

# BIBLE 901

## INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Bible is God's *revelation* of Himself to man. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit and was written for us in two main divisions. The first contains thirty-nine books and is called the Old Testament. The second has twenty-seven books and is known as the New Testament. The term *testament* means *covenant* or *agreement*. The **death and resurrection of Jesus Christ** brought the old covenant to an end and began the new agreement. He is the focal point of all history. Hebrews 1:1-2 states that God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son.

**Studying this LIGHTUNIT, you will learn about** the events between the Old Testament and New Testament. You will see how the way was prepared for the coming of the Messiah and the spreading of the good news of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. A look at the political and religious situation will set the scene for the events that are shared in the *Gospels*, *Acts*, the *Epistles*, and *Revelation*. After you examine the inter-Testamental period, you will learn how the

four Gospels were written. You will see how they relate to one another and to the rest of the New Testament. You will also realize that Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation are really rooted in the facts which the Gospels record.

As you study the sequence of events in the New Testament, you will understand that the Bible is a living organism. Every part is vitally connected with every other part. The Holy Spirit, who is the Author, made sure of this. The central subject of the whole Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. Learning the names of the books of the New Testament, and how they fit into the time sequence, will give you a better grasp of the events of the first century. Studying about the authors will help you to appreciate the fact that God used ordinary men to pen the greatest **Book the world has ever known**. You will become aware that the Lord made sure that we would have a reliable written record so that we could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and find abundant life in Him.

## OBJECTIVES

**Read these objectives.** The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIGHTUNIT.

When you have finished this LIGHTUNIT, you should be able:

1. To name three world empires which governed Palestine during the inter-Testamental period.
2. To name three distinct civil periods between the Grecian and Roman empires.
3. To describe the Jewish literature of the inter-Testamental period.
4. To name three religious groups of Jesus' day and describe their religious viewpoints.
5. To tell how the political and religious situations of the inter-Testamental period paved the way for the coming of Christ and the spreading of the Gospel.
6. To identify the books, the writers, and the Author of the New Testament.
7. To name and describe the three divisions of the New Testament.
8. To describe the viewpoint of each of the four Gospels.
9. To name the three major divisions of Jesus' ministry.
10. To name the twelve apostles.
11. To explain the events and meaning of Pentecost.
12. To describe the nature and scope of Paul's journeys.
13. To name the seven churches in Revelation and describe the condition of each.
14. To describe the conflict which Jesus and His church have against the devil, and to name some rewards for those who, with Christ, overcome.
15. To tell some of the names of Jesus and the devil as given in Revelation.

Survey the LIGHTUNIT. Ask yourself some questions about this study. Write your questions here.

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## I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The last book of the Old Testament is Malachi. Between Malachi and the first book of the New Testament, Matthew, 400 years of history elapsed. The period between Malachi and Matthew has been called the inter-Testamental period, and also The Silent Years. The term *silent* is used because no words from any prophets of God were recorded as Scripture during this period. In Malachi 4:5-6 the prophet had warned the people that the next main event from God would be a ministry similar to that of Elijah. This prophecy was fulfilled at the beginning of the New Testament period in the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:7-15; 17:9-13).

The *various empires* that came into power during the inter-Testamental period had a great

effect on the Jews. Each new empire gained or fought for control of Palestine. The Gentile empires helped to mold Jewish life and thought. The attitudes and actions of the Jews during Christ's day were a result of the impact of the inter-Testamental period on their nation. The main empires during this time were the Persian, Grecian, and Roman, with Egyptian, Syrian, and Maccabean periods between the Grecian Empire and the Roman Empire. The *religious literature* of this period included the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Septuagint. The conflicts which the Jews had with these empires helped to shape the *religious groups* within Judaism. The three main groups in Jesus' day were the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees.

### SECTION OBJECTIVES

**Read these objectives.** When you have completed this section, you should be able:

1. To name three world empires which governed Palestine during the inter-Testamental period.
2. To name three distinct civil periods between the Grecian and Roman empires.
3. To describe the Jewish literature of the inter-Testamental period.
4. To name three religious groups of Jesus' day and describe their religious viewpoints.
5. To tell how the political and religious situations of the inter-Testamental period paved the way for the coming of Christ and the spreading of the Gospel.

### VOCABULARY

**Study these words** to enhance your learning success in this section.

**apocalyptic** (u pok' u lip' tik). Containing prophetic writings about the end of the world.

**apocrypha** (u pok' ri fu). Writings of doubtful authority excluded from the Bible.

**compromise** (kom' pru miz). To surrender or give up one's principles.

**denounce** (di nouns'). To condemn strongly as evil.

**desecrate** (des' u krät). To profane or treat as not sacred.

**Hellenistic** (hel' u nis' tik). Like the Greeks in language and customs.

**immortality** (im' ôr tal' u tē). The condition of being deathless or undying.

**inspiration** (in' spu rā' shun). A divine influence upon human beings which resulted in the writing of Scripture.

**monotheistic** (mon' u thē is' tik). Believing that there is only one God.

**polytheistic** (pol' ē thē is' tik). Believing in or worshiping many gods.

**pseudepigrapha** (sū du pig' ru fu). Writings bearing the names of false authors.



**Note:** All vocabulary words in this LIGHTUNIT appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

**Pronunciation Key:** hat, âge, câre, fâr; let, êqual, têrm; it, ĩce; hot, ôpen, ôrder; oil; out; cup, pût, rûle; child; long; thin; /TH/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.



### Complete these sentences.

- 1.1 The last book of the Old Testament is a \_\_\_\_\_, and b. \_\_\_\_\_ is the first book of the New Testament.
- 1.2 Between the books of Malachi and Matthew, \_\_\_\_\_ years of history elapsed.
- 1.3 The period of "The Silent Years" is also called the \_\_\_\_\_ period.
- 1.4 John the Baptist had a ministry similar to that of \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.5 Each major empire and power fought for control of the land of a. \_\_\_\_\_, where the b. \_\_\_\_\_ lived.
- 1.6 The three main empires in the silent period were the a. \_\_\_\_\_, b. \_\_\_\_\_, and c. \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.7 Other periods in between included the a. \_\_\_\_\_, b. \_\_\_\_\_, and c. \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.8 The three main religious groups in Jesus' day were the a. \_\_\_\_\_, b. \_\_\_\_\_, and c. \_\_\_\_\_.

## VARIOUS EMPIRES AND PERIODS

The Persian Empire, which existed during the time of Malachi, was followed by the Grecian Empire, which was divided into four segments following Alexander the Great's death. Then following 323 B.C., various ones of these segments held control over Palestine:

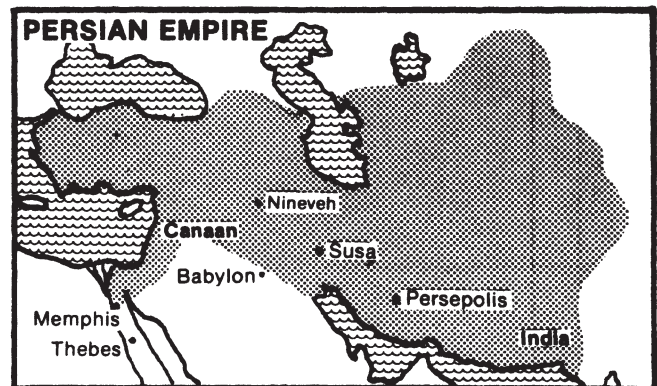
323-200 B.C., Egypt controlled

200-165 B.C., Syria controlled

165-63 B.C., Maccabeans controlled

(Jewish independence)

**The Persian Empire.** The Persian Empire was in existence during the time of Malachi. This empire dates from approximately 539 to 334

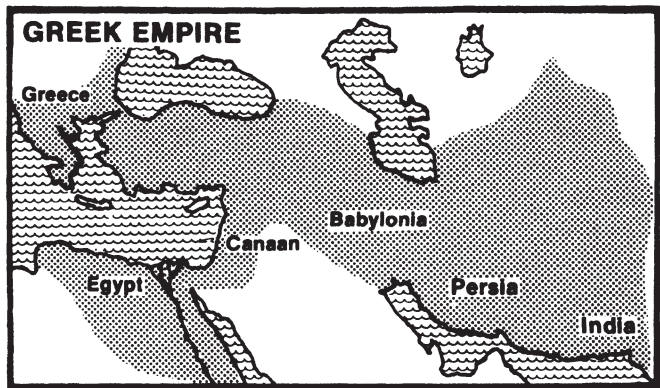


B.C. The Jewish people had just come out of the Babylonian captivity under which they had been taken captive to the land of Babylon for 70 years. This captivity had cured them of idol worship, and they now knew that Jehovah was the one true God. Two main groups of several thousand people returned to Palestine under Zerubbabel and Ezra during the Persian period. Many others decided to stay in the land where they had been captive. Under Persian rule the Jews were allowed to be governed by their high priest, who had to answer to the Persian rulers. The priest's office should have been used to give the people spiritual guidance. Instead, it became a much-sought-after political office. The violence connected with the priest's office caused the Persian government to send troops to occupy Jerusalem. They began to persecute the Jews and to impose fines on them. The Samaritans, Jews who had intermarried with Gentiles, meekly obeyed the Persian rulers and escaped persecution. The Jews hated the Samaritans for disobeying the law of Moses and **compromising** with the Persian rulers.

**The Grecian Empire.** The Grecian Empire followed the Persian Empire (334-323 B.C.) as Alexander the Great became a world conqueror. He came to power at the age of twenty and reigned for twelve years until his sudden death. When Alexander approached Jerusalem for

battle, Jaddua, the high priest, went out to meet him. With other priests and in full dress, he begged for mercy on behalf of Jerusalem. Alexander had had a previous dream in which he saw the priests coming out to meet him in peace, so he spared the city. He even offered sacrifices to the God of the Hebrews, Jehovah.

The priests told Alexander about Old Testament prophecies concerning him (Daniel 8:5, 21). Afterwards, Alexander showed the Jews favor. He used them in his army and granted them equal rights with Greeks as first citizens in his cities. The influence of Alexander upon many of the Jews caused them to become Grecian or **Hellenistic** in attitude. This attitude met with opposition from the conservative nationalistic Jews.



**Write the correct answers on the blanks.** Choose from the list to the right.

- |      |  |                              |
|------|--|------------------------------|
| 1.9  | The Persian Empire was in existence from a. _____ to b. _____ B.C.         | <b>answer numbers</b><br>343 |
| 1.10 | The Jewish people had been captive in the land of Babylon for _____ years. | 70<br>12                     |
| 1.11 | The Grecian Empire lasted from a. _____ to b. _____ B.C.                   | 539<br>334                   |
| 1.12 | Alexander came to power at age a. _____ and reigned for b. _____ years.    | 20<br>323<br>18              |



**Answer these questions in complete sentences.**

- 1.13 Why was the high priest's office important under the Persian Empire?

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- 1.14 Who were the Samaritans and why did the Jews hate them? \_\_\_\_\_

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1.15 Why did Alexander the Great spare Jerusalem, and what favors did he show to the Jews? \_\_\_\_\_

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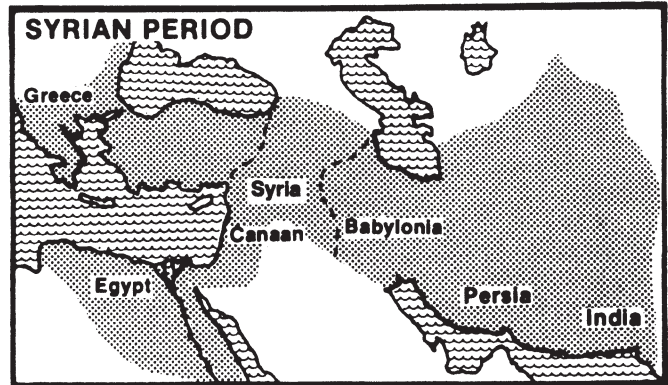
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**The Egyptian Period.** (323-200 B.C.) After the death of Alexander the Great, the Grecian Empire was divided among four of his generals. General Ptolemy Soter ruled over the southern section, known as Egypt. And thus since Judah was part of this kingdom, the Egyptians ruled Palestine.

During the reign of General Soter's son, Philadelphia, the Jews became concerned about losing their heritage. The business world of Egypt was forcing Jews to adopt the common Greek language, and they were losing the use of Hebrew. So the Jews had seventy scholars translate the Old Testament Scriptures into Greek. This translation became known as the Septuagint, or LXX version.

About this time, the northern kingdom, which had been given to the Seleucid dynasty, began to increase in power. Palestine became the battleground between the northern princes (Seleucids) and the Egyptian rulers (Ptolemies). In one of his invasions of Judea, Ptolemy Philopator tried to **desecrate** the Temple by entering the Holy of Holies, the most sacred part. Strong Jewish opposition caused him to retreat in confusion, but later he returned the opposition with persecution.

Out of the northern division the Syrian nation developed, grew stronger, and finally gained control of Judea.



**The Syrian period.** The Syrian period (200-165 B.C.) was a period of constant persecution and martyrdom. Hellenistic (Grecian) Jews were fighting the conservative nationalistic Jews over the high priest's office. The political fighting in Jerusalem gave the Syrian ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, a reason to invade the city. He hated the Jews; and, upon entering Jerusalem, he desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a pig on its altar. Later he erected a statue there to the heathen god, Jupiter Olympius.

Antiochus killed thousands of Jews and sold the women and children into slavery. He tried forcibly to make the Jews into pagans by cruel acts. He tore down the city walls and forbade sacrifices and circumcision, a sign to the Jews of their covenant relationship with Jehovah. He had them beaten with whips until many died. He tried to break their wills, but they resisted. The Samaritans again escaped persecution through compromise, gaining even more hatred from the Jews.

Finally, a priest by the name of Mattathias and his five sons rose in rebellion against Syrian bondage. After the father's death, the sons continued the struggle until eventual freedom was gained. The descendants of Mattathias became known as the Maccabees.

