

Intertestamental Time

Intertestamental Time The prophet Daniel saw a vision portraying four successive kingdoms, likened to four beasts, that would rule the ancient Near East (Dan. 7:2-12; cf. 2:31-43). The first beast, the lion, had already arrived with the Babylonians. Next to come were the Medo-Persians (the bear). The Persians completed their domination of Anatolia in 546 B.C. when Cyrus defeated the famous Lydian king Croesus. Sardis now became the capital of a Persian satrapy. Alexander the Great was the Macedonian leopard who next appeared on the scene. He is also described as a one-horned goat in Daniel 8:5–8. Alexander's first defeat of the Persians occurred at Granicus River in northeastern Turkey in 334 B.C. A year later at Issus Alexander routed the Persian king Darius III, thus securing Greek control of Anatolia. Following Alexander's death (323 B.C.) his kingdom broke into four parts, each ruled by one of his generals (Dan 8:8; 11:3–4). Daniel 11 tells the prophetic history of this subsequent period, focusing on the two eastern dynasties—the Seleucids and the Ptolemies. The Ptolemaic kingdom, based in Egypt, had little subsequent bearing on Anatolian history except for its final ruler Cleopatra. In 41 b.c. she had a historic meeting with Mark Antony at Tarsus. Eleven years later, after the pair were defeated by Octavian (Augustus), Cleopatra committed suicide. After Seleucus I defeated Antigonos at Ipsus in 301 B.C., he and his heirs began their domination of much of Anatolia for nearly 150 years. In 300 Seleucus founded Antioch, which became the capital of his western kingdom. Alexander's legacy in the region cannot be overemphasized. Hellenistic religion and culture were introduced throughout Anatolia. Greek became the common language of the eastern Mediterranean and the language in which the New Testament was written. The Seleucids built hundreds of cities across Anatolia, and in many of these established a Jewish population. Josephus records how in 210 B.C. Antiochus III resettled 2000 Jewish families in Phrygia and Lydia. So by the 2nd century B.C. Jews were dispersed throughout Anatolia (hence the term Diaspora or Dispersion; cf. 1 Peter 1:1). 1 Maccabees 15:23 records a decree issued by the Romans that countries including Myndos, Caria, Pamphylia, Lycia, Halicarnassus, Phaselis, and Side should guarantee the safety and rights for all Jews under their rule. During this period St. Paul's family came to live in Tarsus. Daniel's final kingdom was represented by Rome. In 190 B.C. the Romans defeated Antiochus III at Magnesia on the Meander (Dan 11:18); the iron beast with its ten horns had arrived. In 133 B.C. Attalus II bequeathed his kingdom of Pergamum to the Romans, and four years later Asia was established as the first Roman province in Anatolia. This political beast out of the sea (cf. Rev. 13:1–3) likewise had a religious component (cf. Rev. 13:11–17). Although Alexander had been the first to receive worship as a living "god," it was the Romans who institutionalized the practice through the imperial cult. In 29 B.C. Augustus authorized the construction of the first Anatolian temples for the imperial cult at Pergamum and Nicomedia. Smyrna became the temple keeper (Greek neokoros) for the second imperial cult temple in Asia (a.d. 26). Imperial cult temples were also established in the province of Galatia at Ancyra (A.D. 19/20), Pessinus (20s), and Pisidian Antioch (30s). Ephesus became "twice neokoros" (cf. Acts 19:35) when Domitian built a Flavian temple of the Sebastoi ("Revered Ones") in the city in A.D. 89/90. The temple at Ankara is still standing and adjoins the famous Haci Bayram mosque. Its walls are inscribed in Latin and Greek with one of the most important inscriptions preserved from antiquity, the Res Gestae. These are the deeds of Augustus done during his reign as the first emperor of Rome. Roman rule in Anatolia extended as far east as the Euphrates River. There a series of forts was built at key fords along the river. Hence in the Book of Revelation the enemy armies are always gathered on the east bank of the Euphrates (Rev. 9:14; 16:12).