

# Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

## Lecture 4: Judaism in the First Century

### Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rlst-152/lecture-4>

#### Overview

Of the four kingdoms that arose after Alexander's death, those of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies are most pertinent to an understanding of the New Testament. Especially important is the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who forced the issue of Hellenism in Jerusalem by profaning the temple. Jews were not alike in their reaction to Hellenization, but a revolt arose under the leadership of the Mattathias and his sons, who would rule in the Hasmonean Dynasty. After the spread of Roman rule, the Judea was under client kings and procurators until the Jewish War and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Revolt was only one Jewish response to foreign rule; another was apocalypticism, as we see in Daniel and also in the Jesus' teaching and the early Christian movement.

#### 1. *After Alexander: The Seleucids and the Ptolemies*

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* The chronological end of the Old Testament, Hebrew Bible, takes place in the sixth century BCE that is in the 500s BCE. I say the chronological end of the text is that because that's actually not the latest that our literature comes from. It's just that's the end of the story. What happens basically is that the Jews are taken out of Judea, they're taken into captivity, or at least the upper class is, in Babylon, and then they wait 70 years and then they're brought—they're allowed to come back into Judea to rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, and it's the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem that are narrated in the books Ezra and Nehemiah. That's kind of where the story of the Jews or the Israelites ends, at the end of the sixth century BCE.

[2] That's not actually the latest document because, as we'll talk about a little bit later today, the book of Daniel, which claims of course to be written in Babylon, Babylonian captivity, but also by a guy named Daniel who lived in the sixth century. It's actually not written then, it's written around the year of 164 BCE, so that's the latest document that we have that's in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament. So there's a difference in the actual timing of the documents and the chronological end of the

story. I'll remind you of what we talked about last time with Alexander the Great just very briefly. Alexander the Great, remember, wanted to set up a one world, a universal empire. He taught a sort of syncretism of religion, he taught a common language, Greek, he set up these Greek cities all around, these things will all be very important for us. That process is what we call Hellenization, so the Hellenization of the world in that time means that we even call that period Hellenistic Greek, the Hellenistic Period. To differentiate it from classical Greek period, say classical Athens in the sixth and fifth century, and then the Greco Roman Period which will come later, the period of Rome.

[3] The reason Hellenism is so important for us is because Alexander—what happened to his empire after he died. After much confusion and fighting among his major generals, after his death, Alexander's kingdom ended up being divided up into four major empires. For our purposes only three of those really matter, and on your handout you'll see the names Seleucus, Antiochus, and the Seleucids [*handout is appended to this transcript*]. Seleucus was one of the Generals of Alexander and he ended up getting the part of his empire that had been Babylonia, that is modern day Iraq, and Syria. What happens is, you'll find over and over again, a man named Seleucus will have a kid

named maybe Antiochus, who will have a kid named Seleucus, who will have a kid named Antiochus. The Seleucids is what we call their dynasty, their family name, they tended to use those two names Seleucus and Antiochus a lot, so you'll see just Seleucus I, II, III; Antiochus I, II, III, and IV. Those two names were used quite—in their family over and over again, so it gets very confusing in historical literature when it's hard to keep them straight but that's the reason.

[4] His general Ptolemy II got the Kingdom of Egypt, which was very, very important because Egypt was one of the wealthiest parts of the ancient world. Ptolemy II took Egypt and set up his own sort of Greco-Egyptian kingdom there, so when we talk about these things—sometimes you'll hear us talk about the Syrian Empire or the Greco Syrian Empire, or simply the Greek Empire. That's because there was a Greek sort of veneer over what would have been local differences. You'd have Egyptians speaking ancient Egyptian languages but the elites in the cities would be speaking Greek, so the culture, the elite culture would still be Greek and the same way in Syria. The Ptolemies are easier to keep straight because they tended to all be named Ptolemy. They might have a nickname, like Ptolemy Philadelphus is a very famous one, but then they would give them numbers. Ptolemy II was the first general who ruled Egypt, and then his descendants would be named II, III, and IV and that sort of—and so forth. The other empire that was important, but we'll not talk about it too much today, is what was Macedonia and Greece itself and the General Antigonus Gonatas was the one who took that. That would be its own sort of area until the Romans defeated the different Greek rulers there and took over Macedonia and Greece.

[5] What's important for us though is really the Seleucids and the Ptolemies because if you draw a line separating Syria from Egypt, the line goes right through Palestine. The Jews were kind of caught, therefore, on the border, so Judea at this time was on the border between these two empires and they were constantly fighting trying to aggrandize their own kingdoms. The Jews were often, therefore, caught right in the middle. Antiochus IV Epiphanes reigned from 175 to 164 BCE. He's called the IV obviously because he's the fourth Antiochus. Epiphanes though is a sort of

nickname and it means “manifest,” it's just the Greek word for “manifest.” What Antiochus was doing with his name is saying he was claiming divine honors for himself, because what he's saying is, “I'm Antiochus, God made manifest among you.” This was not that unusual. As I said last time, Alexander had sort of claimed divine honors for himself. He was following the lead of a lot of eastern monarchs and rulers who would claim to be the descendants of a god and claim to be a god themselves, and would receive cult and worship. Antiochus IV, though, was ruling at that time and he had control, he had gained control of Judea.

[6] At one point he almost conquered Egypt, as a matter of fact, again they were always these battles, but then Rome intervened. Rome was not in control of eastern Mediterranean at this time but they started getting more and more powerful, so Rome came to Egypt, and a Roman general basically said, “You've got to withdraw,” and forced Antiochus IV to pull out of Egypt.

[7] Why did Rome do that? Well Rome wanted—Rome didn't want any other empire in the Mediterranean to get too powerful so they wanted small—they didn't want to really control all the eastern part of the Mediterranean at this time, they would have been stretched too thin, but they wanted these two kingdoms to balance each other out, so they didn't—they weren't particularly for Antiochus IV, they just didn't want him to destroy the Egyptian Ptolemies and him to take over Egypt because it would make him too powerful. Rome, though, shows that they have enough power that they kind of play the referee between different kingdoms even in the east at this time.

## 2. *The Jews, Hellenization, and the Maccabean Revolt*

[8] While Judea, though, was under Antiochus control a lot of Jews tried to figure out how do you deal with this whole process of Hellenization? In other words, if you want your own kids to get ahead in the world, in this time, and you're going to have an elite family yourself in a town, in a city, it makes sense for your kids to get a Greek education. You want your sons, for example, to be able to speak, and read, and write Greek. Why? Because that's the *lingua franca* of the elite—of business, and of

government, and all that sort of thing. It's precisely the way it is now with English around the world. Elite families want their kids to have English education, they want them to be familiar with American culture, and, if possible, they'll even send them to a university in the States, or to graduate school in the States, and this is partly because there are good universities in the States, but it's also partly because they know that to get ahead their kids need to use English, they need to become, in some sense, to some extent Americanized.

[9] This is what's going on even in places like Jerusalem at this time. Jerusalem wasn't a huge city but it was important enough that there were elites there themselves, and so they responded to this urge of Hellenizing culture to have their kids educated in the gymnasium. Remember? So they would themselves get this sort of Greek rhetorical education. In fact, what we'll call for the purposes, liberals and conservatives in Jerusalem, because there was conflict in Jerusalem at this time over how much Hellenization you should go along with. Apparently, a majority of the priests and the lay nobility supported the Hellenizing group, that is the Jewish leaders who wanted to bring more Hellenization into the Jerusalem itself.

[10] The high priest at this time was named Jason, his name is on here, and in 175 he built a gymnasium in Jerusalem. Why did he build a gymnasium in Jerusalem? Well if you're going to have Greek education you have to have a gymnasium. This—he also founded a Greek polis, that is as Greek city structure and Jason apparently paid Antiochus for the privilege of having Jerusalem recognized as a Greek city. This would have consolidated the power of those Jewish leaders who wanted to press Greek culture more rather than those Jewish leaders who wanted to hold back on Greek culture. If you control the gymnasium, and you control the means of education, you actually control the citizenry because you can't become a citizen of a Greek polis, a Greek city, unless you yourself have Greek education, so sons would—sons of people would go to the gymnasium. Notice what this would do also, it would disenfranchise those leading families who didn't want to have their sons Hellenized. By holding the control of the education, you disenfranchise conservative Jews who are resisting this Greek influence.

[11] About this time, apparently, Antiochus offered citizenship status to the Jews, but, like I said, admission to the gymnasium and the ephebate—remember the ephebate we talked about how the boys around the years 18 to 22 or so, around the age that you guys are, you would be enrolled in this sort of quasi education, quasi military training club sort of thing of the town. That was the ephebate, and you had to go through that to be a citizen. Jason and his party controlled this, and in fact, they renamed Jerusalem “Antioch of Jerusalem.” There are lots of different cities named Antioch in the ancient world, and they were all done in honor of some Antiochus, so Jerusalem was renamed Antioch of Jerusalem. The high priesthood was the main ruler of the Jews at this time. They didn't have a king, and they didn't have a direct governor, so whoever controlled the high priesthood was sort of the political ruler also at this time.

[12] But Antiochus was the one who had the privilege of appointing the high priest. Menelaus, another leading Jew, his name is on your handout, seems to have offered Antiochus more money for the priesthood trying to get it away from Jason, and he couldn't afford it. In order to pay for his own priesthood he took gold vessels and instruments out of the temple treasury, and this seems to have caused a riot. Now notice, “Jason,” is that a good Jewish name? No, that's not a good Jewish name. “Menelaus” is that a good Jewish name? No, Jason and Menelaus are both famous Greek names. You have two guys fighting for the high priesthood in Jerusalem, both with Greek names, not traditional Hebrew names, and both of them apparently trying to get in with this Hellenizing process.

[13] They get into a big fight. To settle things down in Jerusalem, Antiochus takes control of Jerusalem and he stationed Syrian troops, that is the Greco-Syrian troops, in Jerusalem in 167. Now things are heating up. Around this time changes were made to the temple in Jerusalem. It may have been basically to accommodate the soldiers. They may have had to house soldiers from the Greco-Syrian Empire, and they may have used the temple mount apparently to house some of them. This caused changes to the temple. At this time Menelaus is in charge, and his Hellenizing party, which we could call the radical reformers, they saw—this is the beginning of the anti-Judaism laws.

- [14] About this time several laws were passed that forbade circumcision, you can't circumcise your boys anymore; you're forbidden from observing the Torah, the Jewish law; it may have been that even a pig was sacrificed on the altar in Jerusalem in the Holy of Holies, and the temple was turned into a syncretistic Jewish pagan grove. In traditional Greek religion and other religions having a grove of trees is sort of considered the sacred area. Like when you walk through a forest now and you come upon a nice open kind of grove of trees, and all of sudden you just kind of feel like some nymph or something is going to jump out at you, and God is there, so the Greeks liked these sorts of groves of trees, so this is often what they would use as a sacred area. They did this to the temple, and it was renamed as a shrine to Zeus Olympus.
- [15] Now notice what's happening, I talked about syncretism last time. If you're one of these liberal Jews, you may not really believe you're doing anything bad. You're not forsaking Judaism, you're just updating it, you're just bringing it up to the modern era. You might say, "Well what's wrong with calling it Zeus Olympus? We all know these are just different names given to the same god anyway, there's just one supreme God." So they may well have identified the Jewish god Yahweh with this god Zeus Olympus and said it's just two different names, one Greek name and one Jewish name for the same Jewish god. That may have been what they were thinking about. They could also have been thinking about the Syrian god Baal, that Baal Shamin was a Syrian god, so they're just saying we'll have an altar here, Antiochus will be happy because we're worshipping this Syrian god here, the Greeks are happy we're worshipping Zeus Olympus, and the Jews will be happy because it's identified as Yahweh.
- [16] This whole process of Hellenization, therefore, I'm interpreting this—in a lot of history books, sometimes, you'll get the idea that the Jews were all good loyal Jews just trying to keep the law, trying to keep Torah, and that Antiochus IV Epiphanes is putting all this on them and forcing Greek religion and Greek culture on them. That's not really the way it happened. I've told the story the way I—I've proceeded—if you read between the lines of some of these ancient Jewish texts, it's more like it's a debate that's going on within Judaism itself. How Greek should we be? How much do you accommodate the dominant culture? Precisely the way you get a lot of this kind of debate in the modern world, our time, of how much do you want your kids, your Jewish boys and girls to assimilate to be just as American as everybody else? How much intermarriage do you want to have or do you allow? If you're a Muslim immigrant to this country, the first generation, do you let them listen to hip hop? Do you let the women stop covering their hair? Where do you draw the line? What I'm arguing is that this is what was going on, and it was an internal Jewish conflict that was going on.
- [17] There were several responses to Hellenization, therefore, among Jews. It wasn't just that the Helleni—that Greeks are here putting this onto Jews, but there were responses within Judaism itself. As I've already said Menelaus and the liberals accept it and promote it. Another priest that had been dislocated from the high priesthood earlier, his family had originally been the high priesthood family. Onias, I think Onias IV is on your hand out there. Onias IV actually withdrew from Jerusalem and went off and built a new temple. He says, well if you're going to destroy the existing Jewish temple we're going to have an alternative temple elsewhere. You also have these people that come to be called the Hasidim, it's on your hand out, that's from a Hebrew word meaning the holy ones or pious ones or something like that. It—and they're not to be confused with the modern Hasidim who live in Brooklyn and who come from Eastern Europe. That's a modern movement that came about in the medieval period and has come to—but it's the same word used for these people. These weren't Jews who decided to be very strict and they seemed to reject a lot of Greek culture. They certainly rejected Greek religion and Greek sacrifice. They seemed to promote the speaking of Hebrew, the use of Hebrew text, and particularly pious observations of Jewish law.
- [18] You even have a group of high priests, former high priests, who have been dislocated and other priestly families withdrawing from Jerusalem and apparently going out in the desert and maybe building a community out there, and we find out about them in the twentieth century when the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered in the late 1940s. A lot of the theories are these Dead Sea scrolls were the writings of a sect of Jews led by people who had been priestly families, who moved out into

the desert, set up camp on the shores of the Dead Sea, and had their own little sort of maybe quasi monastic community there, very strict in their observation of the Law, they keep their documents—they have some documents in Greek, some in Hebrew, some in Aramaic. So that may have been another way to respond to this increasing Hellenization to just pull away and form a different community.

[19] Then you have the reaction of Mattathias. Mattathias was a priest from Jerusalem who had settled in a village called Modein, in the hill country of Judea. Apparently, according to the text that had come down to us, some of which had to be sort of legends and that sort of thing, hero worship, the story goes that Mattathias was in his village and a priest and a soldier come from Jerusalem to the village, and they're trying to force the Jews to sacrifice on an altar. Now what an altar is most of the time is—do you all see this little base over there in the corner? There's just a little pillar that might be this high, and to offer something—you don't actually have to sacrifice a chicken or anything like that, you can obviously sacrifice animals, but you can just pour out some wine or you can pour some grain or something like that on the altar, burn it up, and that will suffice as an offering to a god, without killing an animal. Something like this may have been going on.

[20] Mattathias, it is said, took the sword away from the soldier and killed this priest and the soldier for encouraging Jews in his village to sacrifice to the gods. This was, of course, against the law, so Mattathias runs off to the hills, taking his family with him, his sons, he had several sons, and this is the beginning of the war that comes to be called the Maccabean Revolt. It's called Maccabean because after Mattathias died, shortly thereafter, he was the leader of the revolt in the beginning, his son Judas becomes the head general of the bunch, and Judas, early on earned the nickname Maccabeus. We're not really sure what the nickname means or where it comes from, it could be something like "the hammer," so he could be "Judah the hammer," but it may have been an attribute from him being a very good general and winning a lot of battles.

[21] Against all odds, this rag tag bunch of basically guerilla fighters, up against a far superior army of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, they beat them, they retook Jerusalem, they didn't actually beat

them in Syria, they just beat them several battles in Judea, and Judas was able to recapture Jerusalem and the temple. In the year 164, they cleansed the temple of the profanation, the pollution of having maybe pigs and things like that sacrificed, it being polluted as a Greek temple, and so 164 is the beginning of the celebration of the Jewish holiday Hanukkah. The Hanukkah song now—we won't sing the Hanukkah song. So 164 in the cleansing of the temple is what Jews celebrate with Hanukkah.

[22] Judas Maccabeus reigned as not an official king at that point but he reigned over Judea of this time, and there was still battles that raged between him and his family, and his army [on the one side], and Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and then other descendants [on the other]. After he died, his brother—one of his brothers became the leader, and then another brother became the leader, gradually these different people of this family came to set up their own dynasty of rulers themselves. Their family name was not Maccabeus, that was just a nickname, the family name was Hasmoneus and so we call this the Hasmonean Dynasty, that's the descendants of Mattathias. Some of them actually were then proclaimed king, they were recognized as—with the title king by the later rulers of the neighboring areas like the Syria-Greco-Syrian Empire. The Hasmonean Dynasty was in power from the year 165 to the year 60 BCE.

### 3. *The "Prophecy" of Daniel*

[23] Now, that's the way one people responded to this, they revolted against the rulers. Another way some Jews responded was by believing that military revolt wasn't the way to go, that God would somehow intervene miraculously that God would send an angel or some kind of heavenly figure down to earth and an army of heavenly figures would defeat Antiochus and usher in the new Kingdom of Israel. And that's where you get the story of that from the book of Daniel. I asked you to read Daniel, at least the last part of Daniel for today, if you've got your Bibles take it out and turn with me first to Daniel 8:20. Now the book of Daniel is in two halves. The first half of it tells about the adventures of this young man Daniel who's very, very wise and very smart and very loyal, and who refuses to worship the Persian god. Of course this—these are morality stories written

for Jews who were living under Greek domination encouraging them not to worship Greek gods but its past in the distant past.

[24] Then the second half of Daniel is a whole series of visions and prophecies. Daniel says, “I was in a dream, I was in a vision on a day, and I saw this, and this angel told me to do this and this person told me this,” and so it’s the narration of the history of humankind that’s part of which has already happened by the time of Daniel, but most of which is to happen in the future for Daniel. Some of this stuff actually does happen. So for example, and he tells about different beasts. There’s the ram that does this, there’s the beast that does this, but you know that these beasts represent different kingdoms because in Chapter 8:20 he says, “As for the ram that you saw [in your vision] with the two horns, these are the Kings of Mede and Persia.” There was the kingdom of the Medes and the kingdom of the Persians who came together under Cyrus. “The male goat is the King of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is the first king,” so that would be Phillip, Alexander’s father. “As for the horn that was broken in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation but not with his power.” This is Alexander, he’s broken, and his kingdom is divided up into four empires, like I told you about earlier, but none of those four empires enjoys the same power that Alexander the Great enjoyed with his.

[25] Notice how you’re already given a clue, right here in Daniel, that these different images, these different beasts are to refer to kingdoms that are going to come in the future from Daniel’s perspective. We know, actually, that they already did. Then what happens in Daniel is each different chapter, the last part of Daniel, in a sense tells the story over again. He has another vision and instead of reading it chronologically, as if Chapter 9 told about one century, and then Chapter 10 or Chapter 11 is the next century, and the next century, you actually have to read them cycles because what Daniel is doing he’s giving you a prophecy of what’s going to happen politically related to Judea, but he’s giving it to you in several different visions that all tell the same story, just in different kind of symbols.

[26] Turn over now to Chapter 11. Here again it’s sort of like the fourth—Chapter 11:2, “The four shall be far richer than all of them when he has

become strong to his riches, he shall stir up all against the Kingdom of Greece,” so this is actually talking about the Persian ruler who will attack Greece. “Then a warrior king shall arise who shall rule with great dominion,” that’s Alexander, “While still rising in power,”—Alexander remember was still young and increasing his power when he died—“his kingdom shall be broken and divided to the four winds of heaven but not to his posterity.” Alexander had a child but the child dies, and Alexander’s kingdom did not go to any of his own offspring, they went to these other four generals.

[27] Then notice in verse 5, “The King of the South shall grow strong,” and the next verse, “The daughter of the King of the South shall come to the King of the North to ratify the agreement.” What’s the King of the South? Who’s the King of the South? Ptolemy, some Ptolemy, one of the Ptolemies. So whenever you see King of the South in Daniel it’s always referring to the Ptolemaic Dynasty, one of the Ptolemies. Who’s the King of the North? Seleucus or Antiochus, so whenever you see the King of the North it refers to one of the Seleucids. So over and over again in Daniel, you’re going to get the King of the North, the King of the South, the King of the North, and notice how it says, “The daughter of the King of the South shall come to the King of the North to ratify the agreement.” If you look down—if you have a study bible and you look at your footnotes it’ll actually give you the names of these different people that historians can identify. This may be Berenice because we know that she was a daughter of Antiochus or Seleucus, she was married to one of the Ptolemies. If you follow in your study bible—now it has to be a good critical study bible. I mean if you—by real scholars—if you use these bibles that take all this as prophecy that relates to the Soviet Union or to Russia they might tell you things like, “Well the King of the North here refers to the head of Politburo or something like this,” and so if it’s a bible by a contemporary church that takes all this is referring to our time or the time immediately to the future, which of course a lot of Christians do, then their footnotes might be different. But the footnotes in any good study bible will place these people to the history of what’s going on in Judea as this time.

[28] Now go over to 11:29 because I’m not going to lead you through all the stuff that happens in

Chapter 11 because if you read it, and you read it with the footnotes, it's basically telling you a history of the battles and alliances between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies and where Judea was caught in the middle at different times. "At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south," this is one of the—this is Antiochus, not Antiochus IV, "But this time it shall not be as before for ships of Kittim shall come against him and he shall lose heart and withdraw." Who are the Kittim? Romans, exactly. "The Kittim" is a term that's used in Hebrew, and in a lot of different ancient Jewish texts, and sometimes it seems to refer to the Greeks, and here it clearly refers to the Romans because the Romans come and they force the King of the North back.

[29] Notice what it says, "Forces sent by him—he shall turn back and pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant." Antiochus IV will pay attention to the Jews who have forsaken the Torah, "Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and the fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate," or in some modern English translations, "the abomination of desolation." That term will be used also in the New Testament in several places. "He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant." That is, the bad Jews who have violated the Torah will be in cahoots with Antiochus.

[30] "But the people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm and take action. The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall by fall by sword and flame and suffer captivity and plunder." Who are the wise? The author of the book. Remember he spent the whole first part of the book setting up Daniel as a wise man. So this author writing under the name of Daniel, a wise man, identifies other wise Jews of his own day and he says they're going to oppose Antiochus IV and some of them will die because of it. "When they fall victim they shall receive a little help and many shall join them insincerely." Some scholars believe that this "little help" may be this author's reference to Judas Maccabeus. It may be that he knows that there is an armed resistance, and it's a little bit of help, but he doesn't believe, himself, that the answer to Antiochus IV is going to be an armed revolt, he believes it's not going to ultimately

succeed. Why? Because God's going to be the one who will intervene, not Judas Maccabeus.

[31] "The king shall act as he pleases. He shall exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god,"—remember Antiochus Epiphanes? "God manifest"?—"and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods. He shall prosper until the period of wrath is completed for what is determined shall be done. He shall pay no respect to the gods of his ancestors or to the one beloved by women; he shall pay no respect to any other god, he shall consider himself greater than all." So it's all about setting himself up.

[32] Now look, "He shall come into the beautiful land," obviously we're talking about Judea, "And tens of thousands shall fall victim but Edom and Moab, and the main part of the Ammonites shall escape from his power, he shall stretch forth his hand against the countries and the land of Egypt shall not escape." In other words, Antiochus IV this time is actually going to capture Egypt, he's [this author] predicting. "He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow in his train." Not only will he overrun Egypt he's going to go west of Egypt and take Libya and south of Egypt and take Ethiopia. "But reports from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to bring ruin and complete destruction to many. He shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea,"—what's the sea? the Mediterranean, thank you, somebody is awake—"and the beautiful holy mountain," what the holy mountain? Say it, Zion, Mount Zion which is where Jerusalem is founded. "Yet he shall come to his end with no one to help him."

[33] "He shall come to his end"—wait a minute, he conquers Egypt, takes Libya, takes Ethiopia, comes back through Judea, sets up camp, somewhere in that coastal area between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean and there he dies. That didn't happen. Antiochus IV never took all of Egypt, he never took Ethiopia, he never took Libya, and he did eventually die, but he died way over in Babylon. He didn't die here.

[34] How do we know that this document was written around the year 164? Because this author doesn't know the end of the story. Notice how throughout the history he's gotten

everything right—well not every detail—but he gets a lot of it right. He knows when Antiochus the so and so wins a battle, he knows when one of the Ptolemies wins a battle, he knows when they tried to have a treaty between them and marry off one of their daughters to each other to establish peace. He knows when they called truces. He knows when the Romans intervened and stopped battles between them. He knows all—he knows that Antiochus profaned the temple, so this has got to be written after 167 because he’s telling us all about this stuff that happened with the temple. He knows everything that happens up to 167, and there may be a little hint that he even knows about Judas Maccabeus, but he doesn’t know about anything what happened to the cleansing of the temple. He doesn’t know about the victory of Judas which happened in 164.

[35] Notice how this is wonderfully convenient for us modern scholars. He gets everything right up to 167 and everything wrong at 164, because notice what happens then, in Chapter 12, right as Antiochus IV dies according to his prophecy, “At that time Michael the Great Prince, the protector of your people,”—Michael’s an angel, the greatest angel— “shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish.” In other words, this is when all hell breaks loose, the heavens come down, Michael swoops in on a chariot from the sky with angelic armies, and they are the ones who bring the final victory. God breaks into history and brings the final victory. Judas Maccabeus doesn’t win the battle.

[36] This is how we date apocalyptic literature. Daniel is one of the earliest cases of what we call apocalyptic literature. It gives—apocalypticism gives you this vision of what’s going to happen in the very near future, and it answers the problems of suffering and the answer is not “arm yourselves and fight the battle yourself,” because the odds are overwhelmingly against you. You can’t defeat all of Rome, you can’t defeat all of Greece, you can’t defeat Antiochus IV Epiphanes by yourself, but God can. And so angelic armies will break into history and bring about the solution to the problem. The apocalyptic writer sets himself up usually, far in the distant past, like this guy says he’s Daniel writing in the sixth century, and they narrate history through the age—and you can tell he’s got it all right. Daniel foresaw this stuff writing way back in the year 580 [or whenever]. And yet he’s—he

knows about the Persians, he knows about the Medes, he knows about the Greeks, he knows about Alexander, he knows about the splitting up of Alexander’s kingdom, he knows about Berenice, he knows about the Romans, and so you think he knows all this stuff, he got it all right, and you pick it up and you’re reading it in the year 164 yourself, or 165, and you think well he must be right about what’s going to happen next. And you think God’s going to break in any day, we’re going to be saved, we don’t have to fight ourselves, we’re going to be saved.

[37] This is how we date apocalyptic literature. Where do they get the history right, and then when does the history go pfffffft. When does the history just all of a sudden go wrong? That’s when it’s dated because they’re writing up to that point. That kind of apocalyptic mentality, that apocalyptic world view will become very important for early Christianity because what I’ll argue in the rest of this course is, who else was an apocalyptic prophet? Jesus. Who else was an apocalyptic prophet? Paul. All of the earliest followers of Jesus seemed to have been apocalyptic minded Jews, and that’s the beginning of early Christianity. Early Christianity starts off as an apocalyptic Jewish sect. They all were reading Daniel, and when they read other prophecies from the Hebrew Bible they also read those apocalyptically. The apocalyptic response is another one of these responses to Hellenization.

#### 4. *The Jewish War and the Destruction of the Temple*

[38] In 63, about a hundred years after the cleansing of the temple—first are there any questions about any of that so far? I’m giving you a lot of both confusing history and confusing terminology. A hundred years after the cleansing of the temple, *mas o menos*, in the year 63 BCE, Pompey, the Roman general Pompey, enters Jerusalem, and this is when you have the beginning of Roman control of Judea. Herod the Great gets himself appointed as King of the Jews by the Roman Senate. Only the Senate at this time can proclaim anybody a king, so the Senate would sometimes would have client kings on the different—the edge of frontiers of their control. They couldn’t—they didn’t want to be bothered with controlling everything themselves with their own armies directly, or their governors, so they would

appoint local kings, whether in Asia Minor, Greece, different parts.

[39] Herod the Great was appointed king by the Roman Senate and he ruled from the year 37 to year 4 BCE. After Herod the Great died, his kingdom was split up first among his different sons, but Judea itself eventually was placed under direct Roman rule under procurators that were appointed by the Senate or sometimes by the Emperor, and this is what Pilate's job was. Pontius Pilate, who was the governor of Judea, his actual title wasn't governor, he was a procurator, but he was the one in control of Judea during the life—during the time that Jesus was killed himself. Pilate was one of these direct Roman rulers of Judea. Galilee was ruled by a son of Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, and different descendants of Herod would rule in different parts of Palestine for many years after that.

[40] During the first century there were sporadic uprisings among the Jews, some of them were apocalyptic, that is, they seem to have been Jews who were expecting the end to come but sometimes they seemed to have expected that they were supposed to start it. So, for example, you have Josephus tell us about Jewish prophets who arise and say, follow me to Jerusalem, follow me to Jerusalem, and then stand on the Mount of Olives, which is this mountain that's right opposite the main mountain of Jerusalem, and they'd say, okay tomorrow we're going to go out and we're going to march around the walls of Jerusalem and the walls are all going to fall down. Sound like anything you're familiar with? The walls of Jericho in the Hebrew Bible falling down after the Israelites marched around it for seven days and then seven times the last day.

[41] Prophets were arising, using inspiration from Jewish prophets from the ancient past, and they were setting themselves up again as prophets, and, again, expecting God to break through. Sometimes these prophets arose, and they were themselves apocalyptic prophets, announcing the end of the known world soon. Sometimes, also, they seem to have been setting themselves up as king of the Jews, and that would make them a Messiah. Because the word messiah in Hebrew just means “the anointed one,” and what do you do when you make someone a king in the ancient world? You put oil on their heads. That's how you anoint a king. If someone's

called “the anointed one,” that's a kingly title. Now this is very dangerous because what did I just say about how did you get to be a king and run a controlled area? The Senate had to appoint you. Anybody who set himself up as king, without being appointed king by the Senate, that was itself an act of treason. There were, though, other Messianic figures who would rise and try to provoke some kind of revolt.

[42] The most important revolt of the Jewish people during this time, started the year 66. Now we're in the Common Era, so this 66 CE. It started in 66 with Jews in both Judea and Galilee revolting against Roman rule, they drove the Roman squadron out of Jerusalem, and in the year 70 the Romans finally, after four years of warfare, they had surrounded Jerusalem for a full two years, they finally took Jerusalem itself. They flattened—they destroyed the temple. So the destruction of the temple is the year 70, and that's probably the most important date for this course because a lot of important things in Christianity, the early Jesus movement, happened either before 70, and they're one kind of event, some of them happened right around the year 70, and we'll talk about that when we get to the gospel of Mark in a couple of times, and then some of them—most of the things happened after the year 70.

[43] The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in the year 70 is not only hugely important for Jews, right? because ever since then Jews have not had a sacrificial cult. If you are a Jew now where do you go to sacrifice? You can't go to the temple there's—Dome of the Rock sitting on where it's supposed to be. Jews substituted different forms of piety, reading the Torah, studying, praying, meeting in synagogues, meeting in other places, so Judaism changed radically beginning in the year 70, precisely because the place where you sacrificed was destroyed. Every ethnic group around the Mediterranean in the ancient world had its religion as some part of sacrifice. They all did. Sacrifice was just common among different groups around the Mediterranean. The year 70 caused the Jews to stop being primarily a sacrificial people, because they had nowhere to sacrifice. The end of the Jewish war is dated by most people to 74, because that's the time when the final battle took place, and the fortress that fell was called Masada. So if you go to Israel

now Masada is a shrine. It's a tourist spot and a shrine that celebrates the defeat of the last of Jews at Masada, the fortress that Herod the Great had built.

[44] After that Judaism changes you have—I'm not going to go into much detail because the way rabbinic Judaism—what you know as Judaism today, if you know anything about it at all, is a result of developments that happened after 70. It's the result of the rabbis recognizing that the temple cult is no longer there. The rabbis, who are teachers of the law and commentators of the law, they become the central organizing feature not the priests. The priesthood—you still have Jews named Cohen, right, which means "priest," but priests in Judaism don't really do much anymore. It's the rabbis who become important. At the beginning of—around the year 200 you have the rabbinic Judaism starting to develop its written text, the Mishnah, the Babylonian Talmud, the Jerusalem Talmud, and this is the birth during these centuries of rabbinism. That is rabbinic Judaism as it comes to be important.

[45] There was another Jewish revolt in 132 to 135 called the Bar Kokhba Revolt, but that was suppressed by the Emperor Hadrian in 135, and that you had the complete destruction of Jerusalem. It was leveled, it was renamed Aelia Capitolina, a Roman name, and Jews after that were forbidden even to enter Jerusalem for a long time. What's important about all this—I told you—I warned you last time that last lecture on the Roman Empire, the Greek world, was going to be some just boring historical narrative and you've had some of the same thing this time where I just had to tell the story of what was going on in these centuries.

[46] Why was this all important for us? Here are the main things to take away from it. Hellenization was extremely important because it united the Mediterranean world, the eastern Mediterranean but then the Romans even took over some of the aspects of Hellenization when they took over all of the Mediterranean. By Jesus' time, all of Palestine was Hellenized to some extent, only to different degrees. Yes, if you lived in a village or out in the country you may not have spoken Greek, you may have spoken Hebrew or Aramaic. But if you were an elite person in any city, even in Palestine's time, you were expected to be able to speak Greek. You had some exposure to Greek

culture. Syncretism was very important. The idea that religions around—religions borrowed from each other, religions were mixtures of things, and cultures borrowed from each other, so syncretism was very important.

[47] There was also conflict within Judaism. I've tried to emphasize that. Jews weren't all agreed about how to respond to the things, the politics and the cultures around them. Jews conflicted with Jews over how to adapt to Greek and Roman domination and culture. Political, social, religious, linguistic, cultural issues were all affected in some way.

[48] The next really important thing is the smallness of Judea. From the modern world we tend to think of Jerusalem and Judea as being very important because of course that's where Judaism started off and that's where Christianity started off. But by the standards of the Greek and Roman worlds, Judea was a kind of insignificant backwater. It wasn't a big important place economically or politically, and Jerusalem was not that terribly important. Judea was relatively unimportant from a world historical perspective, but—and this is also very important for how this lecture plays out for the rest of the course—the Jews were never truly independent during this time nor were they ever truly powerful during this time. Even when the Hasmoneans, Judas Maccabeus and his brothers and their descendants, were ruling for 100 years or so, they never were politically very powerful outside of that narrow area of Judea. They were never truly independent; they always had to fend off the greater power of Syria, or Egypt, or Rome.

[49] The difference—the important thing, though, is Jews had an ideology that supported imperial pretensions. Go back and read the first few Psalms, where God says, "To my anointed one," and here he's either talking to King David or whoever is supposed to be sitting on King David's throne, "You are the King of the world. I will make all the nations flow to Jerusalem, all of them will come and worship Me in this holy place." The Psalms are full of language that implied that whoever is in control in Jerusalem is the king of world, and yet the Jews looked around themselves and they're going, we haven't had anybody who approached that in centuries. The Jews had an ideology of empire and world domination embedded in their scripture, and yet their social and political

situation was just the opposite, and it's in that maelstrom of Jewish ideology not fitting reality, that Jesus is born.

[50] No sections this week. Look at the syllabus. On Monday you'll be asked to come in with lists of historical events as you see them in Acts and lists of historical events as you see them in Galatians 1 and 2. Come in with your lists on

paper because we're going to put it up on the board. Be prepared to tell me what you do for your homework, and do the homework for Monday. Okay? It's not very difficult; it won't take you a long time, but follow the syllabus instructions and come Monday ready to talk.

[51] [end of transcript]

## Handout for lecture on ancient Judaism

RLST 152 Introduction to New Testament History and Literature  
Dale B. Martin

Daniel, written around 164 BCE, but fictionally placed in sixth century BCE.

Seleucus, Antiochus, the Seleucids  
Ptolemy and the Ptolemies  
Antigonus Gonatas  
Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned 175-164 BCE)

Jason  
Menelaus  
Zeus Olympius/ Baal Shamem

Onias IV  
The "hasidim"  
Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls (Essenes?)  
Apocalypticism

Mattathias  
Judas Maccabeus  
Hanukkah  
Hasmoneans

Pompey, 63 BCE  
Herod the Great (reigned 37-4 BCE), Idumean  
Pontius Pilate and procurators of Judea

Jewish War, 66-74  
Destruction of Jerusalem: 70

Bar Kochba revolt, 132-135  
Aelia Capitolina