

Men in Christ: "To The Hebrews"

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The scroll we call Hebrews is written during the final years of Second Temple Judah - or the last days of the religion of Israel and the beginning days of the birth of the two NEW daughter religions - Christianity and Judaism.

Our goal for the next few weeks is to explain how we got to where we are from where we began. We seek to understand the world of the Bible so we can read it and understand it correctly.

Israeli (Jewish) History

1. The nomad Hebrews and the tribal God
2. The enslavement era in Egypt
3. The migration and immigration era
4. The age of charismatic leaders
5. Kingdom period
 - a. Early kings (united kingdom)
 - b. Israel and Judah
6. The second exile - Babylon - ends in Ezra & Nehemiah regulations
7. The age of Greek culture
 - a. Restoration and the Hasmonean
 - b. Herodian Roman domination

David conquered Jerusalem by defeating the Jebusites in 1052 (1006) BCE (1 Chronicles 11:4-9), nearly 3000 years ago. After David's death, Solomon (in 1015 BC/BCE) began to "build a house for the name of the Lord" (2 Chronicles 2:1). It took seven years and 183,300 men to build it (1 Kings 5:13-16; 6:38). It measured nearly 90 feet in length, 30 feet in width and 45 feet in height (1 Kings 6:2). The Holy Of Holies occupied one-third of the interior space, and the rest was called the Holy Place. The complete details are described in 1 Kings 6 & 7.

Israel was divided after Solomon's death (979 BCE). The kingdom of Israel was in the north, while Judea was in the south. Jerusalem was the capital of Judea (the Southern Kingdom). It was to be ruled by a succession of twenty kings from 979 BCE to 586 BC. Their reigns lasted from as short as three months (Jehoahaz and Jehoiachim) to as long as fifty-five years (Manasseh). The disheartening history of the declines of Judea is told in 1 Kings 12:1-2, 2 Kings 25:30, and 2 Chronicles 10:1-36:21.

Jerusalem was entirely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in October 586 BCE. The city and the Holy Temple were completely demolished and the articles of the Temple and its treasures were carried off to Babylon. The inhabitants that were not killed were also taken to Babylon. Jerusalem was to lie desolate for seventy years in order that the land might enjoy its Sabbaths (2 Chronicles 36:17-21/Leviticus 26:34).

Seventy-one years later in 539 BCE, Cyrus king of Persia, issued a proclamation to rebuild the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, a total of 42,360 people returned to Jerusalem and Judea to help rebuild the Temple, not including slaves and the musicians. Over the next four centuries, the Jews knew varying degrees of self-rule under the Persians (538-333 BCE) and later Hellenistic/Greeks (Ptolemaic and Seleucid - 332-142 BCE). In 167 BCE, the Jews were prohibited to practice Judaism and their Temple was desecrated with idols as part of an effort to impose Greek-oriented culture and customs on the entire population; the Jews rose in revolt (166 BCE). First led by Mattathias of the priestly Hasmonean family and then by his son Judah the Maccabee; the Jews subsequently entered Jerusalem and purified the Temple (164 BCE). This created the festival of Hanukkah. Under the Hasmonean dynasty, which lasted about 80 years, the kingdom regained boundaries not far short of Solomon's realm; political consolidation under Jewish rule was attained and Jewish life flourished. A conflict between ruling family members invited the Romans in to make peace and Jewish independence ended until 1948 CE.

RETURN OF PAGAN (ROMAN) RULE
(63 BC E - 313 CE - THEN CHRISTIAN/BYZANTINE ROMAN)

A last attempt to restore the former glory of the Hasmonean dynasty was made by Mattathias Antigens, whose defeat and death brought Hasmonean rule to an end (40 BC), and the Land became a province of the Roman Empire.

In 37 BCE, Herod, a son-in-law of Hyrcanus II, was appointed King of Judea by the Romans. Granted almost unlimited autonomy in the country's internal affairs, he became one of the most powerful monarchs in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. A great admirer of Greco-Roman culture, Herod launched a massive construction program, which included the cities of Caesarea and Sebaste and the fortresses at Herodium and Masada. He also remodeled the Temple into one of the most magnificent buildings of its time. But despite his many achievements, Herod failed to win the trust and support of his Jewish subjects.

Ten years after Herod's death (4 BCE), Judea came under direct Roman administration. Growing anger and unrest against increasing Roman suppression of Jewish life resulted in sporadic violence which escalated into a full-scale revolt in 66 CE. Superior Roman forces led by Titus were finally victorious, razing Jerusalem to the ground (70 CE) and defeating the last Jewish outpost at Masada (73 CE).

Although the Temple had been destroyed and Jerusalem burned to the ground, the Jews and Judaism survived the encounter with Rome. The supreme legislative and judicial body, the Sanhedrin (successor of the Knesset Hagedolah) was reconvened in Yawned (70 CE), and later in Tiberius and Sepphoris. Without the unifying framework of a state and the Temple, the small remaining Jewish community gradually recovered, reinforced from time to time by returning exiles. Institutional and communal life was renewed, priests were replaced by rabbis and the synagogue became the focus of the Jewish communities. *Halakhah* (Jewish religious law) served as the common bond among the Jews and was passed on from generation to generation. This is the birth of modern Judaism - the successors of the Pharisees.

	Pre-exilic Israel	Second Temple Judaism
Name	Israelites	Jews
Language	Hebrew	Aramaic and Greek
Social Structure	Tribal	Clan
World view	Simplistic	Dualistic
Identity	Nationality	Religion
Cultist	Temple/priest/sacrifice	Add: book/prayer/synagogue
Social Orientation	Corporate	More individual
Justice	Divine justice rendered in this age	Justice rendered in next age; afterlife, resurrection, angels; good and evil forces within individuals
God	Immanent	Transcendent
Leadership	Kings and prophets	Priests primary scribes (authority based on knowledge of scripture) others: seers, healers, holy men