

We call the time in between the Old and New Testament the “400 Silent Years”

- *But was God truly silent during that time?*
- *What was going on then?*
- *And what can we learn from that time when He seems silent in our lives?*
- *We’ll answer all these questions in our lesson today.....*

Your Notes

The Time Between the Testaments, and what to do when God seems silent

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Our Plan today

- In our last lesson we looked at the Apocrypha, the series of books written between the Old and New Testaments and the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible done at that time.
- We concluded that the Apocrypha is not a canonical part of our Bibles, though the Septuagint is. It is also a significant translation of the Old Testament text and the one used by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament.
- Much more was going on at this time in between the Testaments and if we aren’t aware of it, it can be a rather jarring transition to end the Old Testament reading either Chronicles (the last book written) or Malachi (the last prophet to write) and then jump into the New Testament.
- Here is a summary of the differences you are immediately hit with.....

Summary of the differences

- This chart which is in your notes, goes over the differences between the political and religious worlds of the Old Testament and New Testament.
- We’ll look at how all of this happened step-by-step BUT>>>>>>>>

But first we will examine the label of this time as “the 400 Years of Silence”

- It is usually interpreted as meaning that there were no prophets speaking during this time.
- But the implications are troubling.....
- Does God just walk away from communicating to His people for hundreds of years?
- Why would He do that?
- How should we respond when we feel He is silent in our life?
- ***We need to answer this first, because no matter what is going on in our world or personal live, we need to rely on our God and trust that He is truly NEVER silent.***

This was not the first time in the history of God’s people that prophets were not speaking to them.

- There were numerous times that God did not send prophets to verbally share new messages with the people
- We don’t have much recorded (except for the Flood and Noah) between the Fall and the call of Abraham.
- We don’t have any new prophets recorded while people were slaves in Egypt.
- We don’t have any new messages to us in the 2,000 years since Jesus went back to heaven.

OVERALL, God’s silence never happens

- In THREE Ways He is always speaking-
- **#1 The heavens & our world** declare His glory and that never ceases. IMHO—how can someone look at succulents (little living sculptures) and not believe in a Creator?

- **#2 His Word**—the people at that time had the completed OLD Testament including prophecy in Daniel of all that would happen during this time.
- It was a clear and comforting roadmap for those willing to read it, wherein Daniel’s dream/image of a statue predicted the various world powers that would come between the close of the Old Testament until Jesus’ birth, we’ll look at it in a minute.
- **#3 His Spirit**—convicting unbelievers, guiding, comforting believers.

God’s Word/His roadmap for those times

- People at that time had the completed OLD Testament including prophecy in Daniel of all that would happen in the coming years.
- Daniel’s dream and image of a statue predicted the various world powers that would come between the close of the Old Testament until Jesus’ birth.
- A clear and comforting roadmap was in place for those willing to read it.
- As He has for us in His Word.

But personally, what about “dark night of the soul” in our lives times when it seems God is silent?

- We have what the people of those times had.
- We can remind ourselves of God in nature and our world.
- Be sure we know His Word as that is our source of comfort for the present and the future.
- Remember that God does not work on our timeline.
- Things almost always take longer than we want (sometimes past our earthly life) and...
- “Delay is not denial.”

What then should we do

- Keep walking and pray you walk worthy.
- Keep doing what you are doing, reading His Word, living as you know He wants you to live.
- Trust He is a good God and ultimately all will turn out for good.
- Ask Him for help, for wisdom and insight in the midst of trials, sometimes a mental readjustment is what we need.
- Pray for yourself and others guidance during dark times to respond in ways that are pleasing to the Lord and a witness for Him.

Think about this verse during those times, Ps.42:11

Let’s look at what God was doing

- We’ll go over the overall history of it.
- Then we’ll spend a little more time on who the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and Zealots were.
- Think about it....we are talking about a total of 400 years (over 500 on our chart)
- The U.S. is 246 years old—it’s a long time....
- This chart is in your handouts, but let’s now look at each area in it.

538-336 BC

- People are back in the land.
- Never again will they fall into idol worship or worship other gods.
- But that doesn’t mean they are whole-hearted in their worship of the true God.
- Sloppy worship, neglecting the Temple and support of the priests, marrying pagan women all characterize this time as recorded by the last prophet Malachi.

336-323 BC

- Alexander appears on the scene, gives them relative freedom.
- Greek becomes their universal language.
- During this and previous time, the Synagogues were spreading and becoming the primary place where people could study God’s Word, learn and interact about their faith.

- When Alexander dies, his kingdom is split into four parts and for a little over 100 years the one who rules Israel is Ptolemy who rules from Egypt.

323-198 BC

- Ptolemy is a benevolent ruler, admires the Jews and encourages learning and scholarship in Egypt.
- He gathers scholars, books, and creates the great library of Alexandria.
- As already mentioned, Greek is the universal language and Ptolemy initiates the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek.
- This time of peace and learning doesn't last, as another of Alexander's generals, the Seleucid family, wants control of Israel.

198-110 BC

- In stark contrast to Ptolemy's admiration of the Jews, Antiochus III and his son Antiochus IV Epiphanes, wanted to erase all things Jewish and replace it with all things Greek.
- They suppressed Jewish culture, customs, and worship, slaughtered those who did not comply and ultimately offered a pig on the altar of the Temple.
- Hellenization, the promotion of all things Greek was forced on the people, though it was a popular way of life to many.
- As happens with most tyrants, theirs did not last and a Jewish rebellion took place

Approx 140-63/37 BC

- This rebellion was led by the Maccabean/Hasmonean family and after years of bloody battles finally took over control of the nation.
- Their cleansing of the Temple is celebrated today as Hannukah.
- They established a short-lived dynasty known as the Hasmonean Dynasty.
- It was not universally popular as it tended towards Hellenization; the Sadducees favored and supported that; the Pharisees did not; the Essenes withdrew.
- But they couldn't stop fighting and finally...

63 BC through New Testament Times

- The rising power of the world, Rome steps in and takes control over Jerusalem.
- They are relatively kind to the Jews for a period of time (until 70 AD), but care little for historical or religious sensibilities.
- They give the kingship to Herod, a descendent of Esau, and the priesthood is a political office primarily responsible for keeping the people in line.
- ***Who were the religious groups of the time when no overall priest or prophet spoke and the synagogue had become of primary importance to many?***

Sadducees

- Arose around 200BC as a political party but claimed their descent from the priestly line of Zadok, an earlier high priest.
- They tended to be wealthy, landed aristocracy and embraced the Hellenistic life.
- They only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament and none of the oral tradition.
- Based on that they did not believe in angels, demons, or an afterlife. ("They were sad, you see.")

Jesus's confrontation with them

- **Matthew 22: 23** That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ²⁴ "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷ Finally, the woman died. ²⁸ Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were

married to her?"

- ²⁹ Jesus replied, **"You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.** ³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹ But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."
- **Extremely important warning for us today and the answer the problems of life..... "You don't know the Scriptures."**

Pharisees

- Came into being after the Maccabean revolt as a group opposed to the Hellenizing influences (conforming to popular ways of thinking and worship)
- They accepted not only the written Torah, but the commentaries on it and LOVED to debate them, as Jesus often did.
- They believed in angels, demons, the afterlife.
- They were the teachers, rabbis and though often strict, popular with the people, as they wanted all people to have access to and to obey the Law.

In spite of their good intentions, Jesus challenged them

- **Matthew 15** Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ² "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"
- ³ Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' ⁵ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is 'devoted to God,' ⁶ they are not to 'honor their father or mother' with it. Thus, you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:
- ⁸ "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules."¹
- **In this instance and many others, Jesus answered them from the Scriptures—we always need to be sure we are living what we say we believe—and living it will kindness and compassion**

Godly leaders of the early church came from the Pharisees, including the Apostle Paul

- He was raised a Pharisee.
- His extensive training in the Scriptures was later used by God to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.
- And he used his background, when necessary, "I am a Pharisee on trial because I believe in the resurrection of the dead!" (Acts 23:6) he said to defend himself before the Sanhedrin.

Essenes

- They primarily simply wanted to retreat from the world.
- Most likely would know little to nothing about them except that they were the ones who preserved the Dead Sea Scroll

Zealots

- A group, who varied in their beliefs who wanted to overthrow Rome.
- Interesting how Jesus had both Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector as His disciples.
- A reminder our primary loyalty and citizenship is the Kingdom of God.

Summary, the world in between the Testaments was filled with

- Political upheaval.
- Fragmentation of religious beliefs and practices.
- Some holding tightly to scriptures, some wanting to get all they could out of the current world system, some simply retreating.

In many ways, like our world today

- Like them, we are living in an in-between time.
- From when Jesus went back to heaven to His return when He makes all things new.
- What should we do during this time?
- Jesus tells us very clearly in a number of places, and one of the best ones is just before He went back to heaven.

Acts 1:4-8

- Context: Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”
- So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”
- He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.***”
- Timing isn’t our concern, being His witness is and we can’t do that well unless we know Him well.
- And for that of course, we need to spend time in His Word.

To do that, I have a book for you

- It’s a shorted reading plan that will give you a good introduction to reading the Bible regularly. (available as a free download on www.Bible805.com with this class)
- And suggested Bible journaling ideas
- The best thing you can do during this in between time we all now live in is to ***get to know God’s Word and to live according to it.***
- Then no matter what happens, you’ll be on the right road, living as your Lord wants you to and that’s the best way to live always.

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