

Knowing God's Word

Between The Testaments – Part 1

What is the Intertestament Period?

The Intertestament Period simply refers to the 400 or so years between the end of the OT and the opening of the NT

The last book of history in the OT is the book of Nehemiah

The last book of prophecy in the OT is the book of Malachi

From the time of those books until the angel appears to Zechariah, we have no written history in our Bibles

This is also referred to as the Silent Period

It is thus called because God is silent (no prophets or written messages) during this period of history

We need to understand that just because God is silent does not mean that He is absent in the affairs of men

God was still very much active in the things of the world

We know this through both prophecy (Daniel) and other recorded history

We must begin with the passage in Galatians 4:4

Jesus came in the "fullness of time"

That means that God had a plan where certain things had to happen and come to pass before Jesus would come into the world to fulfill Genesis 3:15

We might begin our study with some prophecy that we see in the book of Daniel

Daniel was taken to Babylon and served there during the period of the 70 year captivity

While there, God revealed some things that would take place thereafter, leading us into the NT

Daniel 2:28-44

We often look at this as the prophecy of the church, but notice the details leading up to the establishment of the church

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God here is revealing things that would take place before the church would come into existence

Here is what we see represented in the dream:

Head of gold = Babylon

Silver chest & arms = Medo-Persian Empire

Bronze belly & thighs = Grecian Empire

Iron legs/Iron & Clay feet = Roman Empire

We have some history of Babylon recorded for us in scripture, including its fall

We also see the Medes and Persians ruling when our OT history ends (ex. Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes)

Prophecy of the Grecian Empire is all we have there; Rome was ruling as the NT opens

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Between The Testaments – Part 2

During the rule of the Grecian Empire is where we begin to see some influences upon the Jews

Philip the Macedon was successful in uniting the Greek city-states into the Grecian Empire

His son, Alexander, was brought up in the Greek culture, taught by Aristotle

When Alexander took over, he was a big believer in Hellenization

Hellenization was the spreading of the Greek culture to other countries or cultures

We see this word in Acts 6:1 as well as 9:29

Alexander was known for his many conquests

There is a story that comes from Josephus regarding Alexander and the Jews

Alexander came to conquer Jerusalem after Jaddua the High Priest refused to pledge allegiance to Alexander

Jaddua came out to greet Alexander in his priestly garb, hoping to find favor with him

When Alexander saw him, he prostrated himself before Jaddua

Alexander told of a dream he had in which he had seen Jaddua dressed in his priestly garb

If this is true, it just shows that God was still involved, protecting His promise

Eventually Alexander would die and the Grecian Empire would be divided into 4 parts

This breaking into 4 parts is prophesied about in Daniel 7

Out of this division arose 2 groups; the Seleucids and the Ptolemys

They battled for control of Palestine; certainly this affected the Jews

Daniel 11 is a very specific prophecy concerning these 2 groups and some of their leaders

Through all of this, the Hellenization of the Jews continued

There even became a bidding war for the high priesthood

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This is when we see the Maccabean revolt take place against the Seleucids and the Hellenization of the Jews

The Maccabean revolt stemmed from the wicked Antiochus IV Epiphanies and the Abomination of Desolation

He came into Jerusalem and looted the temple, built an idol to Zeus, offered pigs on the altar and killed anyone opposed

It's no wonder that there was a revolt

It's at this point that we begin to see groups such as the Pharisees form

The Pharisees began as a group that wanted to push the Jews back to the strict adherence to the law (not following laws of other nations)

The Pharisees were mainly scribes and were actually the more liberal group according to the law

The Sadducees were the more conservative group when it came to God's law, made up of the elite upper class, who wanted to cling to political power and influence

The Pharisees resisted Hellenization while the Sadducees welcomed it

The two groups were mainly at odds, but came together when it benefitted them

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Between The Testaments – Part 3

Upon the Maccabean revolt, the office of the high priest had changed quite a bit from what it had originally been set up as

It became more of a leadership position, such as a king, some other political leader or even a military leader

This caused the Jews to look to someone as a high priest for help and deliverance

During the Maccabean revolt, when the Jews took back Jerusalem and the temple, they observed an 8 day feast

This Feast of Dedication was also known as Hanukkah or the Festival of Lights

We see this mentioned in John 10:22-24

The Jews were finally able to once again gain some sense of independence

This period is often referred to as the Hasmonean Dynasty

This is because the Hasmon, or Asmoneus family is who began the Maccabean revolt and continue to rule

Rome finally decided to intervene in the events of the Jews around 63 BC

Pompey brought them under Roman rule

Herod the Great was allowed to rule Jerusalem beginning in 37 BC and lasted until his death in 4 BC

His descendants would rule as well

Archelaus – Matt. 2:22

Herod Philip – Lk. 3:1

Herod Antipas – Matt. 14:3-12

Herod Agrippa I – Acts 12

We also saw Roman Procurators

The one we know the best was Pontius Pilate (26-36 AD)