

God Was Never Silent

Part 3

Greek Rule

His Story from Malachi to Matthew

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ Under Persian Rule the Jews returned to Jerusalem and:
 - ❖ Rebuilt the Temple
 - ❖ Rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem
 - ❖ Settled into their homes and continued to look toward a future Messiah that was spoken about by the prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and others) as they continued to be ruled by Gentile Nations (Times of the Gentiles)
- ✓ Malachi emphasized the following:
 - ❖ The covenantal blessings of God required faithfulness and obedience
 - ❖ To neglect the Mosaic Law placed one in jeopardy of falling outside the covenantal promises
 - ❖ Be careful not to squander the spiritual heritage that was entrusted to you

Introductory Remarks

- ✓ The Jews had been under Persian rule for a little over 2 centuries
- ✓ The Old Testament closes out with Malachi's prophecy somewhere between 433-422 B.C.
- ✓ Alexander the Great and the Greek Empire is on the move (starting in 337 B.C.)
 - ❖ He defeats Darius III (the last reigning king of Persia) at the battle of Issus
 - ❖ The Greeks become the dominate Empire of the then known world beginning in 333 B.C.

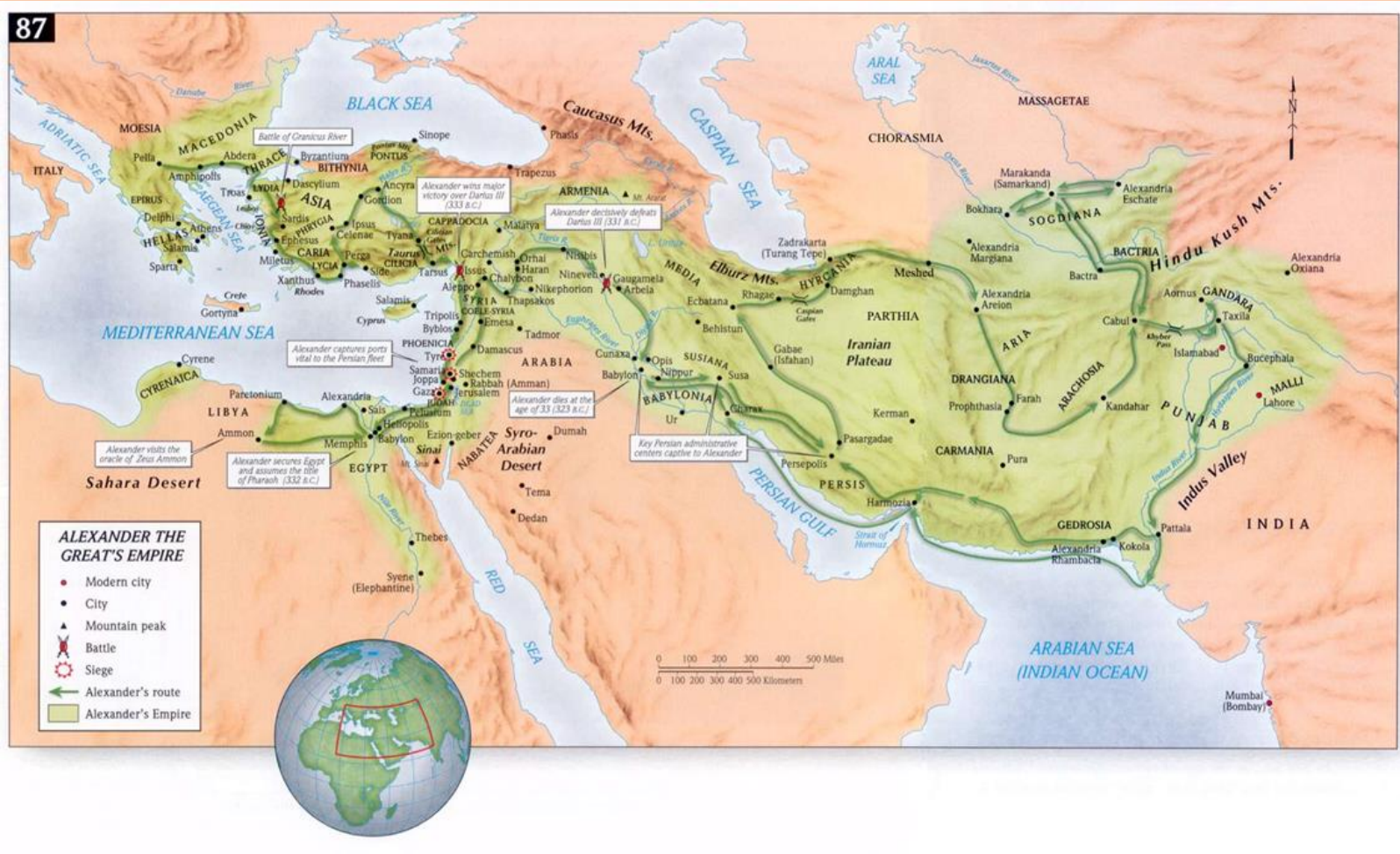
- During the Babylonian Captivity (The Exile), Daniel will interpret a very important dream for King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2). He identifies 4 distinct kingdoms:

- ❖ The First Kingdom was the Babylonian Empire
- ❖ The Second Kingdom was the Persian Empire
- ❖ The Third Kingdom was the Greek Empire



“After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.”
(Daniel 2:32-33)

The Greeks completely conquered the Persians in 330 BC after several wars that absorbed the entirety of the Persian Empire and expanded the Greek Empire to the edges of India



GOLD	Babylonian Empire 606 B.C.
SILVER	Media-Persia 536 B.C.
BRONZE	Greek Empire 330 B.C.
IRON	Roman Empire 27 B.C.
IRON / CLAY	Endtimes

This continues the period known as The Times of the Gentiles

- In Daniel's vision (Daniel 8) about the **Ram** (The Kingdom of Persia) and the **Goat** (The Kingdom of Greece) he speaks prophetically of the future kingdom of Greece (one that would come on the historical scene approximately 220 years later) and the man (Alexander the Great) who would initially lead them in conquering the Ram (Persia):
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In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, **I, Daniel, had a vision**, after the one that had already appeared to me. In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal. (Daniel 8:1-2)

“The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of **Media and Persia**. The shaggy goat is the king of **Greece**, and the large horn between its eyes is the **first king**. (Daniel 8:20-21)

- Modern city
- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ⚔ Battle
- ⊙ Siege
- ← Alexander's route
- Alexander's Empire

The Land of Israel and Judah



From the Apocrypha Writings

“After Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated King Darius of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become king of Greece.) He fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and slaughtered the kings of the earth. He advanced to the ends of the earth and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up. He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes, and they paid him tribute” (**I Maccabees 1:1-4**)

Greek Rule

- ✓ The Greeks will establish a program called Hellenization of the world
 - ❖ It was a term used to describe a cultural change in which something non-Greek becomes Greek (Hellenic)
 - ❖ The term “Hellenic” took hold sometime after Phillip of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great) defeated the Hellenic league (Greeks) and united them under one powerful ruler
- ✓ When Alexander the Great took over after his fathers’ death – he continued with conquering the world and spreading Greek culture
 - ❖ For the first time all people began to speak a common language (Koine) which eventually helped foster the spread of the gospel in Christ’s time
 - ❖ Alexander built several “Alexander” cities which became centers of Greek language, arts, and government

Greek Influence

- ✓ Their culture
- ✓ Their belief system
- ✓ Their language
- ✓ Their wisdom, knowledge, and power
- ✓ Their skills
- ✓ Their domination
- ✓ Their protection

Significant Historical events during this period:

- ✓ The Mayan civilization of South America spreads south
- ✓ The Hebrew Scriptures are translated into Greek and is referred to as the Septuagint
- ✓ Rome becomes a major power in the Western Mediterranean
- ✓ Hinduism was codified in 274 B.C.
- ✓ The Great Wall of China was begun in 214 B.C.
- ✓ The **Punic Wars** were fought between Carthage (led by Hannibal) and Rome (led by Scipio) which gave credibility to the up-and-coming **Roman Empire**
- ✓ The Maccabean Age begins (250-150 B.C.)

A Divided Empire

- ✓ Alexander the Great had a short reign as sole ruler of the Greek Empire
 - ❖ He died in 323 B.C.
 - ❖ His total reign as king was approximately 13 years
 - ❖ He died at the young age of 32
- ✓ After the death of Alexander the Great, the Hellenistic Empire was divided among his four leading generals (History does not record Alexander having any heirs):
 - ❖ Ptolemy
 - ❖ Seleucus
 - ❖ Lysimachus
 - ❖ Cassander

From the Apocrypha Writings

“After this he (Alexander) fell sick and perceived that he was dying. So, he summoned his most honored officers, who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. And after Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died. Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their descendants after them for many years, and they caused many evils on the earth.” (**I Maccabees 1:5-9**)

A Divided Empire

- The Ptolemaic Empire

- ❖ Centered in Egypt and its capital was Alexandria
- ❖ The rulers that succeeded each other were known as Ptolemies
- ❖ The last known ruler of this dynasty was Cleopatra and she died in 30 B.C.



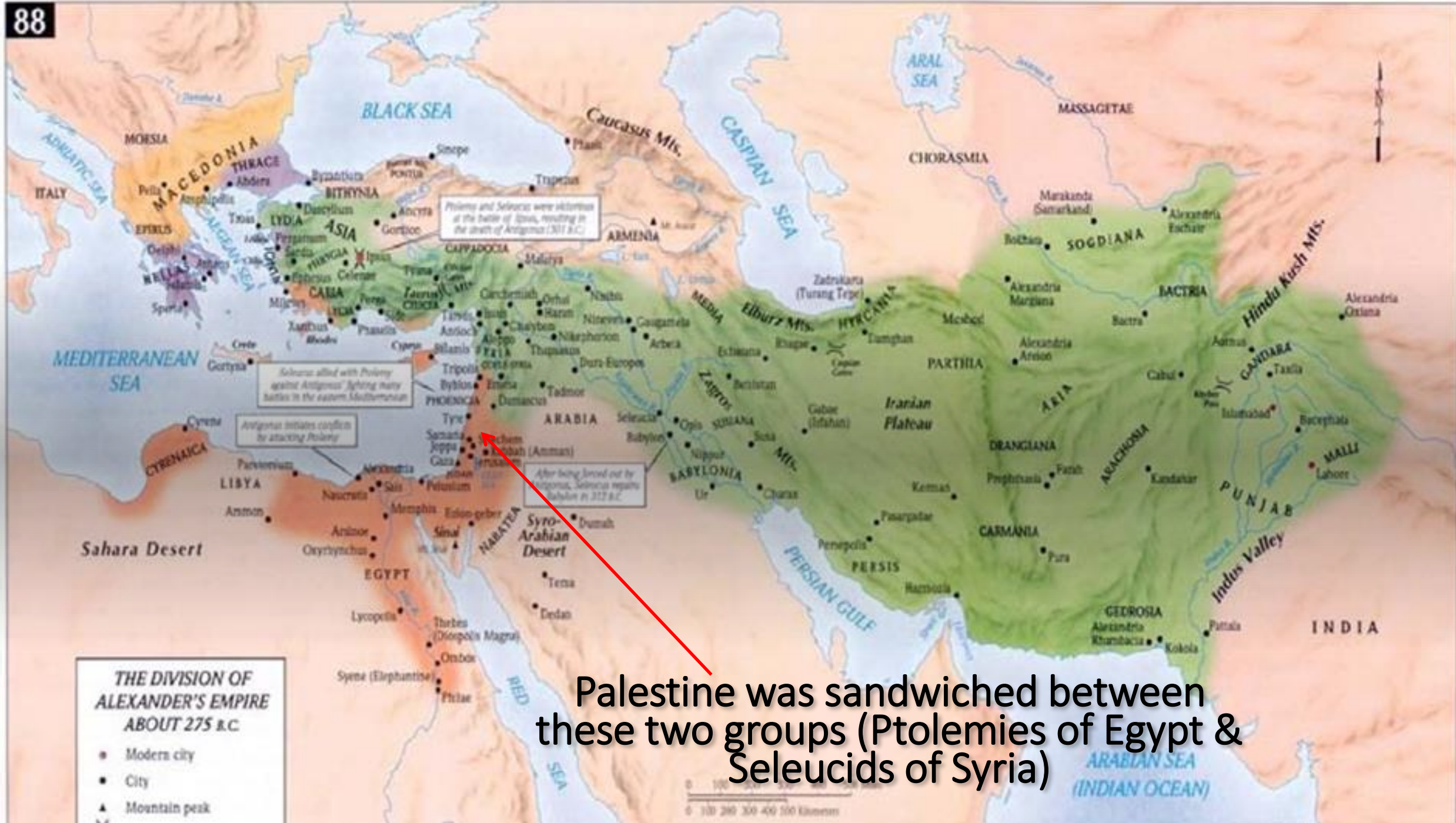
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A Divided Empire

- The Seleucid Empire

- ❖ Centered in Syria and its capital was Antioch
- ❖ The rulers were called Seleucus or Antiochus
- ❖ The Seleucid Dynasty ended when Pompey (the Roman General) made Syria a Roman province.





The continual rivalries that existed between these two empires brought warfare and bloodshed to the region of Palestine during certain periods. You can read about this in Daniel 8, 11



This continues the period known as The Times of the Gentiles

- Continuing with Daniel's vision about the Ram and the Goat (Daniel 8) he speaks prophetically of a future kingdom (one that would come on the historical scene approximately 220 years later – the Kingdom of Greece) but it will break into 4 parts:

“The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off **represent four kingdoms** that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. (Daniel 8:19-22)

The Ptolemies
(Egypt) dominated
first (320-198 B.C.)
and the Jews fared
generally well during
their reign. The
Septuagint (LXX) was
translated during
this time



This continues the period known as The Times of the Gentiles

The Seleucids gained control of Palestine in 198 B.C. after defeating Egypt under Antiochus III (the great)



This continues the period known as The Times of the Gentiles

“When **Antiochus** saw that his kingdom was established, he determined to become king of the land of Egypt, in order **that he might reign over both kingdoms**. So, **he invaded Egypt** with a strong force, with chariots and elephants and cavalry and with a large fleet. He engaged King Ptolemy of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and fled before him, and many were wounded and fell. They captured the fortified cities in the land of Egypt, and **he plundered the land of Egypt.**” (I Maccabees 1:16-19)

After subduing Egypt, Antiochus turned back in the one hundred forty-third year and **went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force**. He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. He took the silver and the gold and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found” (I Maccabees 1:20-23)

“Taking them all, he went into his own land. **He shed much blood** and **spoke with great arrogance**. Israel mourned deeply in every community; rulers and elders groaned; young women and young men became faint; the beauty of the women faded. Every bridegroom took up the lament; she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning. Even the land trembled for its inhabitants, and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame” (I Maccabees 1:24-28)

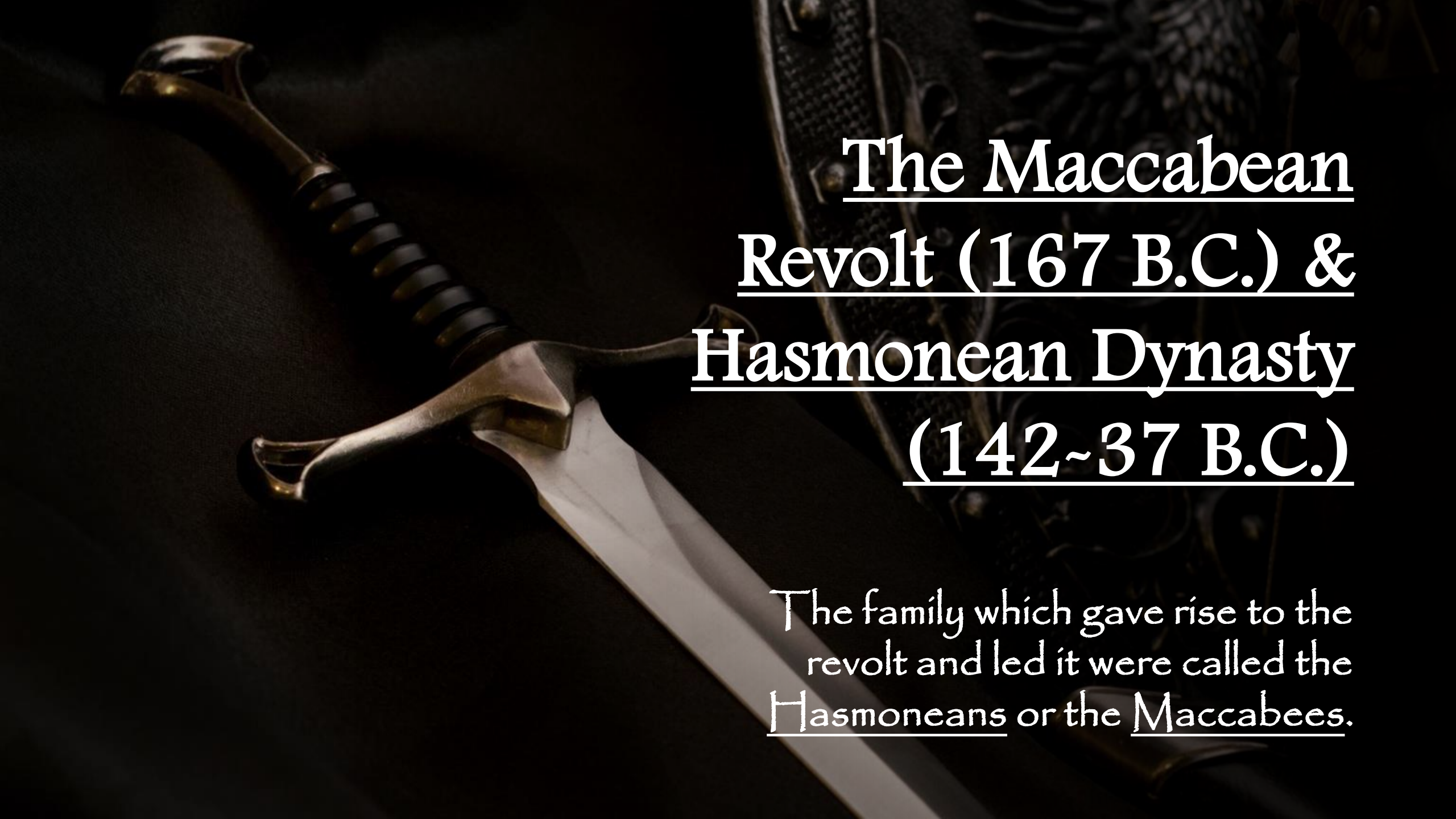
Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. **Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them**, and they believed him, but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. They took captive the women and children and seized the livestock. Then they fortified the city of David with a large strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. They stationed there a sinful nation, men who were renegades. (I Maccabees 1:29-34)

“In those days Mattathias son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the clan of Joarib, moved from Jerusalem and settled in Modein. He had five sons: John surnamed Gaddi, Simon called Thassi, Judas called Maccabeus, Eleazar called Avaran, and Jonathan called Apphus. He saw the blasphemies being committed in Judah and Jerusalem and said, “Alas! Why was I born to see this, the ruin of my people, the ruin of the holy city?” (I Maccabees 2:1-7)

“Now Judas and his brothers saw that misfortunes had increased and that the forces were encamped in their territory. They also learned what the king had commanded to do to the people to cause their final destruction. But they said to one another, “Let us restore the ruins of our people and fight for our people and the sanctuary.” So the congregation assembled to be ready for battle and to pray and ask for mercy and compassion” (I Maccabees 3:42-44)

- The successor to Antiochus III was **Antiochus IV** who was also called Epiphanes (**Antiochus Epiphanes**) the “shining one”:
 - ❖ Antiochus Epiphanes deposed Onias III, the Jewish High Priest and appointed a new High Priest (Jason) in Jerusalem.
 - ❖ During the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes; Jerusalem became like a Greek city with Greek theatres, gymnasiums, games and pagan deities
- “In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a **fierce-looking king**, a **master of intrigue**, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. **He will cause astounding devastation** and will succeed in whatever he does. **He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people**. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, **he will destroy many** and take his stand against the Prince of princes. **Yet he will be destroyed**, but not by human power. (Daniel 8:23-25)

- The **Jews who opposed this “Hellenization”** are called “Hasidim” which means piety. These are similar to what the Puritans are within Christianity
- **Antiochus Epiphanes** feared that there would be a revolt in Jerusalem, so he sent an army of 20,000 men to Jerusalem in 168 B.C. to “Lay down the Law”—This is when **Judaism was outlawed**, and **Heathenism** (worship of Greek gods) was enforced (**This is one of those factors which guided the canonization of the Old Testament**)
- In 167 B.C.; Antiochus Epiphanies set up an altar to Zeus over the altar of burnt offerings in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. He also sacrificed a pig on the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. This event is known as the “**abomination of desolation.**” Something like this will occur again just prior to Christ’s second coming. (Matthew 24:15)



The Maccabean Revolt (167 B.C.) & Hasmonean Dynasty (142~37 B.C.)

The family which gave rise to the revolt and led it were called the Hasmoneans or the Maccabees.

- Maccabees comes from the nickname of one of the greatest Hasmoneans, (Judas “Maccabeus” which means “Judas the Hammer”) which is retold in the book of Maccabees
- Judas Maccabeus led a highly successful revolt against Syria, and they eventually won their religious freedom...though still ruled by Greece
- Because of this revolt, the “Hasmonean Dynasty” (142-37 B.C.) was established. They regained their religious freedom from Syria/Greek rule and rededicated the temple.—this is the basis of the celebration of Hanukkah.



What is Hanukkah's significance to believers?

Hanukkah is a testament to God's faithfulness to the Jewish people by preserving them through war and persecution – and His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to produce a Messiah from the line of David. If the Jewish people had succumbed to Hellenizing pressures and lost their religious and ethnic distinctness, the Messianic prophecies could not have been fulfilled.



- The Hasmonean's and their descendants were full of internal strife and selfish ambition. Therefore, this period gave rise to the religious sects/groups that we see in our New Testament:

- ✓ Pharisees

- ✓ Sadducees

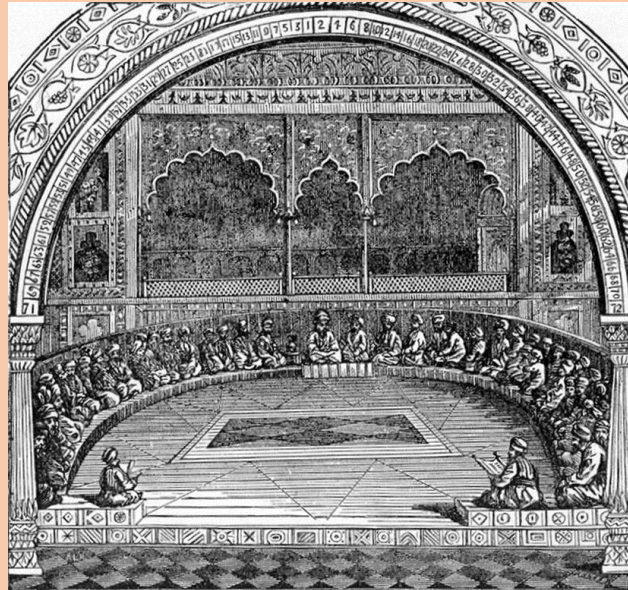
- ✓ Essenes

- The term **Pharisee** literally means “Separated Ones”:
 - ✓ It initially meant those who separated themselves from “Hellenization” to preserve Biblical Law.
 - ✓ They were descendants of the Hasidim (“Pious ones”)
 - ✓ They started out with good intentions, but later became those whom Jesus confronted as pushing the minute details of the Law. They went even further by adopting Jewish oral traditions found in the “Mishna”
 - ✓ They were popular with the common people

- The Sadducees wielded more political influence than the Pharisees:
 - ✓ They made up most the Sanhedrin which controlled local matters affecting daily Jewish life
 - ✓ They only regarded the Torah as authoritative, and they **did not believe in the resurrection** (that's why they're Sad-U-Cee).
 - ✓ They were basically interested in keeping their favored, aristocratic position

- The Essenes were a smaller sect, most of them lived in monastic communities (i.e., Qumran— where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found):
 - ✓ They gave up all property, did not marry and were even pickier about the Law than the Pharisees! (This is why they withdrew from society, so they wouldn't have to mingle with sinners).
 - ✓ Some think that John the Baptist was an Essene!

- The **Sanhedrin** is the name given to the council of **71** Jewish sages who constituted the **Supreme Court** and **legislative body** of ancient Israel
- ✓ The make-up of the council included a chief justice (Nasi), and a vice chief justice (Av Beit Din)
- ✓ The other sixty-nine general members all sat in the form of a semi-circle when in session



Closing Remarks

- ✓ A new military force was forming which would become known as the Roman Empire and they would eventually control all of what the Greeks conquered and then some.
- ✓ To fully rid themselves of Greek rule, the Jews (still being led by Hasmonean descendants) sought the help of the Romans by pledging a mutual alliance of protection

From the Apocrypha Writings

“Now Judas heard of the fame of the Romans, that they were very strong and were well-disposed toward all who made an alliance with them, that they pledged friendship to those who came to them” (I Maccabees 8:1)

“So Judas chose Eupolemus son of John son of Accos, and Jason son of Eleazar, and sent them to Rome to establish friendship and alliance and to free themselves from the yoke, for they saw that the kingdom of the Greeks was enslaving Israel completely. They went to Rome, a very long journey, and they entered the senate chamber and spoke as follows: “Judas, who is also called Maccabeus, and his brothers and the people of the Jews have sent us to you to establish alliance and peace with you, so that we may be enrolled as your allies and friends.” The proposal pleased them” (I Maccabees 8:17-20)

“The proposal pleased them, and this is a copy of the letter that they wrote in reply, on bronze tablets, and sent to Jerusalem to remain with them there as a memorial of peace and alliance:” (I Maccabees 8:21-22)

“May all go well with the Romans and with the nation of the Jews at sea and on land forever, and may sword and enemy be far from them. If war comes first to Rome or to any of their allies in all their dominion, the nation of the Jews shall act as their allies wholeheartedly, as the occasion may indicate to them. To the enemy that makes war they shall not give or supply grain, arms, money, or ships, just as Rome has decided, and they shall keep their obligations without receiving any return. In the same way, if war comes first to the nation of the Jews, the Romans shall willingly act as their allies, as the occasion may indicate to them. And to their enemies there shall not be given grain, arms, money, or ships, just as Rome has decided, and they shall keep these obligations and do so without deceit. Thus, on these terms the Romans make a treaty with the Jewish people.”
(I Maccabees 8:17-20)

Closing Remarks

- ✓ Unfortunately, this trades one tyrannical empire for another but it will bring on the birth of two significant people:
 - ❖ John the Baptist
 - ❖ Jesus of Nazareth
- ✓ In our next lesson – we will see the God of the universe at work through both Jewish and Gentile kings to make the way for His Son, Jesus Christ to be born as Savior of the world!

Never forget; “*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will*” (Proverbs 21:1, KJV)