

The Hellenistic World
 Political & Cultural Background

I. Importance

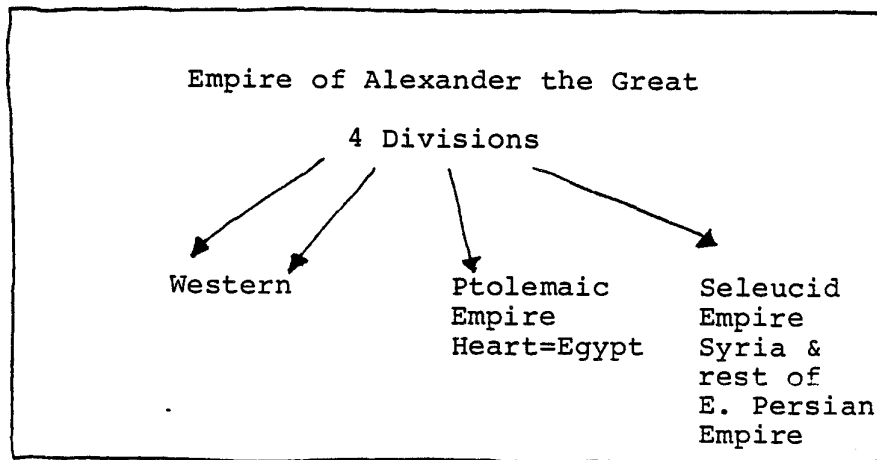
Hellenistic civilization represented the greatest challenge to the restored Jewish community.

II. Political Background

A. Alexander the Great

1. The speed and thoroughness of his conquest of the Persian Empire was unprecedented.
 (No wonder Daniel pictures Alexander as a leopard.)
2. Division of the Empire after his death (323 B.C.)

Eventually, the Empire was organized into 4 divisions (as prophesied by Daniel).



- B. Jews were ruled first by the Ptolemaic Empire and later by the Seleucid Empire.

III. Cultural Background

A. Nature of Hellenistic Culture

1. A fusion of pure Greek culture (Hellenic) with oriental (near eastern) elements.
2. This fusion of Greek and oriental culture was more important to the Seleucid Empire than Ptolemaic Empire. (Reason to be seen in succeeding lectures).
3. Predominantly (90%) Hellenic culture.

B. Result of this cultural fusion was:

1. Creation of the first truly international culture. Throughout the Near East upper class and middle class residents of cities shared a common culture.
 - a. Common Language--Greek (koine)
 - b. Common religion--Greek gods, especially Zeus (sky god) and/or Apollo (sun god)
 - c. Common literary heritage--Greek classics of drama, poetry and philosophy.
 - d. Common political institutions--Those of Greek "polis".
 - e. Common architectural style--especially Corinthian style.
 - f. Common social customs--Greek manner of dress, hairstyle, dietary habits.
2. Establishment of legal and social equality between Conqueror and Conquered (upper and middle classes).
 - a. Unlike previous empires which admitted no foreigners to the privileged class (Assyrian) or which limited those admitted to a few naturalized foreigners (Babylonian) or those with unusual talents or abilities (Persian), the Hellenistic Kingdoms admitted all upper class and middle class residents to the privileged class.

- b. One might have expected the Greeks to be the last to do this since:
 - 1. Greeks considered themselves superior to all other peoples (whom they called barbarians).
 - 2. Greeks during their "Golden Age" had severely limited the granting of citizenship to foreigners who were Greek (not barbarians).

- c. This dramatic reversal of previous behavior is explained by necessity.
 - 1. Too few ethnic Greeks to control and run the cities of the Near East.
 - 2. Too few Greek women, hence intermarriage with upper and middle class native women.
 - 3. Thus, full equality had to be extended to upper and middle class natives.

- d. "Price-tag" for full equality was the adoption of Greek culture by the upper and middle class natives. (inevitable that some oriental elements would be retained; result:
 - a predominantly Hellenic--but not an exclusively Hellenic--culture.)

IV. Impact on the Jews

A. Orientation

As a result of Alexander's Conquest of the Near East and the creation of Hellenistic civilization, Jews became oriented to the West for the first time. This orientation became permanent.

B. Extension of the Diaspora (Communities outside Holy Land)

As a result of the unity of Hellenistic civilization, Jews spread to every major city in the Hellenistic world.

1. This adjustment (living as a cultural-religious minority in a non-Jewish majority culture) helped the Jews survive the later destruction of Jewish national life in Judea. (70 A.D. and 135 A.D.)
 2. The dispersion of the Jews throughout the Hellenistic world helped pave the way for the spread of the Gospel in the 1st century A.D.
 - a. Greek-speaking Jews eventually required a Greek translation of the Old Testament which was read in the synagogue.
 - b. Gentiles attracted to Judaism learned Old Testament promises of the Messiah since scriptures were read and expounded from a Greek text in the synagogue (Paul's first Gentile converts were frequently attendees of the synagogue).
- C. Increased Social Tensions between Jews and Gentiles.
1. In earlier periods, Jews were one of a multitude of different ethno-religious cultural groups in the Near East. Now, the only distinctive group left since the only ones to insist upon perpetuation of their distinctive religious values and practices. (visibility greatly increased)
 2. Jews would not participate in two major activities common to citizens of a Hellenistic city.
 - a. Sons barred from participation in athletics since circumcision was viewed of deliberate destruction of the perfection of beauty - the human body.
 - b. Could not participate in patriotic ceremonies since they were linked to pagan religious practices.

2/24/84

HASMONEANS = MACCABEES
 ↳ FAMILY NAME

I. Identity of the Rebels

Followers of the "resistance movement" to preserve Judaism became known as "Hasidim" (pious ones).

Leadership provided by Mattathias and his five sons--"Maccabees".

Significant leaders: 1. Judah 2. Jonathan 3. Simeon

Sources: 1. I Maccabees 2. II Maccabees 3. Josephus (plagiarized I Maccabees)

II. Why Was the Revolt Successful?

A. God

B. Physical Factors

1. Seleucids unwilling to commit large number of troops (concerns in east--Parthians)
2. Geography aided rebels
3. Divisions among Seleucids
 - Attack following death of Antiochus IV (164) would have destroyed them.
 - Instead religious freedom guaranteed (162) as a result of struggle for control of Seleucid throne.

III. Rise of Hasmoneans to Political Leadership of the Nation

A. Judah

1. Led successful revolt for religious freedom 168-162 B.C.
2. Sought to expand this to political independence.
Died 160 B.C.

B. Jonathan

1. Succeeded Judah as rebel military leader
2. Appointed high priest (152)
3. Expanded Judean territory
Secures recognition of Seleucids - But country still administrative part of Empire -

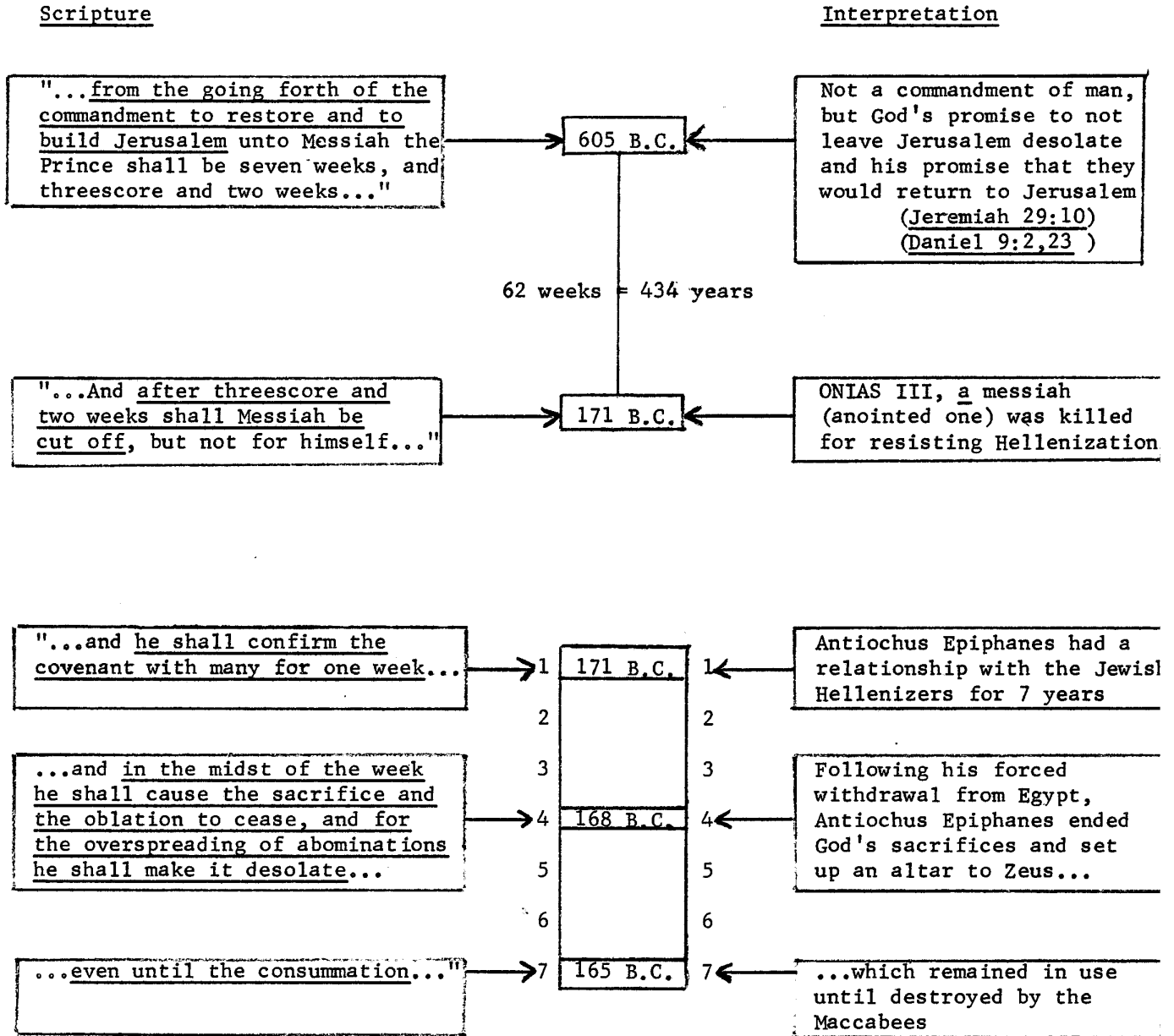
C. Simeon

1. Succeeded Jonathan as rebel leader
2. Secured tax exemption from Seleucids (142) due to Roman support and inter-Seleucid rivalries
3. Recognized by Seleucids as high Priest and ethnarch (140)
Secures important concession in effectual Autonomy - Seleucids had no power of enforcement in Judea -

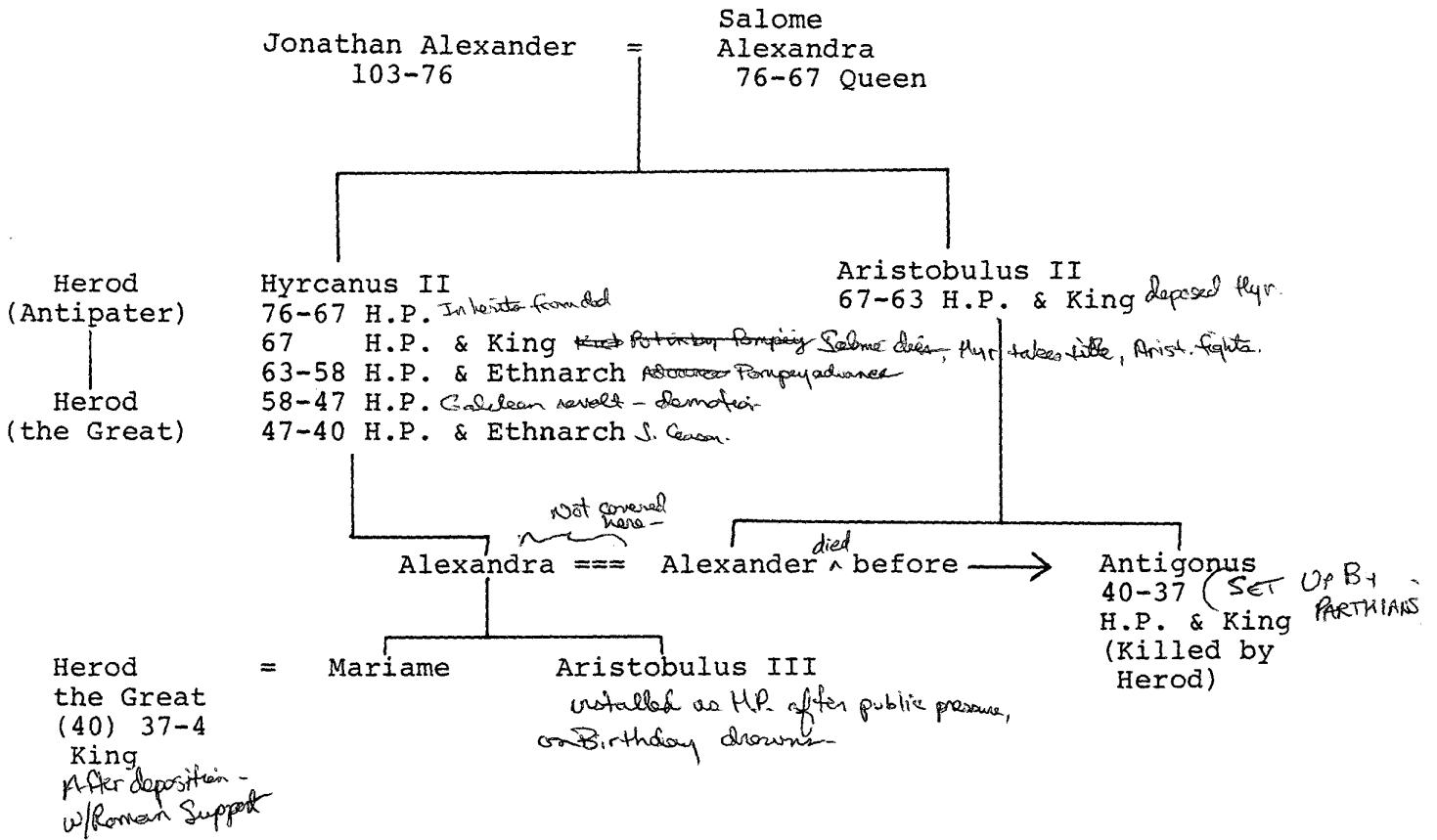
D. Summary

1. Judah--military leader
2. Jonathan a) military leader b) high priest
3. Simeon a) military leader and high priest (religious leader) b) ethnarch (political leader)

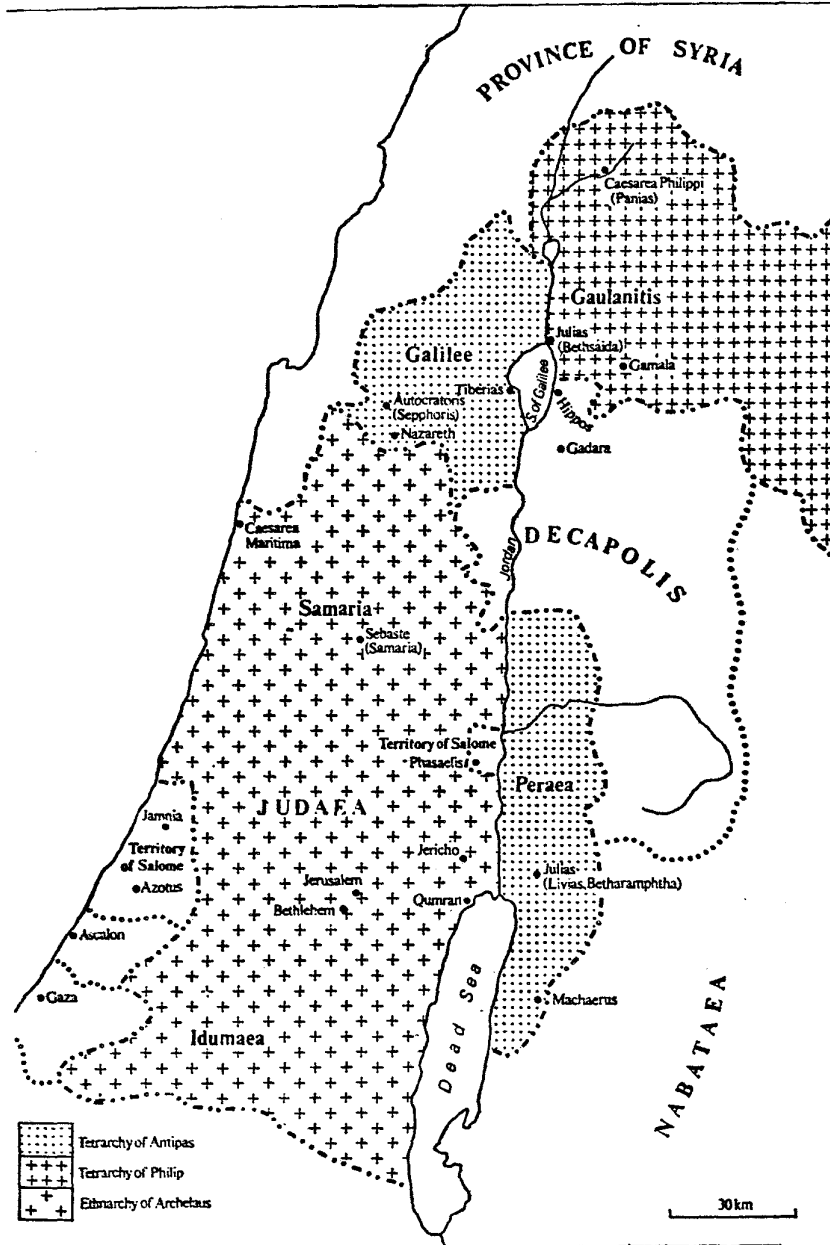
THE 70 WEEKS PROPHECY
Modern-Critical View



DECLINE OF THE HASMONEAN STATE
(Priest Rulers)



JUDEA AFTER HEROD THE GREAT



INFLUENTIAL JEWISH GROUPS
IN THE TIME OF JESUS

