

Between the Testaments

"...In the Fullness of Time..."

Background Information

For about 400 years, there is no divine record. The Old Testament ends with Malachi, but there is nothing in Scripture until John the Baptist comes on the scene, which is about 6 B.C.

Scholars refer to this period as the "intertestamental" period, and others have nicknamed it the "dark years" of Scripture.

However, much of what happened during these 400 years had been prophesied by Daniel and others.

Time Covered and Outline

With the close of Nehemiah (of the history books) and Malachi (of the prophetic books), there is nothing recorded in Scripture until about 6 BC. Since those books closed around 430-400BC, this period is typically spoken of as about four centuries.

The "outline" of this period can be traced to four major world empires, all of which were prophesied in Daniel 2 (Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue).

- I. The Babylonians (spoken of in Daniel and elsewhere)
- II. The Medes and Persians (Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah)
- III. The Greeks (prophesied by Daniel and others)
- IV. The Romans (who are in power at the opening of the New Testament era)

Major Themes

God's sovereignty
God's providence
Fulfillment of prophecy, both of Jews and Gentiles

God's Character in the Intertestamental Period

Providence
Sovereign
Wrathful

Jesus in the Intertestamental Period

Galatians 4:4-7 speaks of Christ being born "in the fullness of time." It is this period that makes sure the world is "just right" for the coming of the Savior, and the silence of these years is part of that preparation.

Key Words in the Intertestamental Period

Proselyte (a Gentile who converts to Judaism)

Synagogue (a development of this period where Jews gathered in their own towns for Bible study, as well as social gatherings)

Elsewhere in the World...

World events of this period are what shape these years, as empires rise and fall, climaxing with the Romans building their empire based on central rule, but local peace (the "Pax Romana").

Elsewhere in Scripture...

The silence of Scripture—even of prophets working—is deafening, but heightens awareness of a coming Messiah.