

Filling in the Gap Between the Old Testament and New Testament

With Nehemiah and Malachi closing out the Old Testament, it begs the question what happened in the period between the Old and New Testaments. 400 years is a long time and the world was very different in the books of the 4 gospels compared to where the Old Testament left off. But this 'time of silence' as it's often called paved the way for the coming of Christ.

What do you know about history from 400BC to 1AD?

In Daniel 7, Daniel predicted that the empire that overthrew Babylon, Persia, would split into two, the Medio-Persian empire and then be conquered by another empire. This was Alexander the Great. The Jewish historian Josephus tells of when Alexander went out to conquer Syria and Egypt and desired to conquer Jerusalem along the way. Jerusalem received word of this and a priest by the name of Jaddua went out to meet him.

Read Nehemiah 12:22

This is the same Jaddua mentioned in Nehemiah 12:22. When the two met on the road to Jerusalem, Alexander was astonished because he had had a vision sometime before of an old man dressed in a white robe who would reveal something important to him. Here was Jaddua dressed in a white robe and he read the prophecy of Daniel to him. This prophecy spoke to Alexander as he recognized himself in the words of Daniel. He promised that Jerusalem would be spared.

Daniel 11 speaks of a great conflict that would follow the reign of Alexander. After the death of Alexander in 323 BC, his generals divided his empire into four kingdoms. Ptolemy took Egypt and the north African countries and Seleucus took Syria. Palestine fell between these two generals and for the next 100 years would be in the middle of conflicts between these two kingdoms. It suffered greatly during this time. The Daniel 11 prophecy is uncannily accurate in its description of this time period. This would also set the stage for Jerusalem being constantly in the midst of conflict and would become one of the most ravaged, destroyed, rebuilt and conquered cities to ever exist, changing hands at least 27 times in recorded history.

During this turmoil, Palestine succumbs greatly to Grecian influence. A new sect of Jews arises called Hellenistic Jews who are more liberal with how they follow Gods laws. Those who resisted the Grecian persuasion and tried to preserve the Mosaic order became known as Hebrew nationalists or Pharisees. The word 'Pharisees' means 'to separate'. This split in the views of Hebrew law caused the Pharisees to become strong advocates for the letter of the law. They were rigid and staunch advocates of the law even to the point of missing the spirit of the law. The Hellenists became known as the Sadducees. They did not adhere to the letter of the law, but they also ceased to believe in the supernatural. This conflict would continue well into the new testament.

When was the bible first translated?

In 284 BC, a group of 70 scholars were called together by one of the Ptolemies to translate the Hebrew scriptures into Greek. This became known as the Septuagint which means 70 due to the number of translators. This is the first time the Bible had been translated into a different language.

Around 200 BC, Antiochus the Great came into power in Syria and took Palestine from Egypt. After the death of Antiochus and then the death of his oldest son, the younger son Antiochus Epiphanes, or Antiochus IV, became king and became one of the most vicious persecutors of Jews that had ever existed. The book of Daniel foresaw him as a contemptible person and vile king. He ended the priesthood of Aaron and then sold the priesthood to a man named Jason who was the first high priest not of Aaron. Jason's brother then bought the priesthood from the king and overthrew his brother as high priest. He then began to sell some of the temple artifacts, and this began the deterioration of the temple and priesthood. Antiochus IV proceeded to invade Egypt and during the battle that ensued a report came out that Antiochus had been killed. This report made it to Jerusalem where the Jews celebrated and overthrew their captors. The report of the death of Antiochus turned out to be false, however, and when he heard this he returned to Jerusalem in a fury. He recaptured the city in a bloody, one-sided battle and then did the unthinkable to the Jews: He defiled the temple. Antiochus entered the Holy of Holies, destroyed the scrolls of the law and then sacrificed a sow, an unclean animal, on the altar. He made a broth with the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled it over everything in the temple. In Daniel 8:14, Daniel said the sanctuary would be polluted for 2300 days. Exactly 2300 days after this event, the temple was cleansed under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus. He was of the priestly line and led a revolt against the Syrian king. They were able to fend off their captors once again and that day is remembered in Jewish history as the Feast of Dedication. This is also known as Hanukkah. Thus, Judas Maccabaeus came into power and began the Asmonean Dynasty. The Maccabees ruled this dynasty for roughly 4 generations as priests in Jerusalem. Because of the constant strife that occurred in Jerusalem and the surrounding regions, they sought allies and made a league with a new and rising power in the West known as Rome.

This treaty would not last, however. Rome watched as the Asmoneans and a rivaling governor name Antipater, a descendant of Esau, battled over the territory. Rome saw the battle was taking its toll on both sides, but when Antipater bribed Rome for help, Rome conquered Jerusalem and named Antipater the 'King of the Jews'. After Antipater passed away his son, Herod the Great, became king.

Keys to the new testament:

- Crucifixion is first recorded in history used by Darius, king of Persia, to end a revolt by the Babylonians. This would become the preferred method of the Romans for dealing death to slaves, prisoners and opposing forces.
- The Old Testament is translated into the Greek language for wider dispersion.
- Rome becomes a superpower and introduces a system of roads for faster travel and introduces a messaging system for faster distribution of messages and even mail.

References

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