

# NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY - A SHORT OUTLINE OF THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD\*

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## Abstract

The roughly 400 years between the writings of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the Christian Scriptures (New Testament) are marked by political and religious changes which provide the formative context for the writings of the New Testament.

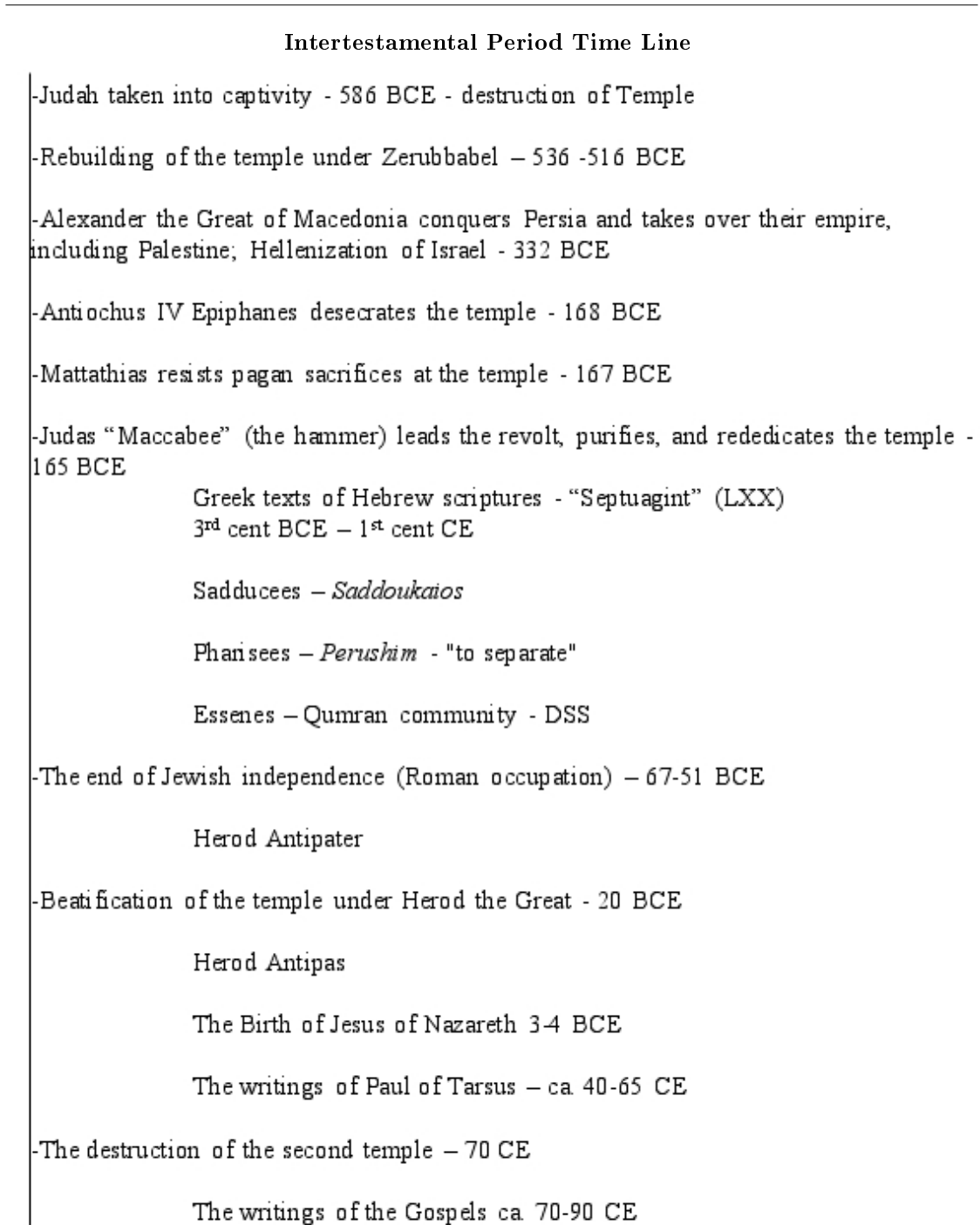
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# 1 A Short Outline of the Intertestamental Period

## 1.1



**Figure 1:** This time is also known as the Second Temple Period, due to the rebuilding of the Temple of Solomon after 586 BCE.

There is considerable debate as to the dating of the Gospel documents since there is scant internal or external evidence as to when they were written. Some NT scholars would argue that the Gospel of Mark's references to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 BCE is indication that the Gospels were written after this historical event. Others would argue that Mark's accounts are prophetic and therefore the Gospels were written before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

Another reason as to date the Gospels later than sooner is that the first Christians believed the return of Jesus was imminent. Not until the church was under persecution and the first apostles, who held first hand testimony of Jesus' life, started dying did the church find it important to write down these narratives. Similarly, the writings of Paul of Tarsus were penned out of necessity, but Paul disseminated his letters early because of his need to communicate his experience of the risen Christ in order to benefit the first churches.

Most NT scholars would agree that Paul of Tarsus wrote the core of his material (known as the *Hauptbriefe*: Romans, Galatians, 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians) before the writing of the Gospels. There is very little material in the Pauline letters that take their source directly from the Gospels. An exception is the narration of the last supper of Jesus and his statements regarding the bread and cup (1 Cor. 11). All three, synoptic Gospels contain this event. However, Paul's version is slightly edited and may indicate that this was one of the first Christian traditions of the early church. Of the non-disputed letters, most scholars see 1 Thessalonians as the earliest Christian writing.