INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

Not many Christians realize what really happened between the testaments, a period referred as the Intertestamental Period.

Usually we go from reading Malachi to Matthew without knowing any of the developmental history that shaped the world, language, and religion.

Intertestamental Period - The 400 years is often referred to as "Silent Years." Psalm 74:9, "We are given no signs from God; no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be."

"Silent Years" - no prophet spoke after Malachi.

This doesn't necessarily refer to the idea that people don't know what went on. Much took place.

- Malachi leaves us with the understanding that the Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity, and worshipping in a smaller temple with no Jewish king ruling over them.
- Zerubbabel is the principle leader of the Jewish people. A rightful successor of David.
- Power shifted from East to West under the Romans
- History uncovered - Josephus; Roman historians, and many of the Apocrypha books
- Assyrian captivity of the Northern Kingdom (721 BC or 722 BCE).
- The ten northern tribes were conquered by Assyria and assimilated. The sad truth may be that the Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and people in the northern region and western Jordan may be related to the Samaritans and the ten lost tribes.
- Foreign occupation of the Southern Kingdom (597). The southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin were finally conquered.

SIX PERIODS OF JEWISH HISTORY

1. **Persian Period (539-334)** - In 539 BC Cyrus of Persia defeated the Babylonians and allowed the dispersed nations, including the Jews, to return to their homelands. This proclamation of Cyrus is mentioned also in Ezra 1:1-4 and Ezra 6:3-5. Which means, by the end of Malachi, the Jewish people were still under Persian rule. They would remain under Persian rule until about 60 years into the Intertestamental period.
2. **Greek Period (334-324)** - Alexander the Great of Greece conquered Judea. He is the "notable horn" that is mentioned in Daniel's prophecy in chapter 8:1-7. Within a span of a decade, Alexander the Great changed the political landscape of the world. The Jews share with him how Daniel, their prophet prophesied that Alexander would come and be a deliverer. Alexander responds in peace and offers a sacrifice to God. He gives the Jews the rights to Greek citizenship. Ushering in peace between Jews and the Greeks. Which also started the Hellenistic movement. However, Alexander the Great falls sick and dies at the early age of 33.

3. **Egyptian Period (324-204 BC)** –
   - Leaving his Empire to be divided up into four sections - led by four of his Generals. Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Cassander and Selenus. These are the four "notable ones" which take the place of the "great horn," as predicted in Daniel 8:21,22.
   - The two most powerful being the Ptolemies in Egypt, and the Seleucids in Syria. These two groups had a major effect on the Jews.
   - Koine Greek became the world trade language
   - The Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek in 200 BC - Septuagint.

4. **Syrian Period (204 - 165 BC)**
   - Antiochus Epiphanes (Seleucid Ruler) - created chaos for the Jews. Under this wicked rule, the Jews revolted - known as the Maccabean Revolution (167 – 63 BC).
     - Daniel 11:28-31 – “While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land. At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. "For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.”
     - By 167 BC, Antiochus Epiphanes killed thousands of Jews, including in that number were women and children. Sacrifices at the temple ceased,
and a statue of Jupiter Olympus was erected on the altar of burnt offering in the temple. Antiochus offered pigs to be sacrificed to the god Jupiter. And uproar ensued by the Jews.

5. **Maccabean Revolt (165 - 63 BC)**
   - **Judas Maccabaeus, "The Hammer,"** would be the one to cleanse the temple after it was defiled for over 2300 days (prophesied in Dan. 8:14). This victory occurred on Dec. 25, known as the day of Dedication (still celebrated by the Jews).
   - Judas and his family were of the **Asmonean Dynasty** and started the priestly line in Jerusalem.
   - The Asmonean priests would later sign a treaty with Rome against the Syrian Empire. This would ultimately lead Rome to come into power over Palestine.

6. **Roman Period (63 BC - 400 AD)**
   - Ray Stedman, "As the battles between the two opposing forces waged hotter and hotter, Rome was watchful. Finally, the Governor of Idumea, a man named Antipater and a descendant of Esau, made a pact with two other neighboring kings and attacked Jerusalem to try to overthrow the authority of the Asmonean high priest. This battle raged so fiercely that finally Pompey, the Roman general, who happened to have an army in Damascus at the time, was besought by both parties to come and intervene. One side had a little more money than the other, and persuaded by that logical argument, Pompey came down from Damascus, entered the city of Jerusalem---again with terrible slaughter---overthrew the city and captured it for Rome. That was in 63 B.C. From that time on, Palestine was under the authority and power of Rome. Now Pompey and the Roman Senate appointed Antipater as the Procurator of Judea, and he in turn made his two sons kings of Galilee and Judea. The son who became king of Judea is known to us a Herod the Great. ("Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?'" (Matt. 2:1, 2)"

By the time you get into the Gospels, so much has changed. Rome is in power, and the Hebrew language is replaced with Greek and Aramaic.
RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

1. **Established Synagogues** - Religious education and Institutions sprang up (They become the center of Jewish life, not so much the Temple).

2. **Sanhedrin** - the supreme civil and religious tribunal of the Jewish nation.

3. **Sects**
   - **Scribes** - expert interpreters in the Law and Scriptures.
   - **Hellenists** - Converts among the Jews in Judea that were influenced by the Greeks.
   - **Herodians** - A political group that advanced the agenda and reign of Herod.
   - **Pharisees** - "Separatists" - Keepers of the Oral Torah (focused on tradition, domestic rituals and synagogue services) - Known as Hebrew Nationalists who were very rigid and strict in their requirements
   - **Sadducees** - Priestly leaders in power during the Hasmonean dynasty (friendly with Romans) - Known as the Hebrew Rationalists
   - **Essenes** (lesser group) - Originated from the Pharisees around 100 BC, and later lived remotely in the desert; preserving the OT (later discovered to be the Dead Sea Scrolls)