

MATTHEW

Preparation

Matthew 3:1-12

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PREPARATION FOR THE MESSIAH

- **The Intertestamental Period (400 BC - AD 25) - this is the era between the last prophet of the Old Testament (Malachi) to the ministry of John the Baptist**
 - Persian Rule (539-332 BC) - the Persians allowed the Jews a measure of freedom.**
 - Hellenization of the world (332-167 BC) -Alexander the Great conquered the Persians and he "Hellenized" the world. Greek culture and Greek language spread across the empire.**
 - Seleucid Empire - One of the divisions of the Greek Empire led by one of Alexander's generals. The region of Israel and surrounding area was ruled and Hellenized by the Seleucids.**
 - Antiochus Epiphanes - In 169 BC, he launched an attack on the Jews in Israel. He entered Jerusalem and offered up pagan sacrifices in the Temple.**
 - Judas Maccabeus - 167 BC - he led a revolt against the Seleucids. Eventually, the Maccabees (Hasmoneans) defeated the enemy and won the independence of the Jewish State. The Temple was cleansed and re-dedicated (Hanukkah), the Greek statues were removed from Jerusalem, and the Jews ruled themselves through the priesthood.**
 - Roman Rule - In AD 67, the Roman general, Pompey, conquered the Seleucid empire, including Israel. Israel had endured a civil conflict between two competing priests - Hyrcanus and Aristobulus (brothers). Eventually, Pompey would side with Hyrcanus.**
 - Antipater was the chief of staff for Hyrcanus. He won the favor of Mark Antony and Octavian (Caesar Augustus). His**

son was Herod! Eventually, Caesar Augustus would choose to work with Herod and allowed Herod to become King of Israel --- even though he was an Idumean and not Jewish.

- **Roman Rule - Greek Culture:** By the time of the first century, Rome was securely in power. Rome built roads, established means of citizenship across the Empire, embraced the language of Greek, instituted Pax Romana, a central legal system, and an empire-wide identity.
- **Galatians 4:4 -** “in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman . . .”
- **Matthew** has used the first two chapters of his Gospel to clearly set forth the clear identification of Jesus of Nazareth to be the long-anticipated Messiah.
- **Matthew 3 -** The Intertestamental Period ends! God sent a prophet, a forerunner, John the Baptist, to announce the arrival of The Kingdom of Heaven/God!

JOHN THE BAPTIST

- All 4 Gospels mention the ministry of John the Baptist.
- John the Baptist announced the launching of the Kingdom of Heaven/God.
- Matthew presents John the Baptist as the fulfilment of prophecy.
- John was associated with the prophetic and Mosaic connections to the wilderness.
- John’s message was both repentance and eschatological.
- John’s primary role was to prepare Israel for the coming Messiah.