

Between the Testaments!

Knowledge of the events **between** Malachi & Matthew can be helpful.
The "Old Testament" was completed with Malachi in about 397 bc.

THE SILENT YEARS ARE ESTABLISHED...Malachi 4:4-6

Elijah is promised...The Word is lifted up...The Blessing & the Curse are restated. Note Psalm 124:9 for a relevant teaching and/or prophecy on this time period. Here is a **summary** of the events describing the condition of the Jewish nation leading up to and during the 400 silent years/587 B.C. Babylonian exile/50 years later the Babylonian empire was overthrown by Media-Persia (Daniel's Babylonian prophecies are fulfilled)/536 B.C. Cyrus, the Persian Emperor decrees the return of the Jewish remnant/50,000 returned with Zerubbabel/21 years later the temple is completed (515 BC)/458 BC **Ezra** returns with another remnant 57 years later - it is a small remnant - but through them law & ritual are restored/446 BC **Nehemiah** returns (12 years later) and rebuilds the walls/The remnant is indeed just that, for the lion's share of the Jews choose to remain in Babylonia.

THE PERSIAN PERIOD (536-333 B.C.)

Pretty uneventful/the Jews often enjoyed favor apart from one incident of rebellion in 721 B.C. (see 2 Kings 17:24-41 the Assyrian Emperor repopulates Samaria with foreigners. These transplants were the ones who provided most of the resistance to the returned remnant. Apparently the rival worship of these peoples was established toward the end of Persian rule (John 4:19-22) by the founding of the Samaritan temple.

THE GREEK PERIOD (333-323 B.C.)

Alexander the Great rules from age 20 to 32 and politically transforms the face of the world. He is the "horn" of Daniel 8:1-7. J. S. Baxter says: "In his Syrian campaign he marched southward on Jerusalem. Josephus tells how the high priest Jaddua stepped forward to invoke the conqueror's clemency. Alexander, who is said to have recognized in Jaddua the fulfillment of a dream, not only spared Jerusalem and offered sacrifice to Yahweh but also had the prophecies of Daniel read to him (concerning the overthrow of the Persian empire by a king of Grecia); and after this he treated the Jews with marked preferment, giving them full rights of citizenship with Greeks in his new city, Alexandria, and throughout his cities. This, in turn, created decidedly pro-Greek sympathies among the Jews and along with Alexander's spreading of the Greek language and civilization, had far-reaching repercussions in the Hellenistic spirit which developed among the Jews, and greatly affected their mental outlook afterward."

THE EGYPTIAN PERIOD (323-204 BC)

The early death of Alexander resulted in the division of his kingdom between his **four generals**. These are the "notable ones" of Daniel 8:21,22. The Ptolemaic Dynasty now covered Palestine. During this period the renowned Alexandrian library and the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek was accomplished. The Jews were so numerous that this Greek translation was necessary. This made the availability of the Scriptures to the Gentiles complete. When Ptolemy Epiphanes took the throne at the age of five, **Antiochus** the Great invaded Egypt. So Judea came to be under Syrian control.

(Continued)

THE SYRIAN PERIOD (204-165 BC)

During this period Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea, and Trachonitis emerge as divided areas within Palestine. With the assuming of the throne by **Antiochus Epiphanes**, a reign of terror began upon the Jews. He interfered with the temple & priesthood. Baxter says "He wreaked a terrible havoc in 170 B.C. Jerusalem was plundered, the wall torn down, the temple coarsely desecrated, and the population was subjected to monstrous cruelties. Thousands were massacred. The women and children were sold into slavery. The temple sacrifices were abolished. The Holy of Holies was rifled and its costly furniture carried away. Jewish religion was banned. Circumcision was prohibited on pain of death.

A foreign governor was appointed, a traitor made high priest, and paganism was forcibly imposed on the people. A commissioner was appointed to pollute both the temple at Jerusalem and that at Samaria, and to rededicate them, respectively, to Jupiter Olympius and Jupiter Xenius. All copies of the **Law** which could be found were either burned or defaced with idolatrous pictures, and the owners executed. The first book of Maccabees says that many Jews apostatized, and that some even joined in the persecution. In 168 B.C. Antiochus caused a female pig to be offered on the Jews holy altar of sacrifice, and then, on the very altar, erected a statue to Jupiter Olympius. In this awful decade "Palestine Jewry was indeed in the valley of the shadow of death."

THE MACCABEAN PERIOD (165-63 BC)

To respond to the excesses of Antiochus, God raised up an old priest from Moden named **Mattathias**. He had five sons, and his son Judas carried on his work, and came to be known as Judas Maccabeus, from the Hebrew word for hammer. For years a faithful band resisted and defeated enemy armies from their homes in the wilderness. Their knowledge of the territory made the ensuing guerilla warfare very difficult for Antiochus and his troops. They defeated (with God's help) armies of 50, 65, and 120 thousand men. **Judea was freed** from alien troops about 142 B.C. and enjoyed independence under very orthodox leaders.

WHAT IT ALL MEANS:

*This freedom ended in 63 BC when Pompey annexed Judea, and Judean freedom was dissolved with the emergence of Herod the Great (the Jewish usurper). Hopes focused on a **new political deliverer**. At the time of Christ there were over forty persons in Jerusalem and Judea making the claim to be the promised deliverer, or **Messiah**. It was the responsibility of Israel's religious leaders (scribes, pharisees et al) to investigate the credentials of each.*

God is always at work, even when it seems He has gone silent.

