

GREEKS

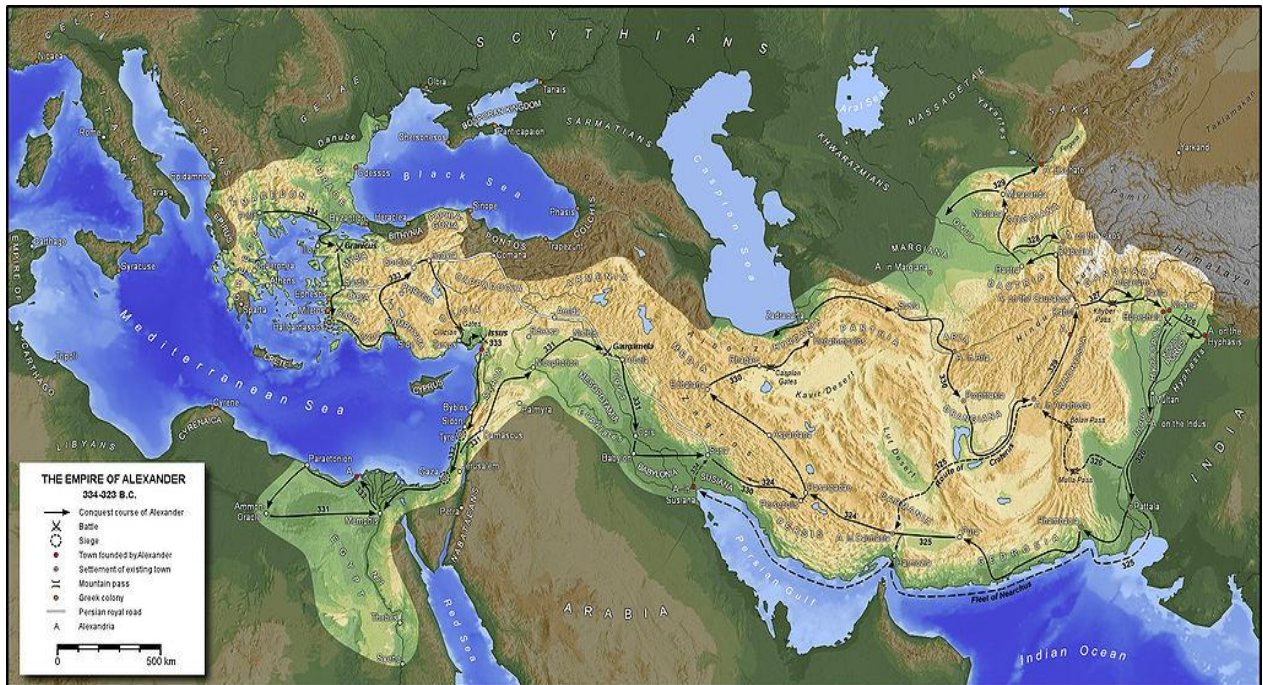
The Greeks had profound influence far beyond the borders of what is present-day Greece. Greek civilization was based upon achievements in philosophy, education, literature and art. One of the primary periods of Greek influence was the Hellenistic period, which lasted from Alexander the Great to the rise of the Roman Empire. Alexander the Great was one of the most prominent Greeks during this time.



(Alexander the Great in battle against the Persians)ⁱ

Through the war efforts of Alexander the Great, ending around 323 BC, the Greek empire and culture expanded considerably. The Persian rule in Palestine came to an end through the conquest of the Greeks led by Alexander in 331 BC. The Greek empire would last until the Roman conquests. During the Hellenistic period, Greeks enjoyed a vast amount of land that spread from Macedonia and Egypt all the way to India.ⁱⁱ See below.

Greek Empire – 323 BC



Through the conquests of Alexander the Great, led to steady emigration of Greeks to many other regions of world including Palenstine, Egypt and Syria, spreading Greek culture. For Christianity, one of the most indirect contributions of Alexander the Great was that his military success would set the stage for the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire.

Upon the death of Alexander in 323, the Greek empire was divided among five generals of Alexander. From these, two generals emerged to control the vast majority of the Greek empire, Ptolemy I Soter and Seleucus I Nicator. Ptolemy I Soter and his successors ruled from 323-30 BC (the “Ptolemies”). Seleucus I Nicator and his successors ruled from 305-125 (the “Seleucids”).

Division of Alexander's Empire – 275BCⁱⁱⁱ



PTOLEMITES

Ptolemies primarily ruled the area of present-day Egypt. Ptolemite culture was heavily Hellenistic, and Jews had a lot of influence in the Ptolemite kingdom. The Hellenized and pagan culture of the Ptolemies was often met with resistance by the Jews, who began to be punished for their beliefs under King Antiochus IV. In the book of Daniel, the Jews were punished by the Ptolemies for following Jewish traditions and for not giving into the pagan and Hellenized culture of the Ptolemies. One punishment of the Jews was to be trampled to death by elephants. The Ptolemies were the chief rival of the Seleucids. Being located primarily in Egypt, the Ptolemies were constantly warring over Palestine and Syria because these areas were passageways in time of drought and bad harvests. Despite their Hellenized culture, the Ptolemies made a number of contributions to Christianity including the preservation of scripture texts by Ptolemite scribes. In addition, the Ptolemies translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (Septuagint) under Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC). Books of Daniel, Wisdom, Sirach, and Maccabees were written during this time between the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC. The Ptolemies ruled Palestine from 323 to 198. It was during this period that great Jewish communities in Egypt, particularly Alexandria, were founded, and the translation of the Old Testament into Greek was undertaken. The fall of the Ptolemies can be seen in the books of Daniel and Maccabees and began with King Ptolemy IV, who was overly ambitious in his quest to conquer the Seleucids. Angers were directed towards the Jews, and eventually the Ptolemic kingdom became deeply divided and was no longer posed a serious threat to the Seleucids.



(Ptolemy I Soter- first ruler)

SELEUCIDS

The Seleucian civilization consisted of nine major cities and it was the Emperor Seleucus I Nicator who was responsible for building these nine cities. Only 4 of these cities are mentioned in the Bible, and these four cities include Seleucia in Syria, Mesopotamia, Cilicia, and Palestine. The Seleucids were able to gain control of Palestine from the Ptolemies in 198 and ruled until 142. The Seleucids were far less open to the Jewish faith than the Persians. The Seleucid ruler Antiochus demanded that the Jewish people take part in pagan sacrifices. Antiochus also desecrated the temple in Jerusalem through unclean sacrifices. This poor treatment led to the Jewish revolt led by the Maccabees that was able to obtain Jewish independence from the Seleucids in 142. The fall of the Seleucid Empire began when two rival kings claimed to be the ruler of the kingdom. Eventually a civil war occurred, and the Seleucian kingdom is then conquered by the Roman general Pompey around 30 BC.



(Coin of Seleucus I Nicator-first ruler)

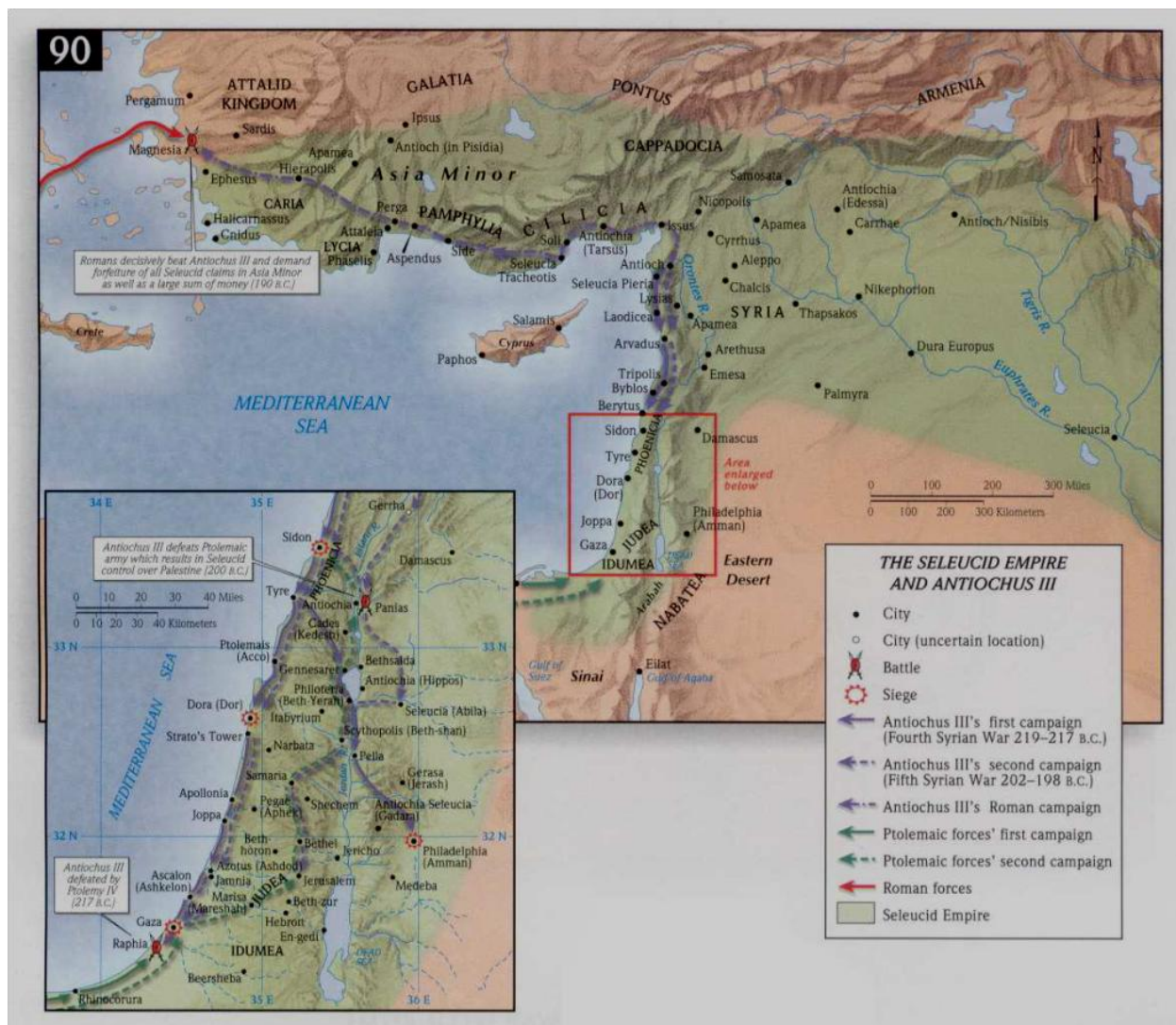
GREEK EMPIRE	
Alexander the Great (356-323)	
Seleucid Dynasty (305-125 BC)	Ptolemy Dynasty (323-30 BC)
Rulers of Seleucid Dynasty (Reign)^{iv}	Rulers of Ptolemy Dynasty (Reign)^v
Seleucus I Nicator (305-280)	Ptolemy I Soter (323-283)
Antiochus I Soter (280-261)	Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246)
Antiochus II Theos (261-246)	Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221)
Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226)	Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203)
Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223)	Ptolemy V Epiphanes(203-181)
Antiochus III the Great (223-187)	Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-145)
Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175)	Ptolemy VII Euergetes II Physcon (145-116)
Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163)	Ptolemy VIII Soter II Lathyrus (116-108)
Antiochus V Eupator (163-161)	Ptolemy IX Alexander (108-88)
Demetrius I Soter (161-150)	Ptolemy X Alexander II (80)
Alexander Balas (150-145)	Ptolemy XI Auletes (80-51)
Demetrius II Nicator (145-138)	Ptolemy XII & Cleopatra VII (51-48)
Antiochus VI Dionysius (145-142)	Ptolemy XIII & Cleopatra VII (47-44)
Antiochus VII Sidetes (138-128)	Ptolemy XIV Caesar & Cleopatra VII (44-30)
Demetrius II Nicator (128-125)	

**PALESTINE UNDER
THE PTOLEMIES**

- City
 - City (uncertain location)
 - ▲ Mountain peak
- JUDEA Hellenistic province
- ← Journey of Zenon, 260/59 B.C.

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ⁱ The photo and map (empire of Alexander) under the Greeks section are from Wikipedia, Alexander the Great. The photo under the Ptolemites section is from Wikipedia, Ptolemy. The photo under the Seleucids is from Wikipedia, Seleucid Empire.

ⁱⁱ Text under the Greeks, Ptolemites and Seleucids sections include text by Thomas Grafsgaard, Introduction to Sacred Scripture – 2008, “The Greeks” at Coriesu, www.coriesu.org.

ⁱⁱⁱ Maps no. 88, 89 and 90 are from the *Bible Atlas*, Access Foundation, edited by Zaine Ridling, Ph.D.

^{iv} John L. McKenzie, S.J., *Dictionary of the Bible* (Macmillan Publishing Company, First Touchstone Edition 1995), 784-785.

^v John L. McKenzie, S.J., *Dictionary of the Bible* (Macmillan Publishing Company, First Touchstone Edition 1995), 706.