

# Babylon and Beyond

## Greek Dominance

### The Rise of Greece

- The origins of Greek history are rooted in the earlier Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations.
- During the Archaic Period (800-480 B.C.), Greece was defined by its autonomous city-states called *poleis* and its famed language and literature was developed.
- During the Classical Period (500-323), there were struggles to survive Persian attacks and to determine which *polis* at its ideals would dominate the Greek world.
- Phillip II of Macedon united the Greek states after the Battle of Chaeronea in 338.
- Phillip's son Alexander III (a.k.a, "the Great") began his conquests that resulted in an empire that stretched from Greece to Egypt to India.
  - This caused the Greek language and culture to dominate much of the world.
- After Alexander's death at age 32, his empire was divided among his four chief generals, called the *Diadochi*.
  - This resulted in three great ruling families: the Ptolemies in Egypt, the Seleucids in the Middle East, and Antigonids in Macedonia.

### Greece and the Jews

- Greece had little or no influence on the Jews when the Old Testament closed.
  - It must have been surprising that Greece was mentioned in prophecy during the Captivity (586-516) – Daniel 8:21, 10:20, 11:2; Zechariah 9:13
- In 332, Alexander defeated Tyre and Gaza while enroute to Egypt, but strangely left no official record of interacting with the Jews.
  - According to a much-debated account by Josephus, Alexander did march on Jerusalem, but a party led by the High Priest Jaddua met him. Alexander said that he had seen the priest in a dream and was very friendly to the Jews. He was supposed to have been shown the prophecies of Daniel 11:2-3 that predicted his victory over Persia. (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 11, Section 302-47)
  - Two interesting results of Alexander's visit are that his name became a popular Jewish name during this time and the Jews started dating events from the beginning of his reign ("...the hundred and thirty and seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks" – I Maccabees 1:10)
- The four-way division of the Alexander's empire (as prophesied in Daniel 8:22, 11:4) after his death in 323 left Israel as a disputed territory claimed by both the Ptolemies and Seleucids.
  - This struggle is prophesied in detail in Daniel 11:5-35. The "king of the south" is one of the Ptolemies, and the "king of the north" is one of the Seleucids.

## Antiochus IV Epiphanes

- The most fateful ruler that impacted the Jews during this period was the Seleucid king Antiochus IV, who ruled from 175 to 164.
- His attempts to control Egypt were thwarted by Roman intervention in 168.
  - There is a great story here involving the Roman ambassador Gaius Popillius Laenas. He confronted Antiochus outside of Alexandria with the ultimatum that he needed to stop. When Antiochus tried to delay his response, Popillius drew a circle in the dirt around the king and said, "Before you step out of that circle give me a reply to lay before the senate." Antiochus submitted and left Egypt.
- While in Egypt, a rumor spread that he had died that led to a small uprising.
  - In 171, he had deposed the High Priest Jason and replaced him with Menelaus, who had given a large bribe to be appointed.
  - Jason heard the rumor, attacked Jerusalem with a thousand soldiers and forced Menelaus to flee.
  - Antiochus returned, restored Menelaus, and killed or enslaved 80,000.
- He outlawed Jewish practices and made participation in pagan rites compulsory.
- His attempts to destroy the Jews and their religion were prophesied by Daniel.
  - He is the "little horn" in Daniel 9:8-14, 23-25.
  - He is the "king of the north" in Daniel 11:21-35
  - His reign is so evil that prophecies jump from him to the Antichrist – compare Daniel 11:21-35 and 11:36-45
- Sparked by the actions of a priest named Mattathias in 167, the Jews began the Maccabean revolt, which we will look at in our next lesson.

## The Jews Under Greek Rule

- There are a variety of experiences under the Greeks:
  - Alexander seems to have supported the Jews.
  - The Ptolemies seem to have granted much religious freedom to the Jews.
  - The Seleucids began with tolerance, but then tried to force Greek culture and religion on the Jews.
- Groups like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes began likely began during this time.
- The Greek culture did prove to be a stumbling block for some Jews, who either embraced it wholeheartedly or adopted elements of its secular philosophy (see the Jewish writer Philo)
- The vast Greek world did provide opportunities for the Jews to settle throughout the Mediterranean and Middle East.
- One of the most important outcomes of the Greek expansion is the adoption of Koine Greek as an almost universal business language.