

ROUTE 66
Session Number Twelve
Wednesday, March 12, 2014

BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS - THE SILENT YEARS

1 As a very amateur history buff, there are certain periods of the past in particular that
2 fascinate me. In recent years - and within my own life time - that years between 1932
3 and 1945 provide such an interest. In those 13 years came the best and worst of world
4 leaders: Stalin, Hitler, Goering, Tojo, Mussolini and others were among the worst of all
5 human history. But then there were great leaders as well such as Churchill, FDR
6 (Roosevelt), Eisenhower, Montgomery and so many others who, though they each had
7 their own foibles, were leaders who saved the world from terrible darkness.

8
9 In tonight's study, we come across a FOUR HUNDRED YEAR period, filled with such
10 examples of good and bad. It's that 400-year period that took place between Malachi,
11 the prophet, and John the Baptist. Scholars often refer to this time as THE SILENT
12 YEARS. For four centuries God did not speak to the human race. As we shall see
13 tonight, the period provided some fabulous men and women who brought comfort and
14 hope to humanity; however, it also provided some of the most infamous human creatures
15 who ever walked the face of this earth.

16
17 But at the culmination of this time period, God provided the greatest of them all:

18
19 Galatians 4:1-7 KJV

20 **Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant,**
21 **though he be lord of all; [2] But is under tutors and governors until the time**
22 **appointed of the father. [3] Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage**
23 **under the elements of the world: [4] But when the fulness of the time was come, God**
24 **sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, [5] To redeem them that**
25 **were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. [6] And because ye**
26 **are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba,**
27 **Father. [7] Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an**
28 **heir of God through Christ.**

29
30 Here is the same passage from The Message:

31
32 Galatians 4:1-7

33 **Let me show you the implications of this. As long as the heir is a minor, he has no**
34 **advantage over the slave. Though legally he owns the entire inheritance, [2] he is**

1 **subject to tutors and administrators until whatever date the father has set for**
2 **emancipation. [3] That is the way it is with us: When we were minors, we were just**
3 **like slaves ordered around by simple instructions (the tutors and administrators of**
4 **this world), with no say in the conduct of our own lives.**

5 **[4] But when the time arrived that was set by God the Father, God sent his Son,**
6 **born among us of a woman, born under the conditions of the law [5] so that he**
7 **might redeem those of us who have been kidnapped by the law. Thus we have been**
8 **set free to experience our rightful heritage. [6] You can tell for sure that you are**
9 **now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into**
10 **our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!" [7] Doesn't that privilege of intimate**
11 **conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child? And if you**
12 **are a child, you're also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance.**

13
14 **What an emancipation! God pinpointed the exact time and place where "the Word**
15 **would become flesh and dwell among us, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) That**
16 **"time" came at the close of 400 of the most turbulent and fascinating periods in all human**
17 **history.**

18
19 **I suggest that it is very difficult to catch the massive implications of the Gospels**
20 **(Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) without at least a basic comprehension of the 400 years**
21 **preceding them. So....let's begin the journey.....**

22 23 THE SILENT YEARS

24
25 **When the Old Testament prophet Malachi ministered, it was still the Persian period -**
26 **around 400 B.C. It was not a particularly good time in human government; however,**
27 **Malachi closed his writing with a phenomenal prophecy of what would come next (which**
28 **would be 400 years later)"**

29 30 **Malachi 4:5-6**

31 **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and**
32 **dreadful day of the Lord: [6] And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the**
33 **children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the**
34 **earth with a curse.**

35
36 **The New Testament reveals who "Elijah" would be: Matthew 11:7-14**

37 **And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John,**
38 **What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? [8] But**
39 **what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear**
40 **soft clothing are in kings' houses. [9] But what went ye out for to see? A prophet?**

1 yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. [10] For this is he, of whom it is
2 written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way
3 before thee. [11] Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there
4 hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the
5 kingdom of heaven is greater than he. [12] And from the days of John the Baptist
6 until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.
7 [13] For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. [14] And if ye will
8 receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.
9

10 It was John the Baptist who would prepare the way for Jesus the Messiah. Jesus
11 confirmed that Malachi's prophecy would come true in the person of John the Baptist.
12

13 An Outline Of Human History Between The Testaments

14
15 THE PERSIAN PERIOD – 450 - 330 B.C. During this time Judah (Jerusalem the
16 capital) were free to worship as they pleased, ruled by high priests who were responsible
17 to the Jewish government.
18

19 THE GREEK (HELLENISTIC) PERIOD - 330 - 166 B.C. With the coming of
20 Alexander the Great most human history was changed. (Hellenism is the term used to
21 describe the beliefs and practices of those who lived under ancient Greek rule).
22

23 In 222 B.C. (just as Daniels interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream - Daniel 2)
24 indicated, the Persian armies were defeated by the Greeks under Alexander. This man
25 was convinced that Greek culture could unify the world (which it did for a long time).
26 Alexander allowed the Jews to keep their laws and even granted them certain exemptions
27 from taxation during their Sabbath years. He was the founder of the great Egyptian city
28 of Alexandria, where he encouraged Jews to live. **It was during this time that the Old**
29 **Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek - the Septuagint vision, around 250**
30 **B.C.**
31

32 THE HASMONEAN PERIOD - 166 - 63 B.C. During this time came the great revolt
33 of the Jews led by Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus. The Jews were being persecuted
34 now by Antiochus III and his even more wicked son Antiochus III (Epiphanies) who
35 destroyed scriptures and demanded their religious beliefs be enforced on Jews. Under
36 Judas Maccabees, the Greek rulers ship was undermined and destroyed.
37

38 THE ROMAN PERIOD - 63 B.C. In the year 63 before Christ, the Roman General
39 Pompey captured Jerusalem and the provinces around it became subject to Rome. It was
40 during this time, as we shall see, that Herod the Great came to power.

1 **Here is a most important thing to remember:** Up until the 4th century B.C., most of human activity and achievement was in the "Fertile Crescent" (today's Iran and Iraq). But now the center of political power will begin shifting to the West. A very historic battle took place at Salamis (near Athens) in which the Greeks soundly defeated the (up to that time) greatest human military armada in history, the Persian advance to the west. The Persian fleet was smashed for good in 480 B.C. (Bible students know this as the prelude to the story of Ahaseurus (Xerxes) and his love for Hadassah (Queen Esther).

2
3 **DEVELOPMENTS IN ISRAEL DURING THE 400 YEARS**

4
5 When we start studying the New Testament, we come across names and groups that were
6 not found in the Old Testament. They were developed during the time between Malachi
7 and Matthew. In the New we read of

- 8
9 ✓ Scribes
10 ✓ Pharisees
11 ✓ Sadducees
12 ✓ Herodians
13

14 **The Scribes** - These men were highly-esteemed people as interpreters and teachers of the
15 Scriptures. They came into prominence after the return from Babylonian captivity. Ezra
16 himself was a priest and a scribe. For the most part, the scribes bitterly opposed Jesus
17 Who frequently denounced them for making the Scriptures of "none effect by their
18 tradition" (Matthew 15:9).

19
20 **The Pharisees** - were a very influential sect of the Jews, arising in prominence in the time
21 of the Maccabees (during the overthrow of Greek rule a century or so before Christ).
22 They had separated themselves from politics - but were zealous guardians of the Mosaic
23 Law and very conservative in belief. The Pharisees accepted the ideas of an after-life
24 and of the supernatural.

25
26 **The Sadducees** - on the other hand were rationalists, the liberals of their day, who denied
27 the existence of spirits, the resurrection and the immortality of the soul. (The "old saw"
28 is that is why these people were "sad-you-see"). These people comprised a much
29 smaller group than the Pharisees and belonged mainly to the aristocracy, wealthy,
30 influential, priestly parties of the nation. They also had their rise during the time of the
31 Macabees.

32
33 **The Herodians** - were not a religious cult but were rather a political party. They took
34 their name from Herod, and their authority from Rome. To them Christ was nothing more

1 than a revolutionary.
2

3 **The Zealots** - were an extremist group and were fanatical defenders of the theocracy and
4 engaged in acts of violence against the Romans. Luke 6:15 suggests that Simon, one of
5 Jesus' disciples, came from this group.
6

7 **The Jewish Sanhedrin** - was the supreme council or court in Israel (before whom Jesus
8 appeared in trial). It was composed of 70 men, plus the high priest who served as its
9 president.. The membership came from the highest echelon of priests, scribes and elders
10 but strangely enough we do not have good record of how they were chosen. During the
11 time of the Roman governors, such as Pontius Pilate, the Sanhedrin had jurisdiction only
12 over the province of Judea (the area around Jerusalem). This body had its own police
13 force which could arrest people - as they did Jesus Christ. While the Sanhedrin heard
14 both civil and criminal cases and could impose the death penalty - but could not fulfill it.
15 That remained in the province of Roman authorities. When General Titus and the
16 Roman armies wiped out Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Sanhedrin disappeared.
17

18 **The Synagogue** - The concept of the synagogue probably had its basic roots during the
19 Babylonian captivity and would have been extant in the Old Testament. When the Jews
20 arrived in Babylon they had no temple in which to worship (back in destroyed Jerusalem
21 the Temple built by Solomon was destroyed). It is believed that the Jews began to
22 assemble in small groups where they received instruction and worshiped, keeping alive
23 their knowledge of the Old Testament Law.
24

25 A BASIC OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE "400 YEARS" 26

27 I am borrowing rather heavily from the writings of Ray Stedman (the late and truly fine
28 pastor in California whose books remain popular) and his synopsis of this timeline.
29

30 After Malachi had ceased his prophesying and the canon of the Old Testament closed -
31 that is, the number of the books in the Old Testament was fulfilled and the inspired
32 prophets ceased to speak. During the next four centuries God rearranged history and by
33 the time of John the Baptist the stage was completely reset.
34

35 In about 435 B.C. the center of world power began to shift from the East to the West. By
36 that I mean that up to this time Babylon (Iraq and the Fertile Crescent) had been the major
37 world power, succeeded by the Medo-Persian Empire.
38

39 Alexander the Great
40

ANCIENT ARTIST'S TILE IMAGE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT



At the height of the Persian power there arose in the country of Macedonia (Greece) a man by the name of Philip of Macedon (Philippi was named for him). He became a strong leader and united the islands of Greece and became their ruler. His wife bore him a son who was destined to become one of the great world leaders of all time - Alexander the Great. In 330 B.C. a tremendous battle between the Persians and the Greeks entirely altered the course of history. In that battle, Alexander, as 20-year old man, led the armies of Greece in a classic victory over the Persians. From that time on, the center of world power shifted farther west into Greece - and the Grecian Empire was born (remember Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 3).

Just a year after that battle, Alexander the Great led armies down toward Egypt - then under the control of Syrians. Enroute he planned to conquer Jerusalem as well, and, if need be - destroy it. Word reached the Holy City that the Greeks were coming. According to the historian of that day, Josephus, an amazing thing happened: The high priest at that time, a godly old man by the name of Jaddua (who is mentioned in Nehemiah) took the sacred writings of Daniel the prophet and, accompanied by a host of other priests dressed in white robes, met Alexander some distance outside the city. Jaddua - according to Josephus - showed the great Greek general the predictions made by Daniel a few hundred years earlier, especially the one about "the notable goat with the horn in his forehead, who would smash Medo-Persia and conquer the world. Again, according to Josephus, on that basis Alexander bypassed Jerusalem and saved it from destruction. Note: the only report we have of this is from the one historian.

Alexander died in 323 B.C at the age of 33. He was in a drunken stupor in Babylon

1 because he had no more "worlds" to conquer. His son had been murdered earlier so he
2 had no heir. His empire was divided among his four primary generals. Several are
3 noteworthy to a Bible student:
4

5 **One was Ptolemy**, who gained Egypt and the northern African nations, including Egypt..
6 **The other was Seleucus** who gained Syria to the north of Israel. For the next 100 years
7 the land of Israel was caught in the conflict between Syria on the north and Egypt on the
8 south.
9

10 **REMEMBER OUR STUDY OF DANIEL:** The eleventh chapter of Daniel gives the
11 amazingly-accurate account of those years.
12

13 THE HELLENISTS

14
15 As you might suspect, Greek influence in Israel was becoming very strong. A political
16 party arose among the Jews called the Hellenists - who were very eager to bring Grecian
17 culture and thought into the nation and to loosen up some of the strict Jewish laws. **WE**
18 **KNOW THEM BETTER BY THE NAME SADDUCEES** - the liberals. They were
19 opposed by yet others there who wanted the status quo kept from generation to
20 generation. The main party resisting Hellenism was **THE PHARISEES**. They insisted
21 upon keeping traditions. They grew stronger and stronger, becoming more legalistic and
22 rigid in their requirements. **THE MOST SCORCHING WORDS JESUS EVER**
23 **UTTERED DURING HIS 33 YEARS ON EARTH WERE DIRECTED TOWARD THE**
24 **PHARISEES.**
25

26 The Samaritans

There was a young rebel Jewish priest who married a Samaritan (gentile) and in open rebellion against Jewish laws built a temple on Mount Gerizim (which over looked a valley which contained a well where later Jesus met the Woman of Samaria (John 4). This caused intense, fanatical rivalry between Jews and Samaritans, a fact reflected in several parts of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). This took place during the time of the Babylonian exile.

27
28 It was during this time the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek. It was given
29 the name **SEPTUAGINT** which means 70 - which was the number of translators. This
30 version is still used in many parts of the world even today.
31

32 THE MACCABEES

1 Now, getting back to the Greek influence in Israel between the Testaments:
2

3 In 203 B.C., a king named Antiochus the Great came into power in Syria. He captured
4 Jerusalem from the Egyptians. He was not terrible, but when he died his brother
5 Antiochus Epiphanes succeeded him. He was one of the most vicious and violent
6 persecutors of the Jews ever known. He is often referred to as “the antichrist of the Old
7 Testament.” He fulfilled some of the prophecies of Daniel (“a contemptible person” and
8 “a vile king.”) His first act was to depose the high priest in Jerusalem, ending a
9 succession that had begun with Aaron (Moses’ brother) in the book of Exodus. The
10 priesthood became a “position for sale to the highest bidder.”
11

12 At the height of his power, Antiochus actually intruded into the Holy of Holies in the
13 Temple where he destroyed the scrolls of the law and took a sow and offered it on the
14 sacred altar. Then, with a broth made from the flesh of the pig, Antiochus sprinkled
15 everything in the Temple, utterly defiling it.
16

17 It was that act of defiling the temple which is referred to by our Lord as the “desolating
18 sacrilege” (Matthew 24:15) which Daniel had predicted and which also became a sign of
19 the coming desolation in the Temple (following the Rapture, I believe) when Antichrist
20 will enter the Temple in the Holy City, call himself God, and thus defile the Temple
21 again.
22

23 Each year, when I visit Israel, I drive through a little town about 20 miles west of
24 Jerusalem (halfway between the Holy City and Ben Gurion International Airport) called
25 Modin. Here lived a great priest named Judas Maccabaeus. They led the revolt against
26 the Greeks, out-manned and out-weaponed at every turn - yet they threw out the Greeks
27 with incredible military strategy. And for about 100 years, the Jews were self-
28 governing.
29

30 THE ROMANS 31

32 In 63 B.C. Roman General Pompey came with his legions from Damascus to quell an
33 uprising in Jerusalem. The slaughter in the Holy City was dreadful. But from that time
34 on, Israel was under the authority and power of Rome.
35

36 Through a series of agreements and money exchanging hands, a man from the eastern
37 side of the Dead Sea was appointed by Rome as the king of the Jews. His name was
38 HEROD THE GREAT.
39
40

1 The reason he was termed “the Great” was not because of his kindness, leadership, or
2 other positive accolades; he was deemed “great” because of his phenomenal building
3 programs. Herod had many palaces, the ruins of which still stand: Jerusalem, Masada,
4 Caesarea, Herodeon, Machaerus (in Jordan) and many others. They were fabulous
5 palaces. He even had his men construct an artificial port at Caesarea, some of which
6 still stands. He rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem, a project requiring decades to complete.
7 Most historians concede that the Temple - the one Jesus knew - should have been one of
8 the seven ancient wonders of the world.

9
10 But Herod was a killer, wiping out many members of his own family - wives and sons
11 whom he thought might be plotting to take his throne. Herod died a horrible death - the
12 stench of his body so vile that people could hardly get in the same room with him. This
13 is the condition he was in when the wise men came from the East, inquiring about “a
14 new-born king.” His fury caused the death of infants under two years in Bethlehem.

15 16 Julius Caesar and his Successors

17
18 There can be little question as to the military genius of Julius Caesar. His wisdom in
19 dealing with the Roman Senate might be a different story, however. On March 15th, 44
20 B.C., while entering the Senate, this man “who would be dictator,” was assassinated.
21 Led by two senators, Cassius and Brutus, Caesar was stabbed many times and lay in a
22 pool of blood, dying. At the time, he had been “enjoying” a rather lengthy affair with
23 Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt - and they had a son together.

24
25 Caesar had two admirers who now fought for his role in Roman politics – Mark Antony
26 and Octavian. Antony picked up with Cleopatra where Caesar left off, offending many
27 in Rome. Now it became a years-long battle between the two men as to whom would be
28 Rome’s leader.

29
30 The final war of the Roman Republic - also known as Antony’s civil war or the war
31 between Antony and Octavian - brought down one of the adversaries and lifted the other.
32 The Roman Senate declared on the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra, which meant her lover
33 Mark Antony was already “behind the eight ball” in this war. At the decisive Battle of
34 Actium (just off the west coast of Greece in the Ionian Sea) on September 2, 31 B.C.,
35 Antony’s forces were defeated (many of his warriors deserted him.) Octavian’s victory
36 enabled him to consolidate his power and he became known as CAESAR AUGUSTUS.
37 Now, as Paul Harvey used to say, “You know the rest of the story.” So what happened?
38 Luke 2:1-7 **And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from**
39 **Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. [2] (And this taxing was first**
40 **made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) [3] And all went to be taxed, every one**

1 into his own city. [4] And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of
2 Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because
3 he was of the house and lineage of David:) [5] To be taxed with Mary his espoused
4 wife, being great with child. [6] And so it was, that, while they were there, the days
5 were accomplished that she should be delivered. [7] And she brought forth her
6 firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger;
7 because there was no room for them in the inn.

8
9 Tonight, we have attempted the impossible - consolidating 400 years of dramatic human
10 history into less than an hour. God knew the exact time to send forth His beloved Son.

11
12 Next week - the Gospels, Part I. At the most precise time in human history, carefully
13 orchestrated by God Himself, Jesus came to this world. His coming split the ages – B.C.
14 (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini - after Christ). **It is truly....the greatest story**
15 **ever told.**
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