

UNDERSTANDING THE “ONE STORY” OF SCRIPTURE
Week 10 – JROC – The Significance of the Intertestamental Times
January 4, 2026

John 3:16 – *...for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten (one-of-a-kind; unique) Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.* What is the context? To whom is Jesus speaking? Why?

In the fullness of the time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law... (Gal. 4:4). The Jewish Apostle Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles – penned these words to the mostly Gentile believers in Galatia. Why is *In the fullness of the time* so impactful? From a BROAD perspective, God is setting the stage to carry out His plan for His creation! God, Who is above time and space, created man and placed us in time and in space...and GOD has INTERCEDED for us – in our time and space, while in our sinful condition, in the HISTORY of the world. God has been revealing...God is continuing to reveal - HIS-STORY which is moving creation and redeemed man (both Jewish believers and Gentile believers) toward RESTORATION – for His/ God's glory and honor (Rom. 8:19-23)! Throughout the Bible, God progressively reveals Who He is and progressively reveals His plan. Do we grasp God's plan and how He has been revealing Himself?

In the past weeks we discussed the account of the shepherds in Luke which speaks to the Messiah Who came as the Lamb of God/the ultimate sacrifice – Who came to die for our sins at His first coming. In the book of Matthew, however, when the Magi appear on the scene we read of them visiting Jesus with a different “agenda”. The Jewish shepherds found Jesus as the Lamb of God Who would be sacrificed – at His first coming. The Gentile Magi were looking for the King of the Jews! When will Jesus come as King? At His physical Second Coming. In the full Christmas account (Luke 1 & 2 and Matthew 2) we are given a clear picture of Jesus' first coming and Jesus' second coming. How exciting!

As we move forward, consider the Magi. Why are they in the picture? They're Gentiles! How do the Gentiles fit in with the Jewish people in God's plan?

Into what kind of world did Jesus enter at His first coming?

We have spoken about the Intertestamental times several times over the years. How would you define the Intertestamental times? “Intertestamental” means “between the testaments.” A specific timeframe is understood which covers 430 years. Malachi wrote the book of Malachi between 450 and 430 BC. These years between the OT and the NT were labeled as the “430 years of silence” (many times labeled by rounding it off to “400 years of silence”) during which time there was no prophetic voice from God (thus the silence) – no prophets speaking forth God's message WARNING Israel of discipline/judgment for veering from God! In considering the timing of the Intertestamental times, Malachi was the last prophet to WARN Israel.

Mal. 4:5-6 – God told His people, the Jewish people, *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD* (a time of judgment, vengeance, wrath). *And he (Elijah) will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers*, (John came in the spirit and power of Elijah [Matt. 11:3-4; Luke 1:16-17]). Rev. 11:3, 6 – it is strongly suggested that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses) - *LEST I COME AND STRIKE THE EARTH WITH A CURSE!* – and thus the last prophetic voice...the last words of the OT.

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The 430 years of divine silence with only Malachi's words of condemnation ringing in their ears...lasted until another prophet was called with a message from God. Who was that prophet? JOHN the Baptizer/the Immerser. (Matt. 11:7-10 – *A prophet? Yes...but more than a prophet.*)

NOTE: How many years were the children of Israel in Egypt? For 430 years and then they were delivered via the Exodus – through the lambs' blood on the doors! Ex. 12:41 - *And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years*—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. Gen. 15:13 - *Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs (in Egypt), and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.* In the land of Egypt for 430 years but afflicted for 400 of those years after which God used Moses to deliver the children of Israel. After 430 years of silence during the Intertestamental times, THE Deliverer, Jesus, would be sent, born of a woman, born under the law...

The Prophet, John the Baptizer spoke God's message to the Jewish people...

Matt. 3:1-2 - *In those days John the Baptizer came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'* “At hand” - to come or draw near; to approach. The Messiah had come! The silence was broken! The Intertestamental times began after Malachi and ended when the angel Gabriel was sent to Zacharias with a message from God regarding the herald of the Messiah, Zacharias' son, John. This is why the people MARVELED!!

Daniel did not live and minister during the Intertestamental times. His life and prophetic ministry occurred during the Babylonian exile and the early Persian period, well before that gap “between the testaments”. The book of Daniel is filled with accounts of dreams and visions!

Intertestamental Times Defined: The Intertestamental timeframe spanned from the close of the Hebrew Scriptures (approx. 430 BC with Malachi) to the birth of Christ (about 6 BC - Herod the Great died in 4 BC – 2 years following Jesus' birth). We need to understand that the Intertestamental time covers part of the Persian rule over Israel, moving through Greek rule over Israel, and into early Roman rule over Judea which began in 146 BC...with no biblical prophetic writings and warnings.

NOTE: Daniel's prophecies, describe events leading into the Intertestamental era (e.g., Greek rulers like Antiochus Epiphanes), but he himself lived about 70 years earlier than the

Intertestamental times, witnessing Babylon's fall and Persia's conquest of Babylon. Later prophets as in Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi ministered during post-exilic/exile times – BUT – still before the full intertestamental silence. AGAIN – the Intertestamental times mean “between the testaments” – Daniel is in the OT – along with the post-exilic Prophets in the OT.

What was the significance of the Intertestamental times? In Israel’s world, what changed?

The Jewish people, during the Intertestamental times were ruled by a Gentile-dominated world. Under Greece, Hellenism spread which is Greek philosophy which taught that God was NOT the center...man was the center! (Gnosticism – matter – evil; spirit/spiritual – good. To spiritualize God’s word is to NOT understand it literally). Jewish people who ascribed to Hellenism, and many did, came against the traditional Jewish religious leaders.

Prior to the “430 years of silence”...

- The glory of God had departed from the Temple in Jerusalem. WHY? Israel had set up multiple idols in the House of God – the Temple in Jerusalem! (Eze. 8 through Eze. 11).

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- In 586 BC, Babylon attacked Jerusalem...broke down the walls...destroyed the Temple and carried away articles from the house of the LORD (Ezra 1:7-11).
- Synagogues were established in Babylon with Rabbis teaching.

The times were politically turbulent (coming under various nations (Israel paying taxes and tribute money to the various nations; various sects of Judaism - differing authorities)...ALL OF WHICH deeply shaped expectations for the coming Deliverer, the Messiah Jesus!. By the time of John the Baptizer and Jesus... Messianic hope was more intense...apocalyptic movements (belief in an imminent end of the world) were more focused upon, and the longing, the yearning for redemption was more intensified – yet - approached differently among the various Jewish sects in their practice of looking for and recognizing the Messiah.

We need to realize that during the Intertestamental time roads were constructed; LXX/Septuagint – Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek so that the world could read God’s word in Koine Greek. Pax Romana – peace – to a certain degree. All helpful in spreading the Word of God.

YET – there was chaos! Spiritual warfare – Satan who had opposed God since his Lucifer days (Isa. 14:12-15 – “I will” – 5X (vv. 13-14) – and declared he wanted to be like the Most High. Satan was on the attack!

The result: a broader range of differences within Judaism which included:

Pharisees who adhered more to the oral law – manmade laws of how to live out the Torah. The oral law was and is more revered than the written law which Moses wrote – Ex. 24:3-4; Dt. 31:2; Josh 8:31). The religious Jewish leadership engaged in the practice of living out the law according to Rabbinic teaching and thought which was and is predominant. The focus was NOT the transformation of the heart!!

Sadducees who were of the priestly tribe and who had authority over the temple, but who didn't believe in the doctrine of resurrection (Dan. 12:1-2) and angels. The Second Temple over which the Sadducees had authority, taught that the Messiah would come as a warrior – NOT a suffering servant Who would pay the penalty for man's sin by laying down His own life.

Essenes – separatist community (Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found), rejected temple corruption along with the Hellenization of the Jewish people. The Essenes were legalists and believed in external adherence to religious rules. They believed in isolating themselves. Their lifestyle was characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures through self-discipline, self-imposed poverty, and simple living, often for the purpose of pursuing spiritual goals – as if they could bring those goals about!

Zealots – sought to overthrow the Romans. They believed in violent resistance as a means to achieve political freedom. The Zealots' extremism created divisions among the Jewish people. Their ideology influenced the perception of Jesus and his message of peace.

Jesus was NOT born into the Hebrew Jewish world. Jesus entered a world which was Gentile-dominated. Was this significant? WHY? How did the Gentile-dominated world fit into God's plan for Israel and for the world? Significant? YES! Why did God create and choose Israel as a nation – like none other?

Deut. 7:6 - For you are a holy people (set apart) to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. Also reference II Sam. 7:22-24.

God chose the children of Israel to receive the law (God is holy and man is sinful)...to serve as witnesses to the Gentiles (Isa. 43:10)...to be the channel through whom the Messiah would come (Gen. 12:3; Jn. 4:22)...to be an instrument of blessing for the world (Gen. 18:18).

Joseph – was sold to Gentile/pagan Egypt! The children of Israel were delivered from Egypt along with a mixed multitude (Gentiles). Across the wilderness for 40 years – traveling in the sight of the nations who witnessed the Jewish God among them, providing for them, and, at times, judging them. The Gentiles witnessed a faithful God!

The 2 spies with the Gentile Rahab who had heard about the parting and crossing of the Red Sea (40 years in the past) and expressed faith in the God of Israel! Through the 2 spies,

Rachel and her family were physically saved from Jericho – and spiritually saved through belief in the one true God of Israel and His promises of the Deliverer, Jesus! (There is only one way of salvation – by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone. Throughout the OT, God promised the Redeemer Jesus (Gen. 3:15b....)

Jonah – turned the other way – not wishing to go to Nineveh...yet the sailors in the boat and all of Nineveh responded to Jonah's words – in spite of Jonah!

GOD brought the children of Israel to Babylon (Jer. 29:4ff), which was then conquered by Persia...then Greece, and then Rome!!

Did you ever read how Daniel shared with Nebuchadnezzar about the one true God? What do we read in Daniel 4:34, 37? Nebuchadnezzar praised and honored God... proclaiming Who the God of Israel is!

God has used the Jewish people noted above, and many other Jewish people...to share the truth of the one true God of Israel Who promised God the Son, the Redeemer (Psa.2). While these Jewish people lived under difficult times, often times undergoing oppression, God used this ethnic people group, Israel, as His witnesses (Isa. 43:10) while disciplining them/judging them and reminding them of His promise to preserve Israel based on His unconditional covenants with them (Abrahamic Cov., Land Cov., Davidic Cov., New Cov). Heb. 6:13 – God obligated Himself to deliver on His promises to Israel!

So, how do the Gentiles fit in?

Isa. 49:5-6 - *And now the Lord says, Who formed Me (Jesus) from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob (Israel) back to Him, ... 6 Indeed He (God the Father) says, 'It is too small a thing that You (Jesus) should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'*

Rom. 11:11 - I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation *has come* to the Gentiles.

For God so loved the world....

OBSERVATIONS:

QUESTIONS:

ANSWERS: