

What Happened Between the Testaments?

Preparing the World For the Messiah

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For most of us, Israel's history stops abruptly with the prophet Malachi—to be resumed briefly, four hundred years later, in the New Testament period. But these 400 missing years—known as the *Intertestamental Period*—were alive with the activity that shaped the world into which Jesus was born.

The Old Testament period ended under the imperial control of Persia. In the New Testament, Rome is in command. A dramatic change in world events!

What happened between the Testaments? How did the Intertestamental Period prepare Judah, and the world, for the coming of the Messiah and the preaching of the gospel?

During this historical period in general, the exile left its permanent stamp on Judaism as well as on the Jews. The Jews' return to the land of their fathers was marked by the last declining rays of prophecy. The prophetic sun set with Malachi. The interval between the Old and the New Testaments is a dark period in the history of Israel and Judah. It stretches itself out over about four centuries. During this time there was neither prophet nor inspired writer in Israel or Judah.

All we know of this time period we owe to Josephus, to some of the apocryphal books, to Latin historians, and to some scattered Greek references. The seat of the empire passed over from the East to the West: from Asia to Europe. The Persian Empire collapsed under the fierce attacks of the Macedonians, and the Greek Empire, in turn, gave way to Roman rule.

Now, in the way of background to this time period, it is important that we look briefly at the backdrop of the contemporaneous history of the period between the Testaments with regard to the world powers. For a better understanding of this period in the history of Israel, we will take the time to glance at the wider perspective of the history of the world in the four centuries between the Testaments.

Egypt

In the four centuries preceding Christ, the Egyptian empire—the oldest and in many respects the most developed civilization of antiquity—was tottering to its ruins. The 29th or Mendesian Dynasty made way, in 384 BC, for the 30th or Sebennitic Dynasty. This was swallowed up half a century later by the Persian Dynasty. The 32nd or Macedonian Dynasty replaced the Persian Dynasty in 332 BC. A decade later it gave way to the last dynasty which was the 33rd or Ptolemaic Dynasty. Do not worry about remembering the dates and the names. This is just an overview of the time periods and the history of some of the nations that existed during these 400 years. In my research for this sermon, I used about two dozen different texts, and I was amazed at how many differing dates were shown throughout those different commentaries and histories. So these dates are not firm. I have used many dates that I received in my history lessons at Ambassador College. The dates are not important as far as accurately stating a

specific year, but they do give us the milestones we need to be able to determine what time period in history we are talking about. Do not let these names and dates of these dynasties glaze your eyes over any worse than they have to!

The whole history of Egypt in this period was one of endless, and swiftly succeeding, changes. In the Ptolemaic Dynasty there was a faint revival of the old glory of the past. The Caesarian conquest of 47 BC was followed, seventeen years later, by the annexation of Egypt to the new world-power, as a Roman province. Egypt's priests had been famous for their wisdom, and attracted the attention of some of the world's most admired philosophers, including Pythagoras and Plato.

Greece

In Greece, also, the old glory was passing away. Endless wars sapped the strength of national life. The strength of Athens, Sparta, Corinth and Thebes had departed. In 337 BC, the congress of Greek states had elected Philip of Macedon as supreme power over united Greece. This brought on the ominous sound of doom for Greek liberty. First, Philip and, after him, Alexander, wiped out the last remnants of this liberty. Greece became a fighting machine for the conquest of the world in the swift career of Alexander the Great.

Many of the Greek scientists, philosophers and statesmen of the period between the testaments are revered by the world to this day. In this dark period for Israel, Greek thought dominated the world. Men such as Hippocrates, Democritus, Plato, Aristotle and Archimedes—all standing out amid the decay of Greek liberty, in the 4th and 3rd centuries before Christ! It is interesting to note how liberty was disappearing during the time of those who the world admires as being the free thinkers and the shapers of society.

Even though Israel's accomplishments were far greater in every arena than the Greeks—especially under the wisdom of King Solomon—the world's historians, using human reasoning, have chosen to admire and respect self-indulgent, Gentile men. That has been the *modus operandi* of the world before and ever since that time.

Rome

Rome meanwhile was strengthening herself, by ceaseless wars, for her goal of world-conquest. By the Latin, Samnite, and Punic wars she became proficient in the art of war, thereby extending her territorial power. She became dreaded everywhere. During the Roman Period between the Testaments, she conquered Italy, North Africa, Greece, Asia Minor, and the lands of the northern barbarians.

Her intellectual accomplishments were developed only when her lust for conquest was satiated somewhat. But in the century immediately preceding the Christian era we find such renowned names as Lucretius and Hortentius, Cato and Cicero, Virgil and Horace. At the close of the period between the Testaments, the Roman Empire had become the mistress of the world and every road led to her capital.

Asia

In Asia, the Persian Empire, heir to the civilization and traditions of the great

Assyrian-Babylonian world power, was fast collapsing. It was ultimately wiped out by the younger Greek empire and civilization. In far-away India, the old ethnic religion of Brahma—a century or more before the beginning of the period between the Testaments—passed through the reformatory crisis. This was inaugurated by Gatama Buddha, and thus Buddhism—one of the major ethnic religions—was born.

Another reformer of the Tauistic religion was Confucius—the sage of China. He was a contemporary of Buddha. Zoroaster in Persia laid the foundations of his dualistic world-view. In every sense and in every direction, the period between the Testaments was therefore one of political and intellectual fermentation. The whole world was changing very dramatically.

From this point on—at least for several periods in history—we will look at the historical developments with regard to the Jews during the time between the Testaments. Israel was being scattered around the world during these four hundred years. It is not part of my purpose to cover *where* Israel was scattered to during these years. I want to focus more on the Jews and Judea and its affect on the society that Christ came into. With regard to Jewish history, the time between the Testaments can be divided into six major historical periods:

1. The Persian period
2. The Alexandrian period
3. The Egyptian period
4. The Syrian period
5. The Maccabean period (also known as the Hasmonean period)
6. The Roman period

Depending on what the perspective of the historian or the author was—he may have labelled these periods slightly different, but these were the ones that I found to be the most common and have the greatest impact.

It was during the Persian period of strength (539-423 BC) that we come to the end of Old Testament history. In 539 BC Cyrus of Persia defeated the Babylonians and allowed the dispersed nations, including the Jews, to return to their homelands. This proclamation of Cyrus is mentioned also in Ezra 1: 1-4 and Ezra 6: 3-5. The book of Ezra was written about 439 BC. II Chronicles was composed around 400 BC and it mentions this proclamation also.

II Chronicles 36:22-23: Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!

Some of the Jews returned under Zerubbabel, in 539/538 BC, as recorded in Ezra chapters 2 to

6. More returned later under Ezra, in 457 BC, as recorded in Ezra chapters 7 to 10.

Nehemiah came to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls in 444 BC and he remained there until 433/432, when he returned to Persia. He went back to Judah again—as recorded in Nehemiah 13—some time before the death of Artaxerxes I in 423 BC.

Let us take a look at that first period. The complete Persian Period extended from the cessation of prophecy about 539 BC to the Alexandrian Period in 334 BC.

This was an uneventful period for the Persians and the Jews. It was a breathing spell between great national crises, and comparatively little is known about it. The land of Palestine was a portion of the Syrian satrapy, while the true government of the Jewish people was semi-theocratic under the rule of the high priests, who were responsible to the satrap—the provincial governor, leader and representative of the Persians.

As a matter of course, the high-priest's office became the object of all Jewish ambition and it aroused the darkest desires in human nature. Thus John, the son of Judas, son of Eliashib, through the lust of power, killed his brother Jesus, who was a favorite of Bagoses, a general of Artaxerxes in command of the district. The guilt of this fratricide (murder of a sibling) was enhanced because the crime was committed in the temple itself, before the very altar. As a result, a storm of rage swept over Judea.

The Persians occupied Jerusalem. The temple was defiled and the city laid waste in part. A heavy fine was imposed on the people and a general persecution followed, which lasted for many years. The Samaritans, ever pliable and willing to obey the tyrant of the day, went practically free of blame, as they did in the many persecutions that followed. In this, we see part of the reason the Samaritans were so hated by the rest of the Jews by the time Jesus Christ came.

The second period was the Alexandrian Period. It was very brief—from 334-323 BC—and simply covered the period of the Asiatic rule of Alexander the Great. In Greece things had been moving swiftly. The Thebans destroyed the Spartan hegemony (influence and authority), which had been unbroken since the fall of Athens. But Philip of Macedon, who was chosen general leader by the unwilling Greeks, soon crushed the new power.

Persia was the object of Philip's ambition and vengeance, but he was killed before he could execute his plans. His son, Alexander, a youth of 20 years, succeeded him and thus the "great male goat," of which Daniel had spoken, appeared on the scene:

Daniel 8:8: Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.

Daniel 10:20: Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.

Here we see Alexandra the Great mentioned in two prophecies. In the twelve years of

Alexander's reign (335-323 BC) he revolutionized the world. His tactics were so swift that all Greece was soon laid at his feet. Then he moved to Asia, where he defeated Darius. Passing southward, he conquered the Mediterranean coast and Egypt. He then moved eastward again, for the complete conquest of Asia. He was struck down in the height of his power, at Babylon, in the thirty-third year of his age.

In the Syrian campaign he had come in contact with the Jews. He was unwilling to leave any stronghold at his back, so he destroyed Tyre after a siege of several months. Then he advanced southward and demanded the surrender of Jerusalem. But the Jews, remembering their former bitter experiences, wanted to remain loyal to Persia. As Alexander approached the city, Jaddua the high priest, with a train of priests in their official dress, went out to meet him, to supplicate mercy from Alexander.

The Jews read the prophecies of Daniel that we just read concerning Alexander to Alexander himself, and so he spared the city and even sacrificed to Yahweh. From that day on the Jews became his favorites of his empire. He employed them in his army and gave them equal rights with the Greeks as first citizens of Alexandria, and other cities that he founded.

Thus the strong Hellenistic spirit of the Jews was created, which distinguished this large portion of the nation in the later periods of their history. During the Greek period the more conservative and zealous Jews were constantly confronted with a tendency of many of the people—especially the younger and wealthier set—to adopt the manners of life, thought and speech of their masters, the Greeks. Thus the Hellenistic party was born. This was bitterly hated by all true-blooded Jews, but still left its mark on their history, until the date of the final dispersion in 70 AD.

The third period was the Egyptian Period (323-204 BC). It began with the death of Alexander, and temporarily turned everything into chaos. The Alexandrian Empire, welded together by Alexander's leadership, fell apart under four of his generals. Remember that Daniel 10 mentions four horns. Those generals were: Ptolemy Soter, Lysimachus, Cassander, and Selenus.

Daniel 8:21-22: And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.

That "first king" is referring to Alexander the Great.

Egypt fell to the share of Ptolemy Soter and Judea was made part of that section. At first Ptolemy Soter was harsh in his treatment of the Jews, but later on he learned—as Alexander had—to respect them and he became their patron. Soter was succeeded by Ptolemy Philadelphus, a progressive ruler, famous through the erection of the lighthouse of Pharos, and especially through the founding of the celebrated Alexandrian library. Like his father, he was very friendly to the Jews and—according to tradition—in his reign the celebrated Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures—the Septuagint—was made. We will look into the subject of the Septuagint in a little more detail later in the sermon.

As the power of the Syrian princes—the Seleucide—grew, Palestine increasingly became the battle ground between them and the Ptolemeys. In the decisive battle between Ptolemy Philopator and Antiochus the Great at Raphia near Gaza, Antiochus was crushed, and during Philopator's reign Judea remained an Egyptian province.

This battle formed the turning-point of the history of the Jews in their relation to Egypt. When Ptolemy Philopator came to Jerusalem, drunk with victory, he endeavored to enter the Holy of Holies of the temple, but he retreated, in confusion from the Holy Place. Nevertheless, he wreaked his vengeance on the Jews for opposing his plan by means of a cruel persecution. He was succeeded by his son, Ptolemy Epiphanes, a five year old child. The long-planned vengeance of Antiochus now took form in an invasion of Egypt. Syria and Judea were occupied by the Syrians and were passed into the possession of the Seleucide.

The fourth period was the Syrian Period (204-165 BC) which, for Judah, was an almost uninterrupted martyrdom. Antiochus was succeeded by Seleucis Philopator. But as harsh as their attitude was toward the Jews, neither of these two was notorious for his cruelty to them. The high priests, as in former periods, were still the Jews' supposed rulers. But the aspect of everything changed when Antiochus Epiphanes came to the throne. He ruled from 175-164 BC.

The nationalists among the Jews were at that time squabbling with the Hellenists for the control of Jewish affairs. Onias III, a loyal high priest, was expelled from office through the scheming of his brother, Jason. Onias went to Egypt, where at Heliopolis he built a temple and officiated as high priest.

Meanwhile, Jason in turn was turned out of the holy office by the bribes of still another brother, Menelaus, who was worse by far than Jason. Menelaus was a Jew-hater and an avowed defender of Greek life and morals. The quarrel between the brothers gave Antiochus Epiphanes the opportunity he craved to inflict his bitter hatred on the Jews in the plundering of Jerusalem, in reckless and total defilement of the temple, and in a most horrible persecution of the Jews.

Daniel 11:28-31: While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land. At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. "For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.

Thousands were slain by Antiochus Epiphanes, and women and children were sold into captivity. The city wall was torn down, all sacrifices ceased and, in 167 BC, a statue was erected to Jupiter Olympus in the temple on the altar of burnt offering. This was the abomination of desolation and, as you might expect, it caused an uproar.

The fifth period, from 165 BC to 163 BC, was the Maccabean Period, which is also known as the Hasmonean Period. It began in revolt with the slaying of an idolatrous Jew at the altar in the temple.

The land of Judea is specially adapted to guerilla tactics, and Judas Maccabaeus, who succeeded his father as leader of the Jewish patriots, was a master in this kind of warfare.

In three Syrian campaigns, all efforts of Antiochus to quell the rebellion failed miserably. Antiochus Epiphanes died of a loathsome disease and peace was at last accomplished with the Jews. Though still supposedly under Syrian control, Judas became governor of Palestine. His first act was the purification and rededication of the temple, from which the Jews dated Chanukkah—their feast of rededication.

When the Syrians renewed the war, Judas applied for aid to the Romans, whose power had begun to be felt in Asia. Judas Maccabaeus died in battle before the promised aid could reach him. His brother Jonathan succeeded him. From that time the Maccabean history became one of endless factions. Jonathan was acknowledged by the Syrians as meridarch (governor) of Judea, but was assassinated soon afterward. Simon succeeded him, and by the help of the Romans was made hereditary ruler of Palestine. He, in turn, was followed by John Hyrcanus.

The people were torn by bitter, partisan controversies and a civil war was waged, a generation later by Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus, the two grandsons of John Hyrcanus. In this mutually destructive struggle the Roman general Pompey participated by siding with Hyrcanus, while Aristobulus defied Rome and defended Jerusalem. Pompey took the city after a siege of three months and entered the holy of holies thereby forever estranging every loyal Jewish heart from Rome. In some respects, the Maccabees set the pattern of Jewish nationalism for the New Testament period. It is interesting to see how each of these periods had a direct influence on Judah during the time of Christ.

The sixth and last period during those four hundred years between the testaments is the Roman Period. It began in about 63 BC (depending on when you date the time between the testaments. This is about the time that the Roman period dawned between the two testaments. Rome lasted for another three hundred some years after the birth of Christ, but we are only dealing today with the history of the years between the testaments. The Roman period began with Hyrcanus when he was stripped of the hereditary royal power, retaining only his high-priest's office. Judea became a Roman province and Rome exacted an annual tribute on her. Aristobulus was sent as a captive to Rome. Nevertheless, he escaped and renewed the unequalled struggle, in which he was succeeded by his sons: Alexander and Antigonus.

In the war between Pompey and Caesar, Judea was temporarily forgotten. After Caesar's death—under the triumvirate (ruling body of three triumvirs or leaders) of Octavius, Antony and Lepidus—Antony (the first triumvir) favored Herod the Great, whose scheming ultimately secured for himself the crown of Judea and enabled him to completely extinguish the old Maccabean line of the Judean princes.

Matthew 2:1-6: Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to

Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'"

At the time of the birth of Jesus, Herod had reigned for about 34 years. Even though the Romans allowed Herod to be called "king," he was in every way dependent upon the Roman emperor. He was commonly called "Herod the Great" because he had distinguished himself in the wars against Antigonus and his other enemies. He had also shown great talents in governing and defending his country, in repairing the temple, and in building and ornamenting the cities of his kingdom.

He was, however, as much distinguished for his cruelty and his crimes as he was for his greatness in governing. At this time Augustus was Emperor of Rome. The world was at peace. Many of the known nations of the earth were united under the Roman emperor.

Contact and communication between different nations was safe and easy. Similar laws prevailed everywhere. The use of the Greek language was general throughout the world. All these circumstances combined to make this a favorable time to introduce the gospel, and to spread it through the earth. The divine intervention of God was extraordinary in preparing the nations in this way for the ease and rapid spread of God's truth. God has done a similar thing today by causing the English language to be spoken and understood worldwide so that God's truth can be taught and the Second Coming of Christ announced.

These six periods we have just examined show the historical developments with regard to the Jews during the four hundred year period between the Testaments.

Now let us look at the internal developments within the heart of Judaism during the time between the testaments. It is self-evident that the core of the Jewish people, which remained loyal to the national traditions and to the national faith, must have been radically affected by the terrible cataclysms that mark their history during these four centuries before Christ.

Because of the persecution suffered by the Jews, there was a rise of the messianic expectation as seen in the increase of apocalyptic literature. The Jews believed that God would raise up a messianic leader, or leaders, to deliver them from the foreign oppressors and to set up the promised messianic kingdom. We can see a parallel as to what is happening now, and what is going to be happening during the tribulation, when people long for someone to come and save the world.

The voice of prophecy was utterly hushed in the period between the Testaments, but the old literary instinct of the nation asserted itself. It was part and parcel of the Jewish traditions and would not be denied. In this period many writings were produced that are very helpful for an

accurate understanding of the life of Judea in the dark ages before Christ. Literary activity within Judaism during the intertestamental period centered upon the main groups of writings: the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha and the Septuagint, which was a group of books translating the books of the Old Testament.

I just want to mention a few facts about each of these writings because they did dramatically affect thought and the period of the preaching of the gospel.

The Apocrypha is a group of books written during a time of turmoil in the history of the Jewish people, from about 150 BC to about 70 AD. These books fall into two main divisions: Old Testament apocryphal books and New Testament apocryphal books. The Old Testament apocryphal books were:

- I and II Esdras
- Tobit
- Judith
- II Esther
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Ecclesiasticus
- Baruch
- Song of the Three Holy Children
- History of Susanna
- Bel and the Dragon
- Prayer of Manasses
- I and II Maccabees
- III and IV Maccabees (probably written during the Christian era)

These books were excluded from some early versions of the Old Testament but were included in others. This explains why Bibles used by Roman Catholics contain the Old Testament Apocrypha, while they are not included in most Protestant editions.

The Old Testament apocryphal books have an unquestioned historical and literary value but have been rejected as inspired for the following reasons:

1. They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms.
2. They teach false doctrines and foster practices that are contrary to inspired Scripture.
3. They resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling, which is out of keeping with inspired Scripture.
4. They lack the distinctive elements that give genuine Scripture its divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.

The Jewish historian Josephus rejects the Apocrypha. The Jewish philosopher and historian, Philo of Alexandria, never refers to it. Jesus and His apostles, though quoting the Old Testament so frequently, never quote the Apocrypha.

The New Testament links itself immediately with the end of the Old Testament as if no inspired writing came between. The gospel begins at the outset with claiming to be the fulfillment of Malachi. Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6 are quoted and referred to in Mark 1 and Luke 1.

Mark 1:1-3: The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You." "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."

Luke 1:16-17: And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. "He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

There is a lack of inherent power and majesty in the Apocrypha, as compared with canonical Scripture.

The next grouping I will mention is the Pseudepigrapha. It was named from the counterfeit character of the authors' names they bear. It is a collection of Jewish books containing various forms of literature, using names of famous people in Israel's history for the titles of the books. The real authors are unknown. Such names as Ezra, Baruch, Enoch, Solomon, Moses, and Adam are used to add authority to the writing. There was some deceitfulness in their production.

This brings us to the Septuagint, the most important of the writings. It is the common title of the earliest and most important translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. It was done for the benefit of the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria, Egypt. A Jewish community had existed in Alexandria almost from its foundation by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. In two or three generations this community had forgotten its native Hebrew language. The Jews realized they needed the Hebrew scriptures rendered into the only language they knew, which was Greek. This translation of the Old Testament is commonly called the Septuagint, from *septuaginta*, the Latin word for seventy, and it is commonly abbreviated with the Roman numerals LXX. Quite often in the commentaries we see LXX used rather than the word "Septuagint" fully spelled out.

Some historians believe that the name Septuagint was selected because of a generally held tradition that about seventy-two elders of Israel, supposedly six from each tribe, were brought to Alexandria specifically for the purpose of translating the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) into Greek. But other historians believe that it was named after the Alexandrian Sanhedrin, which consisted of seventy members.

The Alexandrian Macedonic Greek forms in the Septuagint are said to disprove the unreliable

tradition of the coming of the seventy-two interpreters from Jerusalem and show that the translators were actually Alexandrian Jews.

Its composition at Alexandria began under the earlier Ptolemeys. The first section of the Hebrew Bible to be translated into Greek was the Pentateuch, some time before 200 BC. The Pentateuch is the best part of the version, being the first translated.

The other books of the Septuagint were translated during the second century BC, and betray the increasing degeneracy of the Hebrew manuscripts along with the decay of Hebrew learning. Different people translated different books, and no general revision harmonized the whole. Names are differently rendered in different books. The poetical parts (except Psalms and Proverbs) are inferior to the historical, that is, to the original Old Testament. In the greater prophets important passages are misunderstood.

Throughout this entire dark period of Israel's and Judah's history, God was preparing for Christianity by working out His own Divine plan for them. The Old Testament scriptures were translated into Greek, the common language of the East, after the conquest of Alexandria the Great. Thus the world was prepared for the word of God, even as the word of God in turn prepared the world for the reception of the gift of God in the gospel of His Son. As unreliable as the Septuagint was, it was still reliable enough to help the Jews, as well as others in the world, to begin to have an understanding of God's truth.

As the sacrificial part of Jewish worship declined through their wide separation from the temple, the eyes of Israel were more firmly fixed on their scriptures, which were read every Sabbath in their synagogues. These scriptures, through the rendering of the Septuagint, had become the property of the entire world.

For a time, the synagogues everywhere imparted Israel's exalted Messianic hopes to the world. On the other hand, the Jews themselves, embittered by long-continued martyrdoms and suffering, utterly carnalized this Messianic expectation increasingly as the yoke of the oppressor grew heavier and the hope of deliverance grew fainter. They began more and more to look for a physical human being to lead a physical army.

When their Messiah came, the Jews did not recognize Him, while many Gentiles who, by access to the Septuagint, had become familiar with the promise, humbly received Him.

John 1:9-14: That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The eyes of Israel have been blinded for a season, until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

Romans 11:25: For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Through the dispersion of the Septuagint, many of the Gentiles were familiar with the scriptures.

These writings produced a continuation of the OLD to the NEW. The Old and New Testaments are not two separate trees of life, but one and the same.

From Genesis to Revelation run the same great thoughts: God is a just God and a Savior, man as sinner, man as saint, angels of God, the devil and his angels, sin, death, righteousness, life, the peace and strength of faith, the sovereignty of God, sacrifice, priesthood, redemption by blood, prayer, love, hope, obedience, holiness, and the judgment to come. All these were familiar in the Old Testament and again in the New.

The New Testament is not a beginning of revelation, but a continuation, rather than a repetition, of the Old.

We find something very unique in the way of divine expression throughout the Scriptures. We find the same voice of majesty, the same method of teaching by history and biography rather than by argumentation, the same calmness and unflinching faithfulness of narrative, the same sounding forth of mercy and of judgment, and the same fearless reproof of all unrighteousness and ungodliness. There is consistency throughout the entire Old and New Testament.

Hebrews 13:7-8: Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

So also are His writings.

There was a major characteristic seen throughout the four hundred years between the testaments. The national and spiritual endeavors of the Jews during the period between the testaments took on a dramatic change from the Judah of Ezra's time. We see this dramatic change begin to take place under Nehemiah's influence.

Just before the period between the Testaments, Nehemiah went to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in 444 BC and remained in Jerusalem for about twelve years, after which he returned to Persia. Several years later he returned to Judah to find the Jews ignoring God's commandments and statutes. This account—written about 430 BC—is recorded in Nehemiah 13.

Nehemiah 13:6-12, 15-18, 22-26, 30-31: But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king, and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil

that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense. I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field. So I contended with the rulers, and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their place. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse. In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions. Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? "Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath." And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should go and guard the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy! In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people. So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each to his service, and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times. Remember me, O my God, for good!

This was the condition of the people of Judah in the fifth century BC. But, just before the intertestamental period, God began to turn them around through Nehemiah. They were guilty of neglecting support of God's ministers, Sabbath-breaking, and of inter-marrying with

non-Israelitish cultures—that is, with pagan gentiles. They even allowed their language to be replaced by a foreign tongue. Nehemiah mentioned this to show how far from their special heritage they had strayed.

As Nehemiah began to reform Judah, its people began to realize how far they had strayed from God. The religious leaders found it hard to keep the people from straying from the religion of God so, over time, they instituted clarifications of doctrine and eventually those clarifications became laws themselves. Then those laws needed more explanation—leading to yet more laws!

Since the more conservative Jews grew to distrust the Sadducees' liberality in obedience to God, a new religious leadership—the Pharisees—later developed out of the conservative middle class. The more secular-minded Sadducees—wealthy, of fine social standing, wholly free from the restraints of tradition, utterly oblivious of the future life and closely akin to the Greek Epicureans—opposed the Pharisees.

But still, the Pharisees kept strict adherence to the Torah, the religious law. This increase in the number of laws developed out of a lack of self-government by the individual Jews.

Psalm 119:4: You have commanded us to keep your precepts diligently.

A "precept" is a command or principle intended as a general rule of action. God requires that we work hard to keep His righteous principles. It is more than mere human discretion; it is more than mere integrity; it is more than for our benefit; it is because God requires it.

The word "diligently" in the Hebrew means "very much;" that is, to do it constantly and faithfully. Each one of God's laws must always be obeyed, in all circumstances. God has set these laws down as principles and as precepts.

Since the people would not apply right principles in their daily lives, the leaders added more laws to legislate evils that were not spelled out in detail. One of the things Jesus did was to show us how to apply the spiritual principles of God's Law. Spiritual principles guide a person in right living.

At the end of the first century AD, the Roman historian Tacitus noticed this fact:

When the State is most corrupt, that includes the people, when laws are most multiplied.

The parallel between the increase in laws among the Jews of that era to our society today is chilling! Since people today refuse to govern themselves, more laws are enacted to legislate in detail what a person can and cannot do. We see this happening on a global scale today.

Former U.S. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes noted,

The United States is the greatest law factory the world has ever known.

What does that say about our righteousness?

The European Union has been passing laws at break-neck speed. And on a global scale, the United Nations is trying to increase its power by getting nations around the world to agree by treaty to abide by its global laws, the numbers of which are increasing exponentially every day.

So at the end of the Intertestamental Period, just before the coming of the Lord, we find laws increasing on a religious and national level among the Jews, and the explosion of the legislation of laws throughout the world-ruling empire of the Romans. Wherever Rome conquered, it established and maintained its numerous laws.

In our day we are watching legislations such as "The Patriot Act," eradicate our freedom in the name of peace and safety. No one is sure just how far these laws will go in making every citizen of the United States a criminal at any one time, at the whim of the authorities! I have heard it said by attorneys that, at any one time, there are citizens of the United States breaking numerous laws.

Initially, the Jews' return from Babylon marked a turning point in their spiritual history. From that time onward, their overt lust and idolatry, which had marked their whole previous history, disappeared. In place of it came an almost intolerable spirit of exclusiveness, a striving after legal holiness. These two in combination formed the very heart and core of later Pharisaism. But the Pharisees lacked the faith to see the true intent of the law.

Romans 9:30-32: What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone.

For the Jews, the holy books, but especially the law, became objects of almost idolatrous reverence. The spirit was utterly lost in place of the form.

And as their own tongue—the classic Hebrew—gradually gave way to the common Aramaic, the rabbis and their schools strove ever more earnestly to keep the ancient tongue pure. Worship and life each demanded a separate language.

Thus, the Jews became in a sense bilingual. The Hebrew tongue came to be used in their synagogues, the Aramaic in their daily life and, later on, in part at least, the Greek tongue of the conqueror came into use.

A spiritual aristocracy very largely replaced the former rule of their princes and nobles. As the core of their religion died, the *bark of the tree* flourished. Tithes were zealously paid by the believer, the Sabbath became a positive burden of sanctity, and the simple laws and principles of God were replaced by cumbersome human inventions.

In later times these human additions formed the bulk of the Talmud, which crushed down all spiritual liberty in the days of Christ. Judaism during the intertestamental times became a

religion of the Torah.

Matthew 23:1-5, 23: Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

The Jews, especially the Pharisees, focused on controlling the actions of human beings—just as most human governments do! Jesus Christ focused on changing the heart—the mind and attitude—of human beings. What a dramatic difference that is!

God made it clear, through Jeremiah, that Israel had failed to keep their covenant with Him and predicted that He would make a new one with His people. The new covenant would not be a new law (the old law was still good!), but it would produce a new "heart." That is, it would confer a new power, motivation and understanding to obey the law of God.

Jeremiah 31:31-33: Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

The old law could be broken. To remedy this, God gives—not a new law—but a new power to the old law. It used to be a mere code of morals, external to man, and it was obeyed as a duty. In Christianity, it becomes an inner force, shaping man's character from within—coming from the heart.

Mark 7:21: For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders.

By trying to control the actions of individuals, the Pharisees were stealing the duty of every

human being to self-govern himself.

The New Testament is a progression of the Old, but is more glorious. It is a progression in the light and fullness of the revelation itself. Shadows have given place to substance; elements and basics to perfection; minute regulations to profound principles; patterns of heavenly things to the heavenly things themselves.

II Corinthians 3:1-18: Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

We are being transformed from the glory of the old to the glory of the new. In the Old Testament, there was dimness as if the light of understanding was coming through a veil. In the New Testament we see unveiled faces, and God's own marvelous light.

There is no disparagement of the Old Testament, but simply the recognition of the fact that the Bible is a progressive book. It is a dynamic book! The second part contains more advanced and developed truth so that we may interpret and use the first part more fully.

God is the same God in both Testaments. In the New, God is more clearly revealed and accessible, and our responsibility, as His children, is more obvious and urgent. Our hearts are guided, regulated and changed through the empowerment of God's Spirit so that we may live by righteous principles found in both Testaments. Both Testaments announce the coming of Jesus Christ to establish God's Kingdom on earth.

John the Baptist, the last prophet of the Old Testament, entered human history to announce the coming of the Messiah. Jesus Christ came to bring us into an eternal relationship with God, to bring a message of peace to individuals as well as to the world, and to deliver people from the slavery of sin.

He was rejected and crucified, both by His own people, and by the pagan world. The message of Christ's death and resurrection went out in the Greek language into the world that was under Roman rule, and brought the hope of messianic deliverance both for the present and for the future, when Jesus Christ will rule the world. Malachi was written in about 450 to 430 BC—just before the period between the testaments.

Malachi 3:1: "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.