

BIBLE 910

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I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND NEW TESTAMENT HISTORICAL BOOKS

The 400 years of history between Malachi and Matthew, known as the inter-Testamental period, or the silent years, had a great impact on the Jewish nation. The Gentile empires which fought for control of Palestine helped to mold Jewish life and thought. Many of the attitudes and actions of the Jews during Jesus' day can be traced to the impact made by these heathen

empires and the events of the inter-Testamental period. Both the religious literature produced during that period and the religious groups which sprung up at that time were very influential. As we review these factors, we shall observe the extent of their influence and how they paved the way for the coming of Christ and the spreading of the Gospel.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

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

1. To tell how the various empires and periods of the inter-Testamental time shaped Jewish thought and life.
2. To explain how the religious literature of that period had good and bad effects on the Jewish nation.
3. To name the religious groups of Jesus' day and to state how their views differed from His.
4. To give details about each of the four Gospels, including the date, purpose, theme, style, recipients, and content.
5. To describe the events of the Day of Pentecost.
6. To give details concerning the home missions ministries of Peter, Stephen, and Philip and the foreign missions ministry of Paul.

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.

catechism (kat' u kiz um). A form of oral teaching by questions and answers.

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

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

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

eyewitness (ī' wit nis). A person who testifies to what he has seen.

Hellenism (hel' u niz um). The adoption of the Greek language and customs.

hypocrite (hip' u krit). One who pretends to be what he is not.

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

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

synoptic (si nop' tik). Presenting a common view or viewed together.



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.

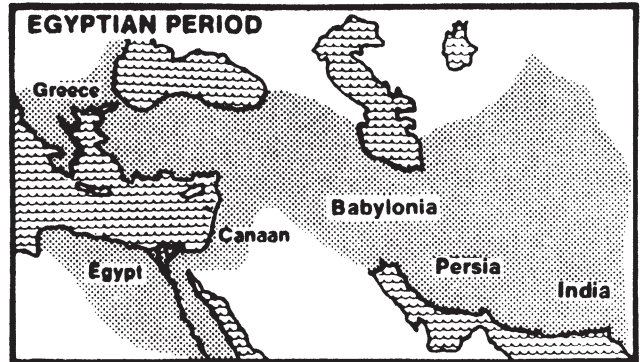
Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, īce; hot, ōpen, ōrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /FH/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.



Read Daniel 2:26 through 45; Ezra 1:1 through 8 and Chapter 7; Matthew 22:15 through 46 and 16:5 through 12; John 3:1 through 12; and Acts 23:6 through 9.

THE EMPIRES, LITERATURE, AND PARTIES

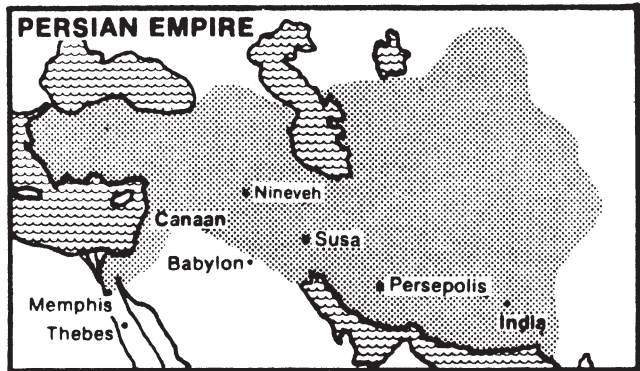
Following the seventy-year Babylonian Captivity, several thousands of Jews returned to their homeland of Palestine under the reign of the Persian Empire. This empire was in existence during the time of Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament. However, the events recorded by Matthew show that the Roman Empire was on the scene when the Gospel era unfolded. During those silent years, four centuries of human history had a profound effect on the hearts and minds of the Jewish people.



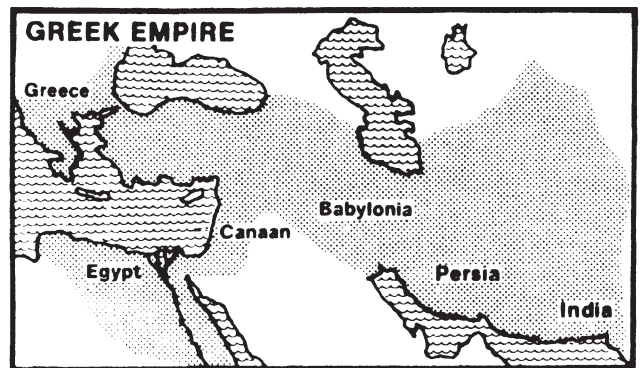
The inter-Testamental empires and periods.

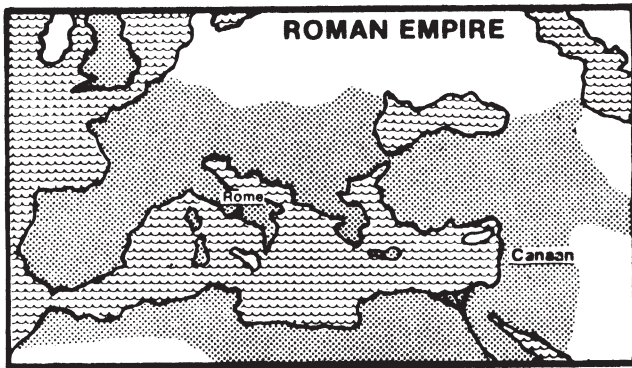
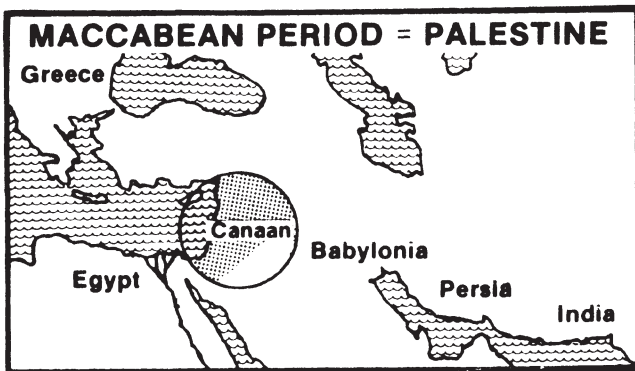
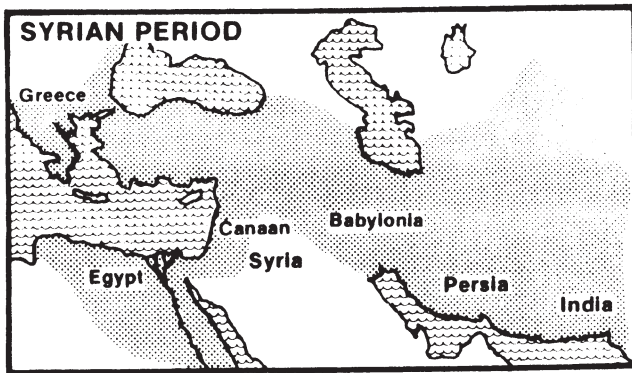
On the heels of the Persian Empire came the Grecian, which was subsequently divided into four segments. Then various ones of these segments gained control over Palestine before the Roman Empire came into prominence during the century before Christ came to this earth. An outline of these empires and periods portrays the political situation that preceded the Gospel age:

Persian Empire	539-334 B.C.
Grecian Empire	334-323 B.C.
Egyptian period	323-200 B.C.
Syrian period	200-165 B.C.
Maccabean period	165-63 B.C.
Roman Empire	63 B.C.



Under the Persian Empire the Jews were permitted to be governed by their high priest, who answered to the Persians. As this office became more political, rather than spiritual, violence erupted concerning it. The Persian government sent troops to occupy Jerusalem, persecuting and imposing fines on the Jews. The Samaritans, who meekly obeyed the Persian rulers, escaped persecution, but were hated by the Jews for disobeying Moses' Law and **compromising** with the Persians.





At the age of twenty, Alexander the Great became a world conqueror, ruling over the Grecian Empire for twelve short years. As he approached Jerusalem, Jaddua the high priest and the other priests in full dress went out to meet him to beg for mercy on the city. Alexander, who had had a dream depicting this event, spared Jerusalem and offered sacrifices to Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews. He was told about Old Testament prophecies concerning his person (Daniel 8:5,21) and afterwards showed the Jews great favor. He employed them in his army and gave them equal

rights with Greeks as first citizens in his cities. As a result many Jews became Grecian or **Hellenistic** in attitude, meeting with much opposition from the conservative nationalistic Jews.

After the death of Alexander, the Egyptian period followed, as the Grecian Empire was divided among four of his generals. Judea was a part of the southern section of Egypt, ruled by General Ptolemy Soter. The northern part came under control of the Seleucid dynasty, from which the Syrian nation arose. Under the reign of General Soter's son, Philadelphia, the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament was made. As the Syrians to the north began to increase in power, Palestine became the battleground between the Syrian princes (Seleucids) and the Egyptian rulers (Ptolemies). When invading Judea, one of the Ptolemies, Philopator, tried to **desecrate** the temple by entering the Holy of Holies. He retreated in confusion, gaining Jewish opposition for his foolish act, and retaliated with persecution. Eventually Judea came under the sway of Syria.

The Syrian period was one of constant persecution and martyrdom. Conservative nationalistic Jews fought the Hellenistic Jews over the high priest's office. Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian ruler, invaded Jerusalem and desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar. Later he erected a statue there to the heathen god, Jupiter Olympius. Antiochus tried to turn the Jews into pagans by cruel acts of torture. He killed thousands of them and sold women and children into slavery. He tore down the city walls, forbidding sacrifices and circumcision, a sign of the Jews' covenant relationship with Jehovah. The Jews resisted, although Antiochus had them beaten with whips until many died. The Samaritans gained even more hatred from the Jews during this period, as they again compromised to escape persecution. Finally, a family of Jews rose in rebellion and threw off the Syrian yoke of bondage.

The Maccabean period of Jewish independence lasted for approximately one hundred years. A priest named Mattathias and his five sons struggled against Syrian oppression until freedom was gained. The descendants of Mattathias became known as the Maccabees. After the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, Judas Maccabaeus became governor of Palestine. He purified and rededicated the temple in Jerusalem, which

gave rise to the Jewish Feast of Purification. In a further struggle with the Syrians, Judas asked aid from the Romans, an upcoming power, but was killed before help arrived. His descendants fought over Palestine until the Roman general, Pompey, took over the city of Jerusalem after a three-month siege. The Jews hated the Romans since Pompey entered the Holy of Holies and defiled the temple.

The Roman Empire came into real power in 63 B.C. and continued in existence for many hundreds of years, the longest reign of any earthly empire. Under Rome the Jewish high priest's office had only minor political influence. The Jews were required to pay tribute or taxes to Rome, to which the people were much opposed. The Romans were greatly influenced

by the Greeks, adopting much of their philosophy, art, and language. In many respects the Roman Empire provided an ideal setting for the coming of the Messiah. A common language and efficient road and water travel assisted the spreading of the Gospel. Jews, scattered all over the empire, built synagogues in which to worship God and to study the Old Testament Scriptures. A measure of peace and safety was guaranteed by a strong central government in Rome. Small rebellions against Rome were always brewing in Hebrew society, and the Jews were eagerly awaiting any sign of a prophet or Messiah to break the yoke of Roman bondage. Under that empire the fulness of time arrived for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Match these items.

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------|--|
| 1.1 | _____ Malachi | a. Jewish priest who fought against Syrians |
| 1.2 | _____ Alexander | b. Roman general who conquered Jerusalem |
| 1.3 | _____ Jaddua | c. purified and rededicated the temple |
| 1.4 | _____ Judas Maccabaeus | d. last book of the Old Testament |
| 1.5 | _____ Ptolemy Soter | e. father of Antiochus Epiphanes |
| 1.6 | _____ Septuagint | f. Jewish high priest who met Alexander |
| 1.7 | _____ Seleucids | g. cruel Syrian ruler who persecuted Jews |
| 1.8 | _____ Antiochus Epiphanes | h. translation of the Old Testament Scriptures |
| 1.9 | _____ Pompey | i. family that brought Jewish independence |
| 1.10 | _____ Mattathias | j. Syrian princes of the north |
| | | k. ruler of the Grecian Empire |
| | | l. general who ruled Egypt after Alexander |



Complete these statements.

- 1.11 The 400 years between Malachi and Matthew are known as the inter-Testamental period, or _____ years.
- 1.12 The Babylonian Captivity of the Jews lasted for _____ years.
- 1.13 Under the reign of the _____ Empire, thousands of Hebrews returned to their homeland of Palestine.
- 1.14 When Matthew recorded his Gospel, the _____ Empire was in control.
- 1.15 Under the Persian Empire, the Jews were permitted to be governed by their _____.
- 1.16 The descendants of a Jewish priest named Mattathias became known as the _____.