

I stressed on Monday that Luke is the only *non-Jewish* writer in the New Testament.

It is not easy for us...living almost 2,000 years later to fully grasp the importance of this without a bit of explanation.

When God spoke to Moses about leading the children of Israel out of Egypt,

He instructed them to stay away from the foreigners who were living in the land He would give them.

The ancient world was VERY different from our modern world...and God had reasons for wanting the Israelites to remain separate.

I could go into the hideous practices of the ancient people in Canaan...modern-day Palestine, but I do not want to go there today.

God wanted a tribe of people who would be *DIFFERENT*.

The Israelites were fairly consistent in this call by God to separate themselves from the world... and to this day Jewish people get criticized for their tribal mentality.

There is tribalism in every culture...being a tribe is what makes a distinct culture.

...so, while I understand why the Jews get a bad rap, I do not agree with that view.

I am about to give you THE MAIN historical context for the New Testament period.

Some of you have heard some of this before, but others have not...

Flavius Josephus, 37 – 100 AD cir.

- *History of the Jews*
- *History of the War [against Rome]*

1-2 *Maccabees* – circa 100BC

(in what we call *The Apocrypha* which sits between the Old and New Testaments in some versions of the Bible.)

We learn these things through the Jewish Historian Josephus and the Books of *Maccabees* in the Apocrypha, writings that sit in between the Old and New Testaments in some Bibles.

When Alexander the Great was taking over the world something unusual happened when he arrived in Jerusalem....

Josephus gives us a fantastic story...  
I need to keep moving so I will not tell it now.

But Alexander the Great had a dream about Israel and when he arrived in Jerusalem rather than going to war...

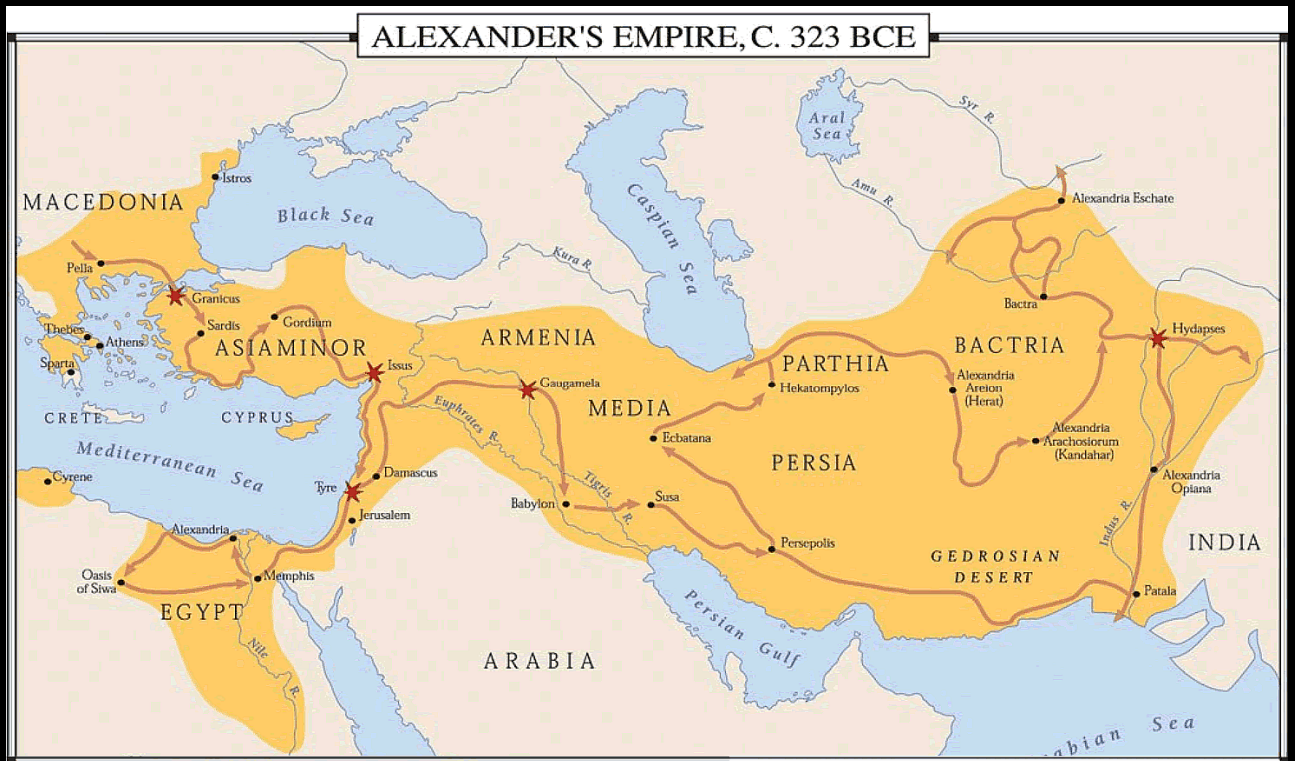
he offered peace and self-rule to Israel. The only thing he asked was that the priests make sacrifices for him and pray for him.

He also offered any Jewish man who wanted to join his army the chance to do so...many joined Alexander's army.

Around 150 years later the Romans granted Israel with the same self-rule in honor of Alexander the Great.

The Jews would offered the same sacrifices and prayers for the Roman Caesar.

So...This was the extent of Alexander's kingdom.



As he conquered, Alexander imposed the Greek language and culture on every nation. When he died his generals basically declared themselves "King" over the region they were leading.



For our purpose we are only looking at the kingdoms that were in Egypt and in Syria...around 180 BC.

You can see that Israel sits right in between two much larger kingdoms.

These two kingdoms were consistently at odds and both wanted Israel to side with them.

The leadership of Israel tried to stay neutral.

The Seleucid Empire to the North finally attacked and subdued the Empire in Egypt.

In 168BC The King Antiochus Epiphanes decided to take over Israel.

[ Some of the Jews believed that the Samaritans sided with the Seleucids. Most scholars do not think this happened, but some of the Jews certainly believed it. ]

Antiochus tried to force the Jews to become "Greek."

- banned Sabbath worship
- banned the Temple sacrifices
- sacrificed a pig on the altar
- set up a statute of Zeus

Thousands of Jews died during this first phase of persecution.

Finally, a significant family, the Maccabees, rose up in rebellion to fight against the King.

This led to the famous Maccabean Wars against the Seleucid Empire...  
and the Maccabees were successful.

The Maccabees became national heroes for the Jews.

The popularity of Maccabean names in the first century, during the time of Jesus illustrates how much influence this time period had...

Something like 50% of the population in first century Judea were given 12 names  
(all from the Maccabean families).

We will see as we continue to look at NT passages how this struggle against "Greek" influence and conflict was part of early Christianity.

There was an ongoing struggle in Israel with the changing of the world around them.

Traditionalists - Jews who spoke Aramaic and tried to keep the Law of Moses

Hellenists [Greek] - Jews around the Empire who spoke Greek - did not speak Hebrew/Aramaic

Due to the prior exiles and wars Jews were spread all around the Roman Empire.

At least 1/2 million Jews lived in Egypt in the first century.

At least 100,00 Jews lived in Rome.

These "Hellenistic" Jews did NOT speak Aramaic...

They spoke Greek.

The OT had been translated into Greek so these Jews could hear the Law of Moses read in their synagogues around the Roman Empire.

This Greek translation was done cir. 280-240BC.

The tradition was that it had been translated by 70 of the greatest Jewish scholars of the day.

That is why it is referred to as LXX – The Septuagint.  
THIS is the OT that all the NT writers quote from...  
NOT from the Hebrew text.

Even though the LXX was done so Jews could  
continue to worship the LORD God...

the Judean Jews...those who kept the Hebrew culture  
alive...did not like these Hellenized Jews.

This divide in the Jewish population was most  
apparent during Holy Days and Festivals when Jews  
from all over the Empire would come to Jerusalem.

You would have a huge influx of Greek-speaking  
Jews, dressed a bit differently...unable to speak  
Aramaic fluently...with accents that made it clear that  
they were *Hellenized*.

The Hebrew speaking Jews did not want the Greek  
speaking Jews to even come into the Temple.

They had synagogues built for these Greek speaking  
Jews...probably in part, to keep them out of the  
Temple.

This is WHY this text from Acts 10 is so important.  
We see in THIS text – the issue of Hellenization  
caused problems in the early Christian movement.



The Great Commission was:  
"Take this Gospel to the Whole World"

Ok. Let's get back to our text.

v47 "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water."

We asked WHY would he even say this?

Next, let's read the beginning of Ch 11:

1 The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, **the circumcised believers** criticized him 3 and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."

Who are "the circumcised believers?"

But Peter and the other disciples are Jews? Why are they called by this name?

Remember what Peter said to the whole group in the house of Cornelius? This is Acts 10:28:

Peter said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile..."

I think he had some in his group who he KNEW were likely to be hesitant to enter into the house of Gentiles...esp a Roman soldier!

In Ch 11 Peter  
(who we thought was THE Leader of the church)  
has to recount the whole story...

and it appears in v18 that these circumcised believers  
were convinced.

Unfortunately, this is not the last time these  
"circumcised believers" are going to raise objections  
with Gentiles coming to Christ.

#### QUESTIONS:

- No need to write anything...yet
- At 1pm your readings for Friday will be displayed
- You will need to read several sections for Friday
  - + please take notes
  - + write down your questions

We are going to wrap up this vital subject on Friday.  
That does not mean we will never see it again, but  
Friday will be the conclusion of this  
INTRODUCTION to the Problem of Hellenization.