

Lesson #43 - Inter-Testament Period 2019

The second of a 2-part series

Good resource material for this period:

Explore the Book, J. Sidlow Baxter Volume 5, page 14 ff.

Josephus, Antiquities II, 7:1

Old Testament Charts, John Walton, page 70

New Testament Charts, H. Wayne House, pages 66-72

Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 1975 edition (all editions after 1995 do not have a conservative viewpoint)

From **450 - 400 BC** – Ezra had prepared the Jews for the future.
He developed an improved Hebrew alphabet, the finished Hebrew Canon, local synagogues and the Sanhedrin.

In **400 BC** - The Old Testament ends with the Jews living under the **Persian** empire.

300's BC – Until **331 BC**, the Jewish people continue to live under **Persian** rule.

331-323 BC - The Jews live under **Greek** rule of Alexander the Great.

323 - 204 BC – The Jews in Israel live under the **Greeks** ruling from **Egypt** – the **Ptolemies**.

Their capital is Alexandria.

Some of the Jews become Hellenized – meaning they prefer Greek thinking and life more than the Jewish ways.

Some of the Jews in the Sanhedrin accept Greek thinking which includes the idea of being open to new ideas.

They listen to and then accept certain Gnostic or *new age* ideas and mix it with Jewish beliefs. They begin

teaching it to others and gain a following. The majority of the Sanhedrin know this is heresy and remove the teachers from the Sanhedrin. They force them and their followers out of Jerusalem.

This small group moves eastward and sets up a community along-side of the Dead Sea. They have with them their Jewish Hebrew sacred writings. But then they begin to write books of their own, explaining their new beliefs. All their writings become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Of the 800 plus that have been found, only 127 are copies of Old Testament books or commentaries on them.

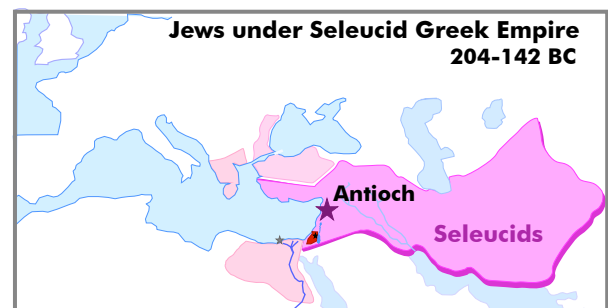
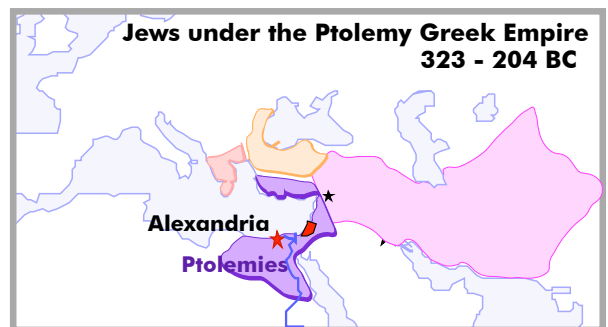
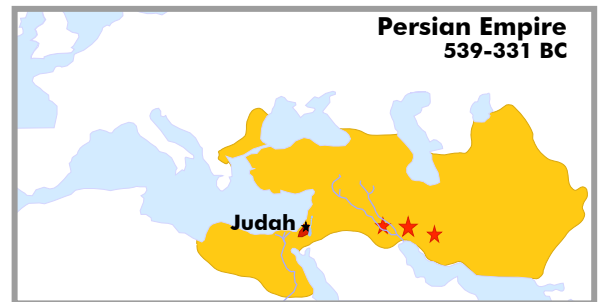
Seven hundred others are about their new beliefs.

These Sanhedrin Jews believed the false teaching because of their Greek thinking – that it was more tolerant and enlightened to *be open and accept new ideas*.

All of this happened in the 200's BC when the Jews were under the Ptolemies, ruling from Egypt.

204 - 142 BC, the Jews in Israel live under the **Greeks** ruling from **Syria** – the **Seleucids**

Their capital is Antioch.



204 - 142 BC, the Jews in Israel live under the **Greeks ruling from Syria** – the **Seleucids** (continued)

It is the Seleucid Greeks who divide the entire area into 5 provinces.

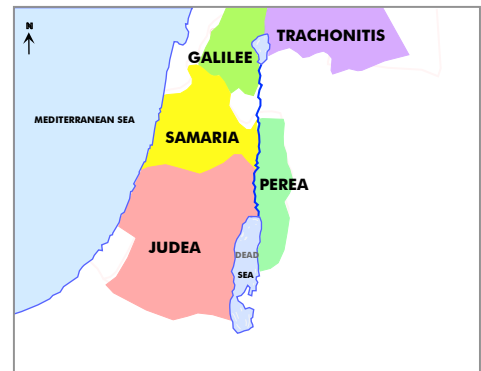
The nation of Judah is now called **Judea**.

Then going north, the area where the Samaritans have their temple and continue to live, is called **Samaria**.

Further north, the area that includes the Sea of Galilee is called **Galilee**.

Directly across from Galilee to the east, is the province of **Trachonitis**.

To the east of Samaria and Judea, on the other side of the Jordan River, is the province of **Perea**.



The Jews are treated harshly under the **Seleucids** - Syrian Greeks, but they can still live under their own Jewish laws.

The **high priest** continues as their leader and authority. He is now sharing his leadership with the Sanhedrin.

The **Sanhedrin** has had the responsibility to protect the **Jewish identity** of the nation. They are to teach each generation about **Jewish beliefs and practices**. But starting in the 100's, this thinking begins to change.

A **minority** of the Sanhedrin has become **Hellenized** and wants to bring **Greek** thinking into Jewish life.

Over time, they will become more and more progressive or liberal in their thinking...
about the **future of the nation** and about their **spiritual beliefs**.

However, the **majority** of the Sanhedrin remain pro-**Jewish**.

They are conservative in their outlook and want a strong **Jewish** identity of the nation.

They are proud of their Jewishness and want strict Jewish laws.

These differences come to a head in the 170's BC. Each side is convinced the high priest should be from their viewpoint. This is a crucial time for the Jews.

If the high priest supports a strong **Jewish** identity, he will emphasize and enforce **Jewish laws** and **Jewish culture**.

If the high priest is a **Hellenist**, he will have great tolerance, encouraging the Jews to accept **Greek ideas** and **culture**. Over time, Jewish identity, faith and practice could be lost.

In **174 BC**, the **high priest** in office is pro-**Jewish**, Onias III.

His brother - brother #2 is pro-**Greek**, Jason. He is willing to do anything to become high priest. He decides to go to the Syrian Greek king. He offers him a large sum of money plus the promise he will make Jerusalem pro-Greek, if the king will name him as high priest.

The king likes the idea, since it will put money in his pocket. He removes brother #1, the current high priest and puts brother #2 in his place.

171 BC Three years go by. Now a Jewish man, not even from the tribe of Levi, goes to the Syrian Greek king and offers him an even bigger payment if the king names **him** as high priest. The king agrees, so brother #2 is out and a non-Levite Jewish man is in. He is more pro-Greek than anyone.

170 BC, the Seleucid Syrian king, Antiochus IV, invades

Egypt, annexing all the Ptolemy land except the capital of Alexandria. He declares victory and heads for Antioch, his capital.

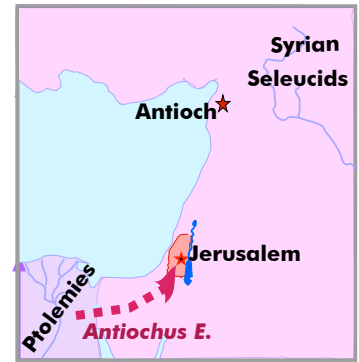
On the way, he hears Jewish brother #2 has returned to Jerusalem to become high priest once again. So Antiochus and his armies invade Jerusalem and take all the money stored at the Temple. By this time, the Temple is also serving as the national Treasury where money reserves are stored. Antiochus takes the money and once again puts the non-Levite Jewish man as high priest.



168 BC Egypt rebels. Antiochus and his armies attack Egypt, but are defeated.

Angry that he has lost control of Egypt, the king knows he can still control the Jews. So again, as he heads for his home in Syria to the north, Antiochus stops at Jerusalem. He orders the entire province of Judea to be Hellenized.

Antiochus believes he is deity. It is why, much earlier, he had taken the added name, *Epiphanes*. Put together - Antiochus Epiphanes means *the visible god*. So with this belief and the desire to get rid of Judaism, he goes to the Temple grounds and burns a pig on the altar of animal sacrifices. He then enters the Temple and goes to the room where the ark used to be. In this room, the most holy place, he puts up a statue of the Greek god Zeus. He then goes outside and tells the people it is a statue of himself. Everyone must worship him.



Daniel described this event in Daniel 11:31.

His armed forces, of Antiochus, will rise up to desecrate the Temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. The word *desolation* means that because of the desecration, the Temple is unfit for worship, no one will come and the place will be deserted - desolate.

This action of Antiochus Epiphanes is important to know about, because it is a picture of future events.

In the **New Testament**, Jesus refers to Antiochus and uses the exact phrase - *when you see the abomination that causes desolation, get out of town immediately*. He is telling the apostles, within their lifetime, the Temple will be desecrated and unusable again. It happened in 70 AD, when the Roman armies entered the Temple and then destroyed it. But typical of Jewish writing, there is double meaning. There will be an event, still in our future, when someone like Antiochus will do what he did.

Paul mentions it in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, where he says that Satan's man (Anti-christ) will *set himself up in the Jewish temple, proclaiming himself to be god*.

If we do not know the story of Antiochus Epiphanes, we cannot understand the details and significance of what Jesus and Paul said. The actions of the Romans in the past and Satan's man in the future is based on getting rid of Judaism and all that it represents.

168 - 165 BC

Antiochus Epiphanes and the Syrian Greeks, called the Seleucids, have **control of the Jewish temple** for the next 38 months, starting in 168 BC. They also take **control of the whole land**.

Antiochus destroys the walls that Nehemiah had repaired 300 years earlier.

He kills thousands of the Jews. Women and children are sold into slavery.

All sacred scrolls that are found are burned.

He names a foreigner to be their governor and puts the false high priest back into power.

To make sure that Jewish faith and culture do not survive, Antiochus puts the Jews under Greek laws.

Judaism is outlawed with no more animal sacrifices or Sabbath observance. Circumcision is forbidden.

Anyone reading Jewish Scriptures will be killed.

The Jews must now worship only Greek gods and practice the Greek religion.

Altars to Zeus are built thruout the land.

Many of the Jews see nothing wrong in worshipping Greek gods. Some co-operate out of fear.

But for other Jews, the worship of pagan gods is unthinkable.

Altho they are a small group, they are the *believing remnant*. They will be faithful to God, no matter what.

It takes a year before this remnant can take their stand - 167 BC. An agent of the king arrives in a village 18 miles northwest of Jerusalem. He is there to make every Jewish person offer a sacrifice in worship of Zeus. He offers a reward to the elderly priest, if he will be the first to sacrifice. If the oldest and most respected leader of the village worships Zeus, the rest will do the same.

But **Mattathias** the priest refuses. When another Jew steps forward to offer an animal in honor of Zeus, Mattathias is so horrified he kills the Jew, the king's agent and destroys the altar.

Knowing this will bring certain death, Mattathias, his 5 sons and their families go into hiding in the hills surrounding the village. Soon they are joined by others who want to defend the name of God. From their refuge, Mattathias and his men go out at night, overturn the altars of Zeus and encourage the Jews to follow only the God of Israel. Because of his age and health, Mattathias dies the next year, but one of his sons, Judas, takes over.

Judas and his 4 brothers deliver quick strikes against Syrian fighters stationed thruout the area. Because of these hammer-like blows, Judas is nicknamed *Judas, the Hammer*. In Greek, the word is *Maccabeus*, so he becomes known as Judas Maccabeus. This name will be permanently given to the rest of the brothers and their families.

King Antiochus hears about these attacks. Assuming they are random and small, he sends a small number of troops to deal with the situation. But Judas and his men attack the royal troops and kill them. With this the king knows the rebellion is serious. He sends a bigger army, but Judas defeats them twice. With these victories, Judas goes to Jerusalem and drives the Syrians from the temple.

As priest, he and other priests who are with him, build a new altar and purify the Temple. In 165 BC, after 3 years of desolation, the Temple is now ready to be used.

One final requirement is to light the Temple menorah. According to Jewish tradition, they can only find a one-day supply of sacred oil. It will take 7 more days to make any further sacred oil. But rather than waiting, they decide to light the menorah with the one-day supply and they re-dedicate the Temple. Miraculously, the oil continues to burn for eight days, just long enough for the Jews to consecrate new oil.

The **Jews' survival as a people and culture**

The **freedom to use their Temple**

The **freedom to worship God** openly

All of this is so awesome and such a miracle, that Jewish leaders make it a holiday to be celebrated forever. They call it the **Feast of Dedication** or the **Feast of Lights**.

We know it today as **Hanukkah** - the Hebrew word for *dedication*. The celebration lasts for 8 days. They always have a menorah known as a *hanúkkiah* with 9 branches holding 9 candles. The center candle is taller and is called the *servant candle*. It is used to light the other candles, one each night for each of the 8 days. In doing this, the Jews are reminded forever of God's deliverance and provision.



165 - 142 BC

After gaining their spiritual freedom, God now uses Judas and his brothers to gain political freedom - independence. Over the next 23 years, the 5 brothers will lead volunteer armies against the Syrian Greek troops. Two of the brothers will die in separate battles (Eliezer, John), but 3 will go on to become leaders.

161 BC - Rome recognizes the Jews as an independent state and signs a treaty with them.

160 - 142 BC - Judas is killed, but **Jonathan** his brother takes over. He wins many victories and is named high priest. For 23 years the Jews had been without a legitimate high priest, from 174 – 152 BC. But now they once again have a godly priest as their leader and authority.

During this period, God is using these brothers and their followers to preserve the Jews, their faith and their culture. They take control over more and more territory. Even tho the armies of the enemy are double in size of the Jews' armies, God gives His people miraculous victories. When Daniel talked about this time period, he said,

With flattery, he, king Antiochus, will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. Daniel 11:32

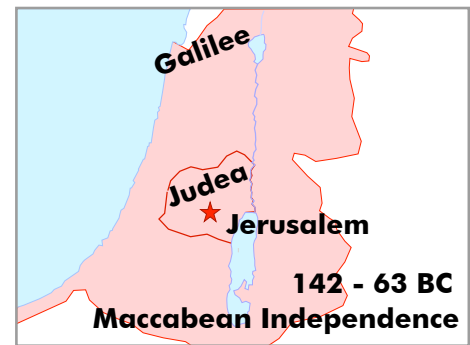
Jonathan leads the Jews for 19 years. When he is tricked and murdered by the Syrians, his brother **Simon** takes over.

142 - 63 BC, the Jews in Israel **gain their independence**.

142 - 135 BC When Simon becomes their leader in 142 BC, the Jews are given their complete independence as a people and nation. They are no longer a part of any Greek empire. This is their first independence from Gentile rule since the days of Nebuchadnezzar, some 450 years earlier.

Simon, as high priest, is such a wonderful and wise ruler, the Jews give him the title, *leader and high priest forever until a trustworthy prophet should arise*. This means, *until the Messiah comes, all our rulers must be a high priest from the direct family line of Simon*.

This is the beginning of the **Asmonean or Hasmonean line of priests**. (Hashmon had been the family name of the great-grandfather of the "Maccabee" brothers. It only continued to Aristobulus II in 36 BC.)



During this time of Maccabean leaders, many of the people and Sanhedrin see the dangers of Hellenism. They now believe Jewish faith and practices should be completely **separated** from Greek ideas and beliefs. They talk so much about being separate, they become known as the **separatists**. The Greek word is **Pharisee**.

From this point onward, Jewish people are always **divided about their identity** - nationally, religiously and culturally.

Those who want **all things Jewish** are considered **Pharisee** in belief - separatists.

They are conservative, wanting separation from Gentile influence.

Jews who are **open to Greek ideas** are **Sadducee** in belief.

They want to be more inclusive in the nation, in religious beliefs and culture. They are Hellenists.

In the **Sanhedrin** - Two-thirds are pro-Jewish *separatists* - Pharisees.

One third are pro-Greek Hellenists - Sadducees.

Simon is the last of the 5 sons of Mattathias. Sadly, he is high priest and leader for only 8 years. Then he and his 2 sons are murdered by a power-hungry son-in-law.

135 - 104 BC

However a 3rd son escapes and takes control. His name is **John Hyrcanus**. Ruling from Jerusalem, he takes control of land in all directions. As high priest, he is the Jews' leader for 29 years until 104 BC. He is the last **godly** leader the Jews will have.

104 - 63 BC

The Jews have 41 more years of independence - from 104 to 63 BC. But they are terrible years, full of murder, family strife and civil war.

When John Hyrcanus dies, his son, **Aristobulus**, takes over as ruler and high priest.

He wants to make sure he stays in power. So he puts his mother in prison and starves her to death.

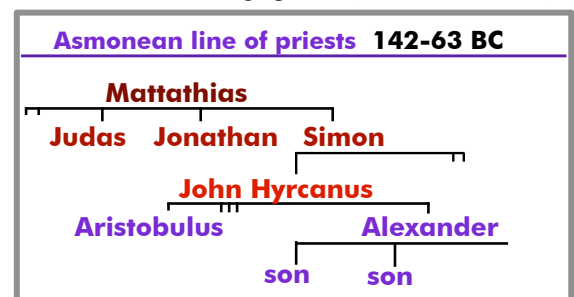
He puts all 4 of his brothers in prison and kills 3 of them.

Remember, this is the high priest - the highest spiritual leader of the Jews. Fortunately he is leader for only one year. Before he can kill his 4th brother, he dies from drink and disease.

His widow frees the 4th brother from prison, marries him and makes him ruler and high priest. (Alexander Jannaeus)

He takes control of the northern province of Galilee. But he cannot control his own province of Judea. He kills 50,000 of his own Jewish people. When he dies in 76 BC, he leaves 2 sons.

Both are determined to be the next high priest and leader of the nation.



63 - 6 BC

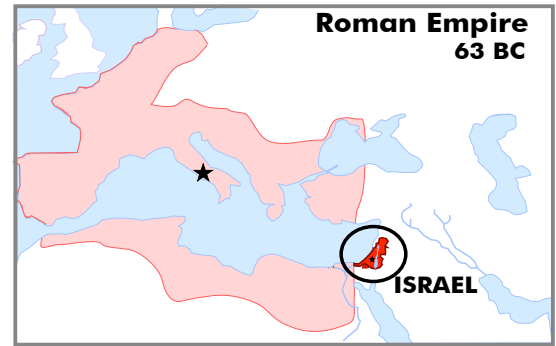
63 BC

By this time, the Romans have come on the scene. They have taken over all of Italy, Greece, northern Africa and are now moving eastward, carving out an empire for themselves. Each of these 2 sons goes to the Roman general in their area.

Each tells the general he will turn over the land of the Jews to the Romans, if the Romans will name him as head priest and put his brother in prison.

General Pompey is more than happy to respond. By getting all the Jewish land under Roman control, he will receive praise and reward from Caesar in Rome. So in 63 BC he attacks Jerusalem, takes control and places one brother as high priest and puts the other in prison. Jewish independence comes to an end because personal power was more important than national freedom.

During the next 20 years, the Romans fight among themselves and the Jews fight among themselves.



47 BC

Julius Caesar becomes head of the Roman empire in 48 BC. There is a man who risked his life for him. As reward, he names him governor or procurator of Judea the following year. This man is an Idumean. Remember, that is the Greek name for the Edomites. The Idumean governor names 2 of his adult sons as governors of other provinces.

37 BC - 4 BC

When the Idumean governor is killed, one of his sons goes to Rome. The Roman senate nominates him to take over his father's job and changes his title from governor to **king** – king over Judea. He begins in 37 BC and wants to keep this appointment for a long time.

This means he will need the support of the Jews. He knows his ancestors, the Edomites, were considered enemies of the Jews and that he is seen as an outsider.

To impress the Jews, he uses Roman money to enlarge the Jewish temple and beautify Jerusalem.

To become an insider, he marries into the family line of the Jewish Maccabean rulers.

He goes to the family line of John Hyrcanus and marries the grand-daughter of one of those 2 sons, (Hyrcanus II). He then names her 17 year-old brother as high priest..

With these actions, this Idumean governor achieves his goal. Because of his building program and the fact he marries a woman of Maccabean descent, many of the Jews now like and support him. As a result, he will be in power for 32 years.

But during these years, every time he thinks a family member is trying to replace him as king, he resorts to murder. He kills 2 of his sons, his wife from the Jewish Maccabean line, her 3 brothers and her mother. It is this man - **HEROD THE GREAT** - that is king of Judea when Jesus is born in Bethlehem.

Herod kills family members because he thinks his position as **king** is threatened. No wonder he reacts when the Magi ask him, *Where is he that is born king of the Jews?* Since he killed his own sons, it is not surprising that he kills all baby boys 2 years and under in the area of Bethlehem.

400 years of history – how it changed the Jews in their nation, faith and culture.

In 400 BC, the situation of the Jews in the days of Ezra and Malachi

The Jews were recognized as a **people** and **nation**.

They were **under** the Persian empire and authority; Aramaic was the common **language**.

Their **spiritual leaders** were governor, high priest and prophets.

The only place for **spiritual instruction** was in Jerusalem on the Temple grounds.

Celebration of the holy days in Jerusalem - only Jews living within the land participated

400 years of history – how it changed the Jews in their nation, faith and culture. (continued)

Changes that came from Ezra's leadership

He confirmed and closed the **Hebrew Canon**.
He started **local synagogues** and the **Sanhedrin**.
Changes continued as the Jews developed these tools.

Changes that came from the various empires.

During Alexander's empire - the Ptolemies and the Seleucids,
Greek became the common language. **Greek ideas, beliefs and culture** became appealing to many.
But it also gave concern to many.
During the time of the Maccabees
Many Jews wanted to remain totally Jewish, **separate** from Gentile or Greek influence.

Changes that were established by New Testament times

Celebration of the holy days in Jerusalem - The Diaspora (dispersed) Jews come to participate
Old Testament **scrolls** for synagogue reading are now in the Aramaic language.
Jews divided into parties based on their **identity**.
Some are pro-Greek or Hellenist Jews.
The majority however, are pro-Jewish with Pharisee - separatist belief.

The Sanhedrin has now developed into 3 branches, plus the high priest making a total of 71

The three branches are: - *the chief priests, scribes and elders*. Mt 16:21

There are **24 chief priests**, known as **The Sadducees**.

They are from the Sadducee party known for their pro-Greek. Hellenists views and beliefs.
They oversee the priests who serve in the Temple and influence who is chosen as high priest.
They are an elite group of priests from several wealthy Jewish families who have bought these positions.

There are **22 scribes** known as **The Scribes or The Teachers of the law**.

They are from the Pharisee party known for their pro-Jewish beliefs - *separatists*.
They are the **teachers** – the “explainers” of the law
They keep alive the expectation of a Messiah.
At first, they explained the 613 laws of God.
Now they spend all their time teaching the *fence* laws - the Mishnah.

There are **24 elders**. These are older members of the Sanhedrin, known as **The Pharisees**.

They also are from the Pharisee party known for their pro-Jewish, separatist beliefs.
They are the **enforcers** of the law.
At first, they were concerned about people breaking **God's** laws.
Now all their attention is focused on the people breaking **Mishnah** laws.
They bring them before the entire Sanhedrin to reprimand, fine or put them in prison.

When Jesus rebukes *the scribes and the Pharisees*,

He is reproving one or more of the Sanhedrin branches.
He is never rebuking the common people.

When He says, *Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees*, he is reproving two branches of the Sanhedrin
The teachers and the enforcers of God's laws or the Mishnah laws.

When the Gospel writers talk about the *chief priests and Pharisees*, it means the entire Sanhedrin.
The scribes and elders are combined as Pharisees, because both are separatists or Pharisee in belief.

When the writers talk about the *Pharisees and Sadducees*,
they are contrasting the pro-Jewish and pro-Greek factions of the Sanhedrin.

During these 400 years of history...

There was unbelievable corruption and evil with the Gentile rulers and even more within Jewish leadership.
In this kind of environment, *How could there be **any** believing remnant when Jesus came to this earth?*

Besides the grace of God, the answer is two-fold.

There was a believing remnant because of the **teachers** in local synagogues
They taught and explained God's Word faithfully and accurately.
They encouraged the people to live godly lives.

There was a believing remnant because the **people** themselves
They studied God's Word on their own
They grew in their knowledge of God
They put that knowledge into practice in their daily lives.
Others who watched them, wanted to spiritually have what these believers had.
And so the believing remnant grew and continued thru the years.

Looking at the evil in the world around us; looking at all the false teaching within the churches, we ask the same question.

*How will there be **any** believing remnant that survives when Jesus returns for us?* The answer is the same.

By sitting under teachers who teach and explain God's Word faithfully and accurately.

By studying God's Word on our own, growing in our knowledge of God and living in such a way that others will come and say, *I want your God to be my God.*

With this, the believing remnant will grow and continue until Jesus returns.

EXTRA INFORMATION FOR THE STUDIOUS AND INQUISITIVE

Idumean Background

The Idumean rewarded by Julius Caesar is **Antipater**. He was procurator of Judea from 47-43 BC.
He named his sons as governors over Galilee (**Herod the Great**) and Jerusalem (Phasael).
He was poisoned in 43 BC.

Herod the Great - son of an Edomite / Idumean father (Antipater) and a Nabatean Arab mother.

He was named governor of Galilee in 47 BC by his father; was named tetrarch of Galilee by Rome in 41 BC

He was forced to flee to Rome in 40 BC because of a civil war

The senate nominated him "king" of Judea and in 37 BC, he began 32 years of ruler-ship

Jewish Background

Jewish High Priests 170's – 160's BC

brother #1 is Onias III who is pro-Jewish

brother #2 is Jason who is pro-Greek

the non-Levite is Menelaus who is from the tribe of Benjamin. He is extreme pro-Greek and an evil man.

Maccabean High Priests 135 – 40 BC

John Hyrcanus had 5 sons: Aristobulus I, Antigonus I,
Alexander Jannaeus, Hezekiah, son unknown

When Aristobulus becomes high priest, he puts the other 4 brothers in prison and later kills 3 of them. He dies from drink and disease.

His wife frees the remaining brother - Alexander Jannaeus,
and marries him

They have 2 sons - Aristobulus II, Hyrcanus II

The son of Aristobulus marries his cousin, the daughter
of Hyrcanus II. Their daughter marries **Herod the Great**

