingua franca* of the period. A spiritual aristocracy very largely replaced the former rule of their princes and nobles. As the core of their religion died, the bark of the tree flourished. Thus tithes were zealously paid by the believer (cf Mt 23:23), the Sabbath became a positive burden of sanctity, the simple laws of God were replaced by cumbersome human inventions, which in later times were to form the bulk of the Tal⁵⁸m, and which crushed down all spiritual liberty in the days of Christ (Mt 11:28; 23:4, 23). The substitution of the names "Elohim" and "Adonai" for the old glorious historic name "Jahveh" is an eloquent commentary on all that has been said before and on the spiritual condition of Israel in this period (Ewald, *H of I*, V, 198), in which the change was inaugurated. The old centripetal force, the old ideal of centralization, gave way to an almost haughty indifference to the land of promise. The Jews became, as they are today, a nation without a country. For, for every Jew that came back to the old national home, a thousand remained in the land of their adoption. And yet scattered far and wide, in all sorts of environments, they remained Jews, and the national consciousness was never extinguished. It was God's mark on them now as then. And thus they became world-wide missionaries of the knowledge of the true God, of a gospel of hope for a world that was hopeless, a gospel which wholly against their own will directed the eyes of the world to the fulness of time and which prepared the fallow soil of human hearts for the rapid spread of Christianity when it ultimately appeared.

3. Parties

During the Gr period the more conservative and zealous of the Jews were all the time confronted with a tendency of a very considerable portion of the people, especially the younger and wealthier set, to adopt the manners of life and thought and speech of their masters, the Greeks. Thus the Hellenistic party was born, which was bitterly hated by all trueblooded Jews, but which left its mark on their history, till the date of the final dispersion 70 AD. From the day of Mattathias, the Chasids or Hasideans (1 Macc 2:42) were the true Jewish patriots. Thus the party of the Pharisees came into existence (*An*⁵⁹*t*, XIII, x, 5; XVIII, i, 2; *B*⁶⁰*J*, I, v, 2). See PHARISEES. They were opposed by the more secular-minded Sadducees (*An*⁶¹*t*, XIII, x, 6; XVIII, i, 3; *B*⁶²*J*, II, viii, 14), wealthy, of fine social standing, wholly free from the restraints of tradition, utterly oblivious of the future life and closely akin to the Gr Epicureans. See SADDUCEES. These parties bitterly opposed each other till the very end of the national existence of the Jews in Pa⁶³I, and incessantly fought for the mastery, through the high-priestly office. Common hatred for Christ, for a while, afforded them a community of interests.

4. Preparation for Christianity

⁵⁸Talm Talmud

⁵⁹*Ant Josephus, Antiquities*

⁶⁰*BJ Josephus, Jewish Wars*

⁶¹*Ant Josephus, Antiquities*

⁶²*BJ Josephus, Jewish Wars*

⁶³Pal Palestine

Throughout this entire dark period of Israel's history, God was working out His own Divine plan with them. Their Scriptures were t⁶⁴r^{65d} into Gr, after the conquest of Alexander the Great the common language in the East. Thus the world was prepared for the word of God, even as the latter in turn prepared the world for the reception of the gift of God, in the gospel of His Son. The LX⁶⁶X thus is a distinct forward movement in the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise (Gen 12:3; 18:18). As the sacrificial part of Jewish worship declined, through their wide separation from the temple, the eyes of Israel were more firmly fixed on their Scriptures, read every Sabbath in their synagogues, and, as we have seen, these Scriptures, through the rendering of the LX⁶⁷X, had become the property of the entire world. Thus the synagogue everywhere became the great missionary institute, imparting to the world Israel's exalted Messianic hopes. On the other hand, the Jews themselves, embittered by long-continued martyrdoms and suffering, utterly carnalized this Messianic expectation in an increasing ratio as the yoke of the oppressor grew heavier and the hope of deliverance grew fainter. And thus when their Messiah came, Israel recognized Him not, while the heart-hungry heathen, who through the LX⁶⁸X had become familiar with the promise, humbly received Him (Jn 1:9–14). The eyes of Israel were blinded for a season, 'till the fulness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in' (Rom 9:32; 11:25).

HENRY E. DOSKER⁶⁹

INTERTESTAMENTAL HISTORY AND LITERATURE Events and writings originating after the final prophet mentioned in the OT (Malachi, about 450 B.C.) and before the birth of Christ (about 4 B.C.).

Shortly after 600 B.C. the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, destroyed the temple and took away many of the people as captives. After Cyrus overcame the Babylonian Empire, the Jews who desired were allowed to return. The temple was rebuilt. Under the leadership of Nehemiah and Ezra, the Jewish religious community established itself, and the worship and life of the people continued. Here OT history ends, and the Intertestamental Period begins.

The history of the Intertestamental Period can be divided into three sections: The Greek Period, 323 B.C. to 167 B.C.; the Period of Independence, 167 to 63 B.C.; and the Roman Period, 63 B.C. through the time of the NT.

The Greek Period, 323 to 167 B.C. Philip of Macedon sought to consolidate Greece so as to resist attack by the Persian Empire. When he was murdered in 336 B.C., his young son Alexander took up the task. He was only 19 years of age, but he was highly gifted and educated. Within two

⁶⁴tr translated

^{65d} translated

⁶⁶LXX Septuagint

⁶⁷LXX Septuagint

⁶⁸LXX Septuagint

⁶⁹ Henry E. Dosker, "[Between the Testaments,](#)" ed. James Orr et al., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 455–458.

years he set out to destroy Persia. In a series of battles over the next two years he gained control of the territory from Asia Minor to Egypt. This included Palestine and the Jews. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived about A.D. 37–100, tells of Alexander going to Jerusalem and offering sacrifice in the temple. Many elements of this story are undoubtedly false, but Alexander did treat the Jews well. When he founded the new city of Alexandria in Egypt, he moved many Jews from Palestine to populate one part of that city. In 331 B.C. Alexander gained full control over the Persian Empire.

Alexander's conquest had three major results. First, he sought to introduce Greek ideas and culture into the conquered territory. This is called Hellenization. He believed that the way to consolidate his empire was for the people to have a common way of life. However, he did not seek to change the religious practices of the Jews. Second, he founded Greek cities and colonies throughout the conquered territory. Third, he spread the Greek language into that entire region so that it became a universal language during the following centuries.

When Alexander died in 323 B.C., chaos resulted in his empire. Five of his prominent generals established themselves over different parts of his empire. Ptolemy chose the land of Egypt. Seleucus took control of Babylonia. Antigonus became ruler of Asia Minor and northern Syria. The other two ruled in Europe and did not have direct influence over events in Palestine.

From the beginning, Ptolemy and Antigonus struggled over the control of Palestine. The battle of Ipsus in 301 B.C. settled the matter for a century. In this battle the other four generals fought against and killed Antigonus. Seleucus was given the territory of Antigonus, including Palestine. However, Ptolemy did not take part in the battle. Instead he took over control of Palestine. The result was that Palestine continued to be a point of contention between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.

The Jews fared well under the Ptolemies. They had much self-rule. Their religious practices were not hampered. Greek customs gradually became more common among the people. During this period the translation of the OT into Greek began during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, 285–246 B.C. This translation is known as the Septuagint, often abbreviated LX⁷⁰X. The early Christians used the Septuagint and NT writers often quoted it.

Antiochus III (the Great), 223–187 B.C., attempted to take Palestine from the Ptolemies in 217 B.C. without success. At the battle of Panium, 198 B.C., however, he defeated Ptolemy IV, and he and his successors ruled Palestine until 167 B.C. The situation of the Jews changed after Antiochus was defeated by the Romans in the battle of Magnesia, 190 B.C. Antiochus had supported Hannibal of North Africa, Rome's hated enemy. As a result, Antiochus had to give up all of his territory except the province of Cilicia. He had to pay a large sum of money to the Romans for a period of years, and he had to surrender his navy and elephants. To guarantee his compliance, one of his sons was kept as hostage in Rome. So the tax burden of the Jews increased, as did pressure to Hellenize, that is, to adopt Greek practices.

Antiochus was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV, 187–175 B.C. When he was murdered, his younger brother became ruler. Antiochus IV, 175–163 B.C., was called Epiphanes ("manifest" or "splendid"), although some called him Epimenes ("mad"). He was the son who had been a hostage in Rome. During the early years of his reign, the situation of the Jews became worse.

⁷⁰LXX Septuagint

Part of it was due to their being divided. Some of their leaders, especially the priests, encouraged Hellenism.

Up to the time of Antiochus IV, the office of high priest had been hereditary and held for life. However, Jason, the brother of the high priest, offered the king a large sum of money to be appointed high priest. Antiochus needed the money and made the appointment. Jason also offered an additional sum to receive permission to build a gymnasium near the temple. This shows the pressure toward Hellenism. Within a few years, Menelaus, a priest but not of the high priestly line, offered the king more money to be named high priest in place of Jason. He stole vessels from the temple to pay what he had promised.

Antiochus sought to add Egypt to his territory. He was proclaimed king of Egypt, but when he returned the following year to take control of the land, the Romans confronted him and told him to leave Egypt. Knowing the power of Rome, he returned home. When he reached Jerusalem, he found that Jason had driven Menelaus out of the city. He saw this as full revolt. He allowed his troops to kill many of the Jews and determined to put an end to the Jewish religion. He sacrificed a pig on the altar of the temple. Parents were forbidden to circumcise their children, the Sabbath was not to be observed, and all copies of the law were to be burned. It was a capital offense to be found with a copy of the law. The zeal of Antiochus to destroy Judaism was a major factor in its salvation.

Jewish Independence, 167 to 63 B.C. Resistance was passive at first; but when the Seleucids sent officers throughout the land to compel leading citizens to offer sacrifice to Zeus, open conflict flared. It broke out first at the village of Modein, about halfway between Jerusalem and Joppa. An aged priest named Mattathias was chosen to offer the sacrifice. He refused, but a young Jew volunteered to do it. This angered Mattathias, and he killed both the Jew and the officer. Then he fled to the hills with his five sons and others who supported his action. The revolt had begun.

Leadership fell to Judas, the third son of Mattathias. He was nicknamed Maccabeus, the hammerer. He probably received this title because of his success in battle. He was the ideal guerrilla leader. He fought successful battles against much larger forces. A group called the Hasidim made up the major part of his army. These men were devoutly committed to religious freedom. They were dedicated to obedience to the law and to the worship of God.

Antiochus IV was more concerned with affairs in the eastern part of his empire than with what was taking place in Palestine. Therefore, he did not commit many troops to the revolt at first. Judas was able to gain control of Jerusalem within three years. The temple was cleansed and rededicated exactly three years after it had been polluted by the king, 164 B.C. (Dates through this period are uncertain and may be a year earlier than indicated.) This is still commemorated by the Jewish feast of Hanukkah. The Hasidim had gained what they were seeking and left the army. Judas had larger goals in mind. He wanted political freedom. He rescued mistreated Jews from Galilee and Gilead and made a treaty of friendship and mutual support with Rome. In 160 B.C. at Elasa, with a force of 800 men, he fought a vastly superior Seleucid army and was killed.

Jonathan, another son of Mattathias, took the lead in the quest for independence. He was weak militarily. He was driven out of the cities and only gradually established himself in the

countryside. Constant struggle engaged those seeking the Seleucid throne. The rivals offered him gifts to gain his support. In 152 B.C. he gave his support to Alexander Balas, who claimed to be the son of Antiochus IV. In return Jonathan was appointed high priest. For the first time, Jewish religious and civil rule were centered in one person. Jonathan was taken prisoner and killed in 143 B.C.

Simon, the last surviving son of Mattathias, ruled until he was murdered by his son-in-law in 134 B.C. He secured freedom from taxation for the Jews by 141 B.C. At last they had achieved political freedom. Simon was acclaimed by the people as their leader and high priest forever. The high priesthood was made hereditary with him and his descendants. The Hasmonean dynasty, named after an ancestor of Mattathias, had its beginning.

When Simon was murdered, his son John Hyrcanus became the high priest and civil ruler (134–104 B.C.). For a brief time the Seleucids exercised some power over the Jews, but Hyrcanus broke free and began to expand the territory of the Jews. In the north he destroyed the temple of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim. He moved southeast and conquered the land of the Idumeans, the ancient kingdom of Edom. The residents were forced to emigrate or convert to Judaism. This had great significance for the Jews, for it was from this people that Herod the Great was to come.

The oldest son of Hyrcanus, Aristobulus I (104–103 B.C.), succeeded him. He had his mother and three brothers put in prison. One brother was allowed to remain free, but he was later murdered. He allowed his mother to starve to death in prison. He extended his rule to include part of the territory of Iturea, north of Galilee. He was the first to take the title of king.

Salome Alexandra was the wife of Aristobulus. When he died, she released his brothers from prison and married the oldest of them, Alexander Jannaeus. He became high priest and king (103–76 B.C.). He made many enemies by marrying the widow of his brother. The OT stated that a high priest must marry a virgin (Lev. 21:14). He was an ambitious warrior and conducted campaigns by which he enlarged his kingdom to about the size of the kingdom of David. He used foreign soldiers because he could not trust Jews in his army. As high priest, he did not always follow prescribed ritual. On one occasion, the people reacted to his improper actions by throwing citrons at him. He allowed his soldiers to kill 6,000 of them. At another time he had 800 of his enemies crucified. As they hung on the crosses, he had their wives and children brought out and slain before their eyes.

Alexandra succeeded her husband as ruler (76–67 B.C.). Of course, she could not serve as high priest, so the two functions were separated. Her oldest son, Hyrcanus II, became high priest. He was not ambitious. Her younger son, Aristobulus II, was just the opposite. He was waiting for his mother to die so he could become king and high priest.

When Salome died, civil war broke out and lasted until 63 B.C. Aristobulus easily defeated Hyrcanus, who was content to retire. This might have been the end of the story were it not for Antipater, an Idumean. He persuaded Hyrcanus to seek the help of the king of Nabatea to regain his position. Aristobulus was driven back to Jerusalem. At this point Rome arrived on the scene. Both Aristobulus and Hyrcanus appealed to Scourus, the Roman general charged with the administration of Palestine. He sided with Aristobulus. When the Roman commander Pompey arrived later, both appealed to him. Aristobulus ended up trying to fight against the Romans. He was defeated and taken as a prisoner to Rome. The Romans took control over Palestine.

The Roman Period, 63 B.C. to A.D. 70 Under the Romans, the Jews paid heavy taxes, but their religious practices were not changed. Roman power was exercised through Antipater, who was named governor of Palestine. Hyrcanus was made high priest. The situation in Palestine was confused due to the efforts of Aristobulus and his sons to lead revolts against Rome. While Palestine was successively under the control of various Roman officials, Antipater was the stabilizing force. He had one son, Phasael, named governor of Judea, and a second son, Herod, made governor of Galilee. Herod sought to bring order to his area. He arrested Hezekiah, a Jewish robber or rebel, and had him executed. The Sanhedrin in Jerusalem summoned Herod to give an account of his action. He went, dressed in royal purple and with a bodyguard. The Sanhedrin could do nothing.

Antipater was murdered in 43 B.C. Antony became the Roman commander in the East in 42 B.C. In 40 B.C. the Parthians invaded Palestine and made Antigonus, the last surviving son of Aristobulus, king of Palestine. Hyrcanus was mutilated by having his ears cut or bitten off so he could not serve as high priest again. Phasael was captured and committed suicide in prison. Herod barely escaped with his family. He went to Rome to have his future brother-in-law, Aristobulus, made king, hoping to rule through him as his father had ruled through Antipater. However, the Roman Senate, at the urging of Antony and Octavian (Augustus), made Herod king (40 B.C.). It took him three years to drive the Parthians out of the country and establish his rule. He was king until his death in 4 B.C.

The years of Herod's rule were a time of turmoil for the Jewish people. He was an Idumean. Of course, his ancestors had been forced to convert to Judaism, but the people never accepted him. He was the representative of a foreign power. No matter how well he served Rome, he could never satisfy the Jews. Even his marriage to Mariamne, the granddaughter of Aristobulus II, gave no legitimacy to his rule in their sight. The most spectacular of his building achievements, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, did not win the loyalty of the Jews.

Herod had many problems that grew out of his jealousy and fears. He had Aristobulus, his brother-in-law, executed. Later Mariamne, her mother, and her two sons were killed. Just five days before his own death, Herod had his oldest son Antipater put to death. His relations with Rome were sometimes troubled due to the unsettled conditions in the empire. Herod was a strong supporter of Antony even though he could not tolerate Cleopatra with whom Antony had become enamored. When Antony was defeated by Octavian in 31 B.C., Herod went to Octavian and pledged his full support. This support was accepted. Herod proved himself an efficient administrator on behalf of Rome. He kept the peace among a people who were hard to rule. To be sure, he was a cruel and merciless man. Yet he was generous, using his own funds to feed the people during a time of famine. He never got over the execution of Mariamne, the wife he loved above all others. His grief led to mental and emotional problems.

During the reign of Herod, Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1–18; Luke 1:5). Herod was the king who ordered the execution of the male babies in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16–18).

At his death Herod left a will leaving his kingdom to three of his sons. Antipas was to be tetrarch ("ruler of a fourth") of Galilee and Perea (4 B.C.–A.D. 39). Philip was to be tetrarch of Gentile regions to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee (4 B.C.–A.D. 34). Archelaus was to be king of Judea and Samaria. Rome honored the will except that Archelaus was not given the title of king. He was ethnarch ("ruler of the people") of these two territories. He proved to be a poor ruler

and was deposed in A.D. 6. His territories were placed under the direct rule of Roman procurators who were under the control of the governor of Syria.

Literature The Jews produced many writings during the Intertestamental Period. These writings can be divided into three groups. The Apocrypha are writings that were included, for the most part, in the Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint. They were translated into Latin and became a part of the Latin Vulgate, the authoritative Latin Bible. Some are historical books. First Maccabees is our chief source for the history of the period from Antiochus Epiphanes to John Hyrcanus. Other books are Wisdom Literature. Others can be classified as historical romances. One is apocalyptic, giving attention to the end of time and God's intervention in history. One writing is devotional in nature. A second group of writings is the Pseudepigrapha. It is a larger collection than the Apocrypha, but there is no final agreement as to which writings should be included in it. Fifty-two writings are included in the two volumes, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth. These cover the range of Jewish thought from apocalyptic to wisdom to devotional. Their title indicates that they are attributed to noted people of ancient times, such as Adam, Abraham, Enoch, Ezra, and Baruch. For the most part they were written in the last centuries before the birth of Jesus, although some of them are from the first century A.D.

The final group of writings from this period is the Qumran scrolls, popularly known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The first knowledge of these came with the discovery of manuscripts in a cave above the Dead Sea in 1947. During subsequent years, fragments of manuscripts have been found in at least 11 caves in the area. These writings include OT manuscripts, writings of the Qumran sect, and writings copied and used by the sect that came from other sources. These writings show us something of the life and beliefs of one group of Jews in the last two centuries before Jesus. See *Apocrypha; Archelaus; Dead Sea Scrolls; Hasmoneans; Herod; Pseudepigrapha; Ptolemies; Septuagint; Seleucids; Temple*.⁷¹

⁷¹ Clayton Harrop, "[Intertestamental History and Literature](#)," ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 829–834.

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25–28 Then they quoted the opening words of the second Psalm, and found proof of their divine origin in the fulfilment which had so recently taken place in their own experience.

This psalm, with its explicit reference to Yahweh's anointed one (Messiah), had been interpreted of the coming deliverer of David's line at least as early as the middle of the first century B.C.,⁷²² the words "You are my Son" (Ps. 2:7), addressed to Jesus at his baptism by the heavenly voice, actually hailed him as that Messiah. In conformity with this understanding is the interpretation which the apostles now place on the opening verses of the psalm. The "Gentiles" raged against Jesus in the person of the Romans who sentenced him to the cross and carried out the sentence; the "peoples" who plotted against him are (despite the plural) the Jews, or rather their rulers; the "kings" who set themselves in array are represented by Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea, while the "rulers" are represented by Pontius Pilate.⁷³³ The reference to Herod harks back to the account in Luke 23:7–12, where Pilate, learning that Jesus is a Galilaean, performs a diplomatic courtesy by referring him to Herod. Luke is the only one of the four evangelists who gives Herod a role in the passion narrative.⁷⁴⁴

The prophetic language of the psalm showed that Pilate, Herod, and the others, in uniting against Jesus, were simply carrying out "God's appointed counsel and foreknowledge" (as it was called in 2:23), "that the Messiah was to suffer" (3:18).⁷⁵⁵ In these words of the apostles there

⁷²⁴² See Ps. Sol. 17:26, where Ps. 2:9 is applied to the expected son of David, the "anointed lord" (cf. p. 68, 90 above).

⁷³⁴³ See p. 81, 28 above.

⁷⁴⁴⁴ For the improbable view that Luke's introduction of Herod was created out of Christian exegesis of Ps. 2:1–2 see M. Dibelius, "Herodes und Pilatus," *ZNW* 16 (1915), pp. 113–26; G. Lüdemann, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*, E.T. (London, 1984), pp. 12–13, 36–37 (with n. 41).

⁷⁵⁴⁵ Tertullian (*On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 20) gives a slightly different interpretation: "In the person of Pilate the nations (*gentes*) raged, and in the person of Israel the peoples (*populi*, plural) planned vain things; the kings of the earth stood up in Herod, and in Annas and Caiaphas the rulers were gathered together." The unusual application to Israel of the plural λαοί is due to the use of the singular λαός in reference to Israel as God's people over against ἔθνη, "Gentiles"; in Ps. 2:1 the Heb. plural *lə'ummîm*, LXX λαοί, stands in synonymous parallelism with *gōyîm*, LXX ἔθνη, not in opposition to it.

is an explicit identification of God’s “holy Servant Jesus” with the royal Son of God addressed in Ps. 2:7. Jesus, God’s obedient servant, is the one whom God “anointed” or made Messiah—at his baptism.⁴⁷⁶⁶⁷⁷

27. Luke picks up the word συνήχθησαν as the most suitable for introducing his interpretation of the Psalm. Neither Herod (Antipas) nor Pilate was a king, but each was a ruler. Pilate undoubtedly represented the Gentiles; Herod might have wished to be regarded as a Jew, but Luke probably thought of him as a Gentile ruler. One of the few sons of Herod the Great to survive him, Herod Antipas ruled as tetrarch over Galilee; see Lk. 3:1; also H. W. Hoehner (*Herod Antipas*, SNTSMS 17, 1972) and *N⁷⁸S* 1:340–53.

ἐπ’ ἀληθείας is a Lucan expression (seven times in the NT; three in Lk., two in Acts—here and at 10:34; also Isa. 37:18, in Hezekiah’s prayer): one cannot infer that Luke alone was responsible for the prayer in view of the use of παῖς, which is peculiar to chs. 3 and 4, and therefore peculiar not to Luke but to a source or stratum of his work. For Jesus as παῖς see on 3:13; v. 25 suggests a connection with David (‘... cuius typus David, nam hic eodem nomine appellatur’, Bengel). It is not however a simple equivalent to Christ (Messiah), since God anointed (ἔχρισας; cf. Isa. 61:1) the παῖς and thus made him Χριστός, which presumably he had not previously been. Cf. 2:36 and especially 10:38, ἔχρισεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ δυνάμει; here also Luke probably thinks of this kind of anointing, though he may well place it at the baptism (Lk. 3:21f.). For Pontius Pilate see on 3:13. There is no profound doctrine of the atonement here, but Schmithals (52) exaggerates in the view that Luke’s exemplary doctrine of the cross is a counterblow against a ‘hyperpaulinische Kreuzestheologie’.

These two came together, along with Gentiles (who carried out the crucifixion—ἄνομοι, 2:23) and with the peoples of Israel (λαοῖς; on this see v. 25; there is some Western support for λαός) in order to crucify Jesus. For the wording cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6:706, innumerae gentes populique. It is Luke only (Lk. 23:12) who describes the reconciliation of Herod and Pilate at the time of the crucifixion; there must be some connection between Luke’s account of the reconciliation and his use here of Ps. 2:1f. It is not however easy to say what the connection is. Did Luke know of the reconciliation, and invoke Ps. 2 to show that it had been determined by God? Did he know the Psalm as a Messianic prophecy and invent the incident to show that it had been fulfilled? The incident in the gospel is not there brought into connection with the Psalm and it would be unwise therefore to say that Luke invented it in order to demonstrate a fulfilment which he does not trouble to mention. On the other hand there is no other evidence

⁷⁶⁴⁶ With “whom thou didst anoint” (ἔχρισας) cf. 10:38, “God anointed (ἔχρισεν) Jesus of Nazareth”; from the verb χρίω comes the form χριστός, “anointed one”, “messiah.”

⁷⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 98–99.

⁷⁸*NS The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)*, by E. Schürer, Revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar, P. Vermes, and M. Black, Vols. I–III.2, Edinburgh, 1973–87.

for a quarrel and its resolution. Luke shows some hints of access to the Herod family (Lk. 8:3; Acts 13:1), and it may be that he had heard a story about Herod and Pilate which reflection finally led him to connect with Ps. 2.

28. Luke neatly underlines that though Herod and Pilate no doubt came together in order to do what they thought fit they were in fact tools in the hand of God who used them to carry out his own purposes. Cf. 3:18: God fulfilled the purposes he had previously disclosed through the prophets by means of the ignorance of his people; here he does so by means of Gentile political manoeuvrings.

ἡ χεῖρ σου: the use of God's *hand* as a means of expressing his instrumentality occurs here and at 4:30; 11:21; 13:11; it may perhaps be regarded as a Lucanism, though there are other examples in the New Testament and the image is not exclusively biblical; see Pindar, *Nemean* 8:12, 13, where χεῖρ and βουλή are combined: βασιλεὺς χειρὶ καὶ βουλαῖς ἄριστος. βουλή (σου after this word is textually doubtful; the evidence is equally divided; fortunately the matter is not important) is undoubtedly a Lucan characteristic (Lk. twice; Acts 8 (7); rest of the NT 3; βούλεσθαι occurs 16(14) times in Lk.-Acts; 21 in the rest of the NT). On the other hand προορίζειν occurs here only in Acts, but it is the word that was needed and is not inconsistent with the view that Luke has edited if he did not write the prayer and its framework as a suitable conclusion for the narrative that begins with the healing of the lame man in ch. 3. Cf. 2:23 (τῇ ὠρισμένῃ βουλή; also 17:23, 31); Luke is thinking not of a general determinism but of the special disclosures of God's purpose in the story of Jesus (cf. Barth,⁷⁹ *C⁸⁰D* 2:1:521).⁸¹

4:24–28

In the community's prayer the reference to the threat of enemies is given in the form of a scriptural proof. The Scripture is in the exact Septuagintal rendering of Ps 2:1–2 and is presented as a prophecy, spoken by God through David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸²³ Most likely originally relating to God's triumph over Israel's enemies through the anointed king, the

⁷⁹Barth, K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Eng. tr. thirteen vols. Edinburgh, 1936–69.

⁸⁰*CD* K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Eng. tr. thirteen vols. Edinburgh, 1936–69.

⁸¹C. K. Barrett, [A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles](#), International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 246–248.

⁸²⁶³The Greek of Acts 4:25a is extremely difficult, being primarily a string of genitives with only the preposition διὰ before πνεύματος ἁγίου. For an intriguing solution see H. W. Moule, "Acts IV, 25," *ExpTim* 51 (1939–40): 396. Despite the grammatical difficulties, the meaning seems fairly evident. Two agencies are expressed: God spoke through the Spirit; the Spirit in turn spoke through David. (Codex Bezae construed it thus, placing a second διὰ before David.)

Christians came to see it as in a real sense prophetic of Christ.⁶⁸³⁴ All the details of these first verses of the psalm were applicable to the passion of Christ, and the Christians did so in their prayer (v. 27). The raging nations represented the Gentile rulers and their cohorts, the soldiers who executed Jesus. The people of Israel were those who plotted in vain.⁶⁸⁴⁵ Herod represented the “kings of the earth”; Pilate, the “rulers”;⁶⁸⁵⁶ and Christ, the “anointed” of God.⁶⁸⁶⁷ Here again as in chap. 3 the title “servant” is applied to Jesus. Here in a prayer the term is primarily liturgical and is applied to David as well in v. 25.⁶⁸⁷⁸ The theme of v. 28 is by now familiar. All the plotting against God’s anointed is in vain because God has already predetermined the outcome (cf. 2:23; 3:18). In the paradox of human freedom and divine sovereignty, despite all the raging of humanity, God’s purposes prevail. They did so in Christ. They did so with the apostles before the Sanhedrin.

4:29–30 The community turned to its petition: “Now, Lord, consider their threats.” Whose threats? The Sanhedrin’s, of course. Just like the threats, plots, and rages against Jesus, the community viewed itself in much the situation he had experienced.⁶⁸⁸⁹ The authorities had raged against him, and God made him to triumph in the power of his resurrection. So now the same temporal powers had raged and plotted against the apostles. Like Christ, God had delivered them. The Christians realized that the opposition was not over. The Sanhedrin continued to threaten them. One would expect them to ask God for further deliverance. They did not. Instead, they asked for more of the same, requesting of him boldness in witness and further miraculous signs. The request for miracle was not a request for power over their enemies. It was closely related to the request for boldness in witness.

⁸³⁶⁴ There is evidence that Ps 2 was already viewed messianically in some Jewish circles prior to Christ (cf. *Pss. Sol.*, 17:25–27). See Jones, “*Christos*,” 69–76.

⁸⁴⁶⁵ How would the phrase “in vain” apply? Marshall (*Acts*, 105) suggests that the opening of the prayer provides the answer. God is Creator (v. 24). He spoke these words of the psalm through David long before they came to bear in Christ. It was fruitless for them to scheme against a God who was their Creator and who even knew in advance of their scheming.

⁸⁵⁶⁶ The reference to Herod Antipas’s involvement in Jesus’ passion is only found in Luke among the Gospels (23:7–12).

⁸⁶⁶⁷ The term “anointed” as applied to Christ most likely refers to his being anointed with the Spirit at his baptism (Luke 3:22; 4:10; cf. Acts 10:38, the only other passage in Luke-Acts where Jesus is described as “anointed”).

⁸⁷⁶⁸ The term is used throughout the OT in the sense of one who is at God’s disposal, is his servant, much as Paul used the term δούλος (“slave, servant”) to describe his own relationship to Christ. A “servant Christology” does not therefore seem as evident in chap. 4 as in chap. 3, although the passion setting of 4:27 may lend to such an interpretation. See J. Jeremias, “παῖς θεοῦ,” *TDNT* 5:702–03. In the later Christian literature the term is common, especially in the Apostolic Fathers, and always in a liturgical rather than a Christological context.

⁸⁸⁶⁹ There is an interesting lesson in hermeneutics here. The community continued to see the fulfillment of the psalm, not solely in Christ but in the continuing experience of the church. For this linkage between the experience of Christ and that of the church, see D. Hamm, “You Are Precious in My Sight,” *The Way* 18 (1978): 193–203, and B. R. Gaventa, “To Speak Thy Word with All Boldness, Acts 4:23–31,” *FM* 3 (1986): 76–82.

In Acts the miracles are always in the service of the word. They are “signs” in the sense that they point beyond themselves to the ultimate power of the gospel message of Christ’s resurrection and the salvation that is in him (4:12). That was amply illustrated in the miracle they experienced. The healing of the lame man started the whole train of events that took them before the Sanhedrin. The healing did not deliver them from danger; if anything, it provoked it. On the other hand, the healing first attracted those who listened to Peter’s sermon in Solomon’s Colonnade and responded to the word in faith. This is what the community prayed for—more signs to undergird the word, more boldness to proclaim it. They surely knew what the result would be—more persecution.⁸⁹

4:25–27. The words **by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of ... David** point up, as do many passages, the divine inspiration of Scripture through human agents (cf. 28:25). Acts 4:25–26 contains a quotation from Psalm 2:1–2, which is prophetic of the Tribulation. In a *preliminary* sense Peter saw the opposition to the Messiah, God’s **Anointed One** (*tou Christou*; cf. “anointed,” Acts 4:27)—predicted by David in Psalm 2—as fulfilled in the early church. The parallels are obvious.

Nations (*ethnē*, Acts 4:25) compare with **Gentiles** (*ethnesin*, v. 27); **peoples** (*laoi*, v. 25) compare with **people of Israel** (*laois Israēl*, v. 27); **kings** (v. 26) compare with **Herod** (v. 27); and **rulers** (v. 26) compare with **Pontius Pilate** (v. 27).⁹⁰

27. *For truly in this very city.* In Jerusalem (see 4:5), where Jesus of Nazareth was crucified (Luke 23:7, 28, 33). Luke uses *ep’ alētheias*, “in truth, truly,” as a mode of asseveration; see also 10:34; Luke 4:25; 20:21; 22:59 (*Luke*, 537).

there have indeed gathered together against your holy servant Jesus. The early Christians realize that Jesus’ death was the result of a conspiracy of different elements, a disciple (Judas), Jews (Jerusalem leaders), and pagans (Romans). Again Luke uses of Jesus *hagios*, “holy” (see NOTE on 3:14) and *pais*, “servant” (see NOTE on 3:13). Compare 2 Chr 32:16.

whom you have anointed. One looks in vain in the Lucan Gospel for any indication of the anointing of Jesus by God, apart from Luke 4:18, where the quotation of Isa 61:1 uses it and would imply such an anointing; but in Acts 10:38 Luke interprets the baptism of Jesus by John

⁸⁹ John B. Polhill, [Acts](#), vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 148–150.

⁹⁰ Stanley D. Toussaint, [“Acts,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 364.

the Baptist as an anointing: “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with a Holy Spirit and with power.”

Herod. Herod Antipas represents “the kings of the earth” mentioned in the psalm. He was the younger son of Malthace and Herod the Great, who received part of his father’s realm at his death and ruled over Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. until A.D. 39. In Luke 3:1 he is called “tetrarch of Galilee.” See NOTES on Luke 2:2; 3:1. He is mentioned now because of his involvement in Jesus’ trial before Pilate in the Lucan passion narrative (Luke 23:6–12, 15). The Herodian family was considered by Josephus to be “half-Jewish” (*Ant*⁹¹. 14.15.2 §403), and this Jewish connection is probably part of the reason why Herod Antipas is mentioned along with the Roman Pilate. See J. Jervell, “Herodes Antipas og hans plass i evangelieoverleveringen,” *NorT*^{92T} 61 (1960): 28–40.

Pontius Pilate. Pilate represents the “rulers” mentioned in the psalm. See NOTE on 3:13. He figures in the passion narratives as involved in Jesus’ death, but as one who tried to release Jesus (Luke 23:4, 14–15, 22). Here, however, Pilate is more involved as responsible for the death of Jesus.

together with Gentiles and peoples of Israel. “Gentiles” may refer to the Roman soldiers involved in the crucifixion of Jesus (see NOTE on Luke 23:36), or more broadly the Roman occupiers of Judea at the time. *Laoi Israēl* lacks the def⁹³. art⁹⁴. in the Alexandrian text, and it may be Luke’s way of being vague about the number of Jews involved; possibly it refers to the tribes of Israel (so Haenchen, *Acts*, 227); cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 85. The W⁹⁵T emends the plural to a singular: either “people” (MS⁹⁶S E, 326) or “the people” (M⁹⁷S Ψ). That would implicate more than just a few Jews. See G. D. Kilpatrick, “*Laoi* at Luke ii.31 and Acts iv.25, 27,” *JT*⁹⁸S 16 (1965): 127. In any case, Luke uses for the first time *ethnē* in the sense of “Gentiles,” a meaning that will take on significance as his story progresses; see 10:45; 11:1, 18.

28. *to do the very things that your designing hand planned long ago.* Lit., “to do what your hand and [your] plan determined beforehand would happen.” Peter ascribes to God’s “hand” what has been determined, using an O⁹⁹T phrase (see Exod 13:3, 14, 16; Ps 55:21) to denote God’s sovereign control. What the just-named adversaries of Jesus have accomplished is something that was foreseen in God’s providence; indeed, it has fitted into the implementation of the divine salvific plan. The prayer repeats what Peter has said in his Pentecostal speech (2:23).

This is the first reference in Acts to the divine “plan” or God’s providence, a notion that Luke shares with other Hellenistic historiographers such as Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius of

⁹¹*Ant.* Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*

⁹²*NorTT* Norsk teologisk Tidsskrift

⁹³def. definite

⁹⁴art. article

⁹⁵WT Western Text (see Introduction §50)

⁹⁶MSS Manuscripts

⁹⁷MS Manuscript

⁹⁸*JTS* Journal of Theological Studies

⁹⁹OT Old Testament

Halicarnassus, and Josephus. It will continue elsewhere in Acts. See J. T. Squires, *The Plan of God*.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, [*The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 31, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 309–310.