

The 400 Silent Years of Israel

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Introduction

During the course of reading your Bible you have just finished reading the Old Testament. You turn the page. You continue to read. It's now the New Testament that you are reading. As you continue to read you are not aware nor are you thinking of the vast time and change that happened in the turn of that page. If you have ever been to a play you will probably see Act I before intermission. It's at intermission that the curtain goes down. After intermission Act II begins. As the curtain is raised, you notice a different scene that there was at the end of Act I. this is what happens between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.

Now I guess I got you thinking and wondering what happened. Why is there no account, in the bible, of the time period between Malachi and Matthew? The reason for this essay is to answer some questions about this period of time. Questions such as what was this period of time, why did it occur, and what happened during the time era.

The Four Hundred Years of Silence

The time we are exploring in this essay is known as the 400 years of silence¹ from God to the people of Israel. An age of silence has begun. A silent God. A silent heaven. These years are called the "quiet years" because they are not reflected in the Bible. Four hundred years had passed. Four hundred years of silence since Malachi laid down his writing instrument and God went silent. Not a peep, not a whisper, not a word. 400 years would pass and no-one would hear anything from God until the day the angel Gabriel to Zacharias announcing the birth of John the

¹ Also known as The Inter-testamental Period

Baptist². Then Gabriel spoke to Mary, telling her of that Holy One which should be born of herⁱ, even the Son of God. Later the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, announcing the birth of the Christ-child, and from the opened heavens they heard the heavenly host praising God. This shattered 400 years of silence from God. This must mean that God was on speaking terms with his creation

Why is God Silent?

Where is God? Why doesn't he answer me must have been asked millions of times during this period between the Old and New Testaments. During this period of silence, nations rage and we see wars, sins, suffering and sorrow on every hand. The people of God often suffered at the hands of their enemies, and we see the ever-increasing and God-defying masses sinning and sinning and sinning. And yet in the midst of it all, God remains silent.

But why did God remain silent? I noted that God stayed silent 1s: Because of the law of sowing and reaping which states, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"ⁱⁱ, and 2nd this was a period when Israel was being judged for their sins. The bible shows us when Israel is enjoying the favor of God the heavens were open, but when Israel was in disfavor with God the heavens were silent.

What Happened During the Silent Years?

² Luke 1:5-25

³ Luke 1:30-32

⁴ Galatians 6:7,

At the close of the Old Testament the Nation of Israel is back again in the land of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity, but they are under the domination of the great world power of that day, Persia and the Medio-Persian empire³. Cyrus the Persian has allowed the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem. This was a much smaller structure than the one that Solomon had built. The Old Testament prophets have died, and there is a huge spiritual vacuum.

During the silent years there were a few governmental development formed for the nation le of Israel. It included such countries as the Persians, the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Maccabean, and by the time you get to the New Testament we have the Roman Empire in charge.

Under the Roman Empire came a new spiritual and religious development. It included Pharisees⁴, Sadducees, and Herodians. There were the rise of new organizations such as Synagogue, Scribes, and the Sanhedrin Council. The rise of these new sects and institutions, and the evolutions of Judaism have come about during those four hundred “silent” years between the Old Testament and the New.

Conclusion

The period between the Old and New Testament is known as the 400 years of silence from God. Most writings point out that these silent years came about because of the sins Israel. My question is are they really years of silence? Who can truly say that they were 400 silent years? Or could they have been a period in Israel history to prepare them for the next level and things yet to come for It is God who in Isaiah 55:8-9 states “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, ne your

³ Persian liberated the Israelites from Babylon allowing them to return to Palestine and practice their own religion.

⁴ The Hasidim gave birth to many new sect, among these new sects were the Pharisees,

ways my ways, declares the Lord. I feel that God was still watching and working thinks out for his people.

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