

8/27/17

The Period Between Malachi And Matthew

We want to begin our study of Matthew by looking at the historical period known as Inter-Testamental, the 400 years between Malachi, God's last Old Testament prophet and Matthew the New Testament apostle and author of one of the synoptic gospels.

Many people are oblivious to the events and their relationship to what we find in the gospels.

- The period is known as "The dark period" of Israel's history, since there was no Inspired prophet speaking or recording, during 400 years of silence.
- Remember Nebuchadnezzar had laid the final siege of Jerusalem in 586 B. C.
- Cyrus issued the decree for the Jews to return under Zerubbabel in 536 B. C.
- The second temple was completed after Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the people by 516 B. C.
- Ezra the scribe returned to teach the people God's word in 586 B. C.
- Nehemiah then followed at the command of Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild the walls of city in 445 B. C.
- Malachi closed the Old Testament period and the canon in 397 B. C.
- God's final message was repentance in view of their present sin and in view of the Lord's Coming.

-These four centuries have been seen in six political periods: Persian, Greek, Egyptian, Syrian, Maccabean and Roman.

-Daniel's vision of world empires only recognizes Persia, Greece and Rome because Egypt and Syria were a result of Greece and the Maccabees were Jewish not Gentile.

Two perspectives of this period will help us understand the transition between the Old and New Testament:

- I. The political perspective.
- II. The religious perspective.

The political perspective deals with the external state of the world powers!

I. The Persian period. (536-333 B. C.)

- A. During this period Israel tolerated Persian rule and the High Priest had a degree of civil power under Persia.
 1. Zerubbabel was the political leader that spearheaded the first return to repatriate the nation and rebuild the temple in 536-7 B.C. under Cyrus. Ezra 1-6
 2. He was born in captivity, a descendant of King Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), his grandson. 1Chron. 3:17-19; 2King. 24:8-16
 3. The prophets Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi fit into this period of history and provide great insight to the people and times

4. Zerubbabel returns with 49,897 Jews, a very small remnant of the captives. Ezra 2:64-65
5. Ezra led the second return 80 years after Zerubbabel, about 457 B.C. Ezra 7-10
6. Ezra, a scribe and priest returned with only about 1496 people a scribe and priest in the 7th year of King Artaxerxes to teach the law of Moses. Ezra 7:1-10
7. Thirteen years after, in the 20th year of Artaxerxes Nehemiah returned, on 445 B.C. Ezra 7:7; Neh. 1:1
8. Nehemiah focuses on the rebuilding of the walls and the re-instruction of the law of Moses. Neh. 1-7: 8-13
9. Four men seem to stand out in this post-captivity period, Zerubbabel the political leader, Joshua the priest, Ezra the scribe and Nehemiah the layman, the king's cupbearer.

B. The delegated civil power under Persia began evil rivalries and assassinations for the office of High Priest.

1. Jonathan, the grandson of Eliashib murdered his own brother Joshua who was a favorite of the Persian government.
2. Therefore, Persia to avenge him defiled the temple, imposed severe fines, wasted part of Jerusalem and persecuted the Jews.
3. During this time the rival worship of Samaria became established by the

Samarian temple, marking a separation of the Jews and Samaritans.

- * The woman of Samaria confirmed the racial religious separation, Jesus told her they did not know what they worshipped, worship was of the Jews. Jn 4:19-22
2. The Samaritans resulted from the custom of the Assyrians to cross populated people to other lands. 2Kings 17:24-41
 - a. To diminish their hope.
 - b. To remove them from their families to diminish their resistance.
 - c. To dilute their race by intermarrying with other races and cultures.
 3. Zerubbabel and Joshua denied the Samaritans in building temple. Ezra 4:1-5
 - a. They did not have a pure genealogy.
 - b. They wanted to hinder the work.

II. The Greek period. (333-323 B. C.)

A. Alexander the Great became leader after his father's assassination.

1. Daniel unexpectedly saw in a vision a male goat from the west. Dan. 8:5
 - a. The he goat is identified to Daniel as Alexander the Great. Dan. 8:21
 - b. The he goat crossed the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground indicating great speed of conquest, as a

leopard with four wings on his back.

Dan. 7:6

- c. The he goat had a notable horn between his eyes, he also is identified as the large horn, as symbolic of power and strength.

Dan. 8:8

* The national symbol of Greece was a he goat, Aegean Sea is the goat sea.

- 2. Daniel saw the goat, Alexander the Great, approach the ram with two horns, Medo-Persia, standing besides the river running with furious power. Dan. 8:6
 - a. The word furious “chemah”, means “burning anger”, referring to the hatred towards Persia for invading and degrading Greece the century before.
 - b. The angel Gabriel interpreted the two horns as Medo-Persia. Dan. 8:20
- 3. Daniel saw Alexander the Great moved with rage defeat Medo-Persia, trampled to the ground despite the insurmountable odds against Xerxes. Dan. 8:7

B. Alexander the Great transformed the world politically and culturally in one decade.

- 1. He made Greek the unifying language for the spreading of the Gospel.
- 2. He spared Jerusalem as the High Priest and priest marched out to invoke him as he had seen in a dream.

- 3. He offered sacrifice to Yahweh and told the prophesies of Daniel about himself “The notable horn” giving full rights of a Greek city.
- 4. The Jews become sympathetic to him resulting in the Hellenistic culture and spirit among the Jews in the New Testament times.
- 5. In just 12 short years Alexander conquered the world, Europe, Asia and Africa.
- 6. Alexander, the commander of the army was 21 years old, when he was 33 he sat and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer.
- 7. He died at 32-33 years of age from pneumonia because he walked home in the rain from a drunken party in Babylon.

III. The Egyptian period. . (323-204 B. C.)

- A.** This was the four-fold division of Alexander’s kingdom as prophesied. Dan. 8:8
 - 1. In place of Alexander four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven, dividing his kingdom among his four generals, but with not the same power. Dan. 8:8. 22
 - 2. Cassander took Macedonia and Greece, Lysamachus took Thrace and Bythia (Asia Minor), Seleucus took Syria and Babylon and Ptolomy took Egypt.

3. These ruled until 50 A. D. when Rome arose. Maccabees 1:1-8
- B.** The land of Israel became the battle ground for Egypt's Ptolemies and Syria's Seleucides.
1. The king of the south was Ptolemy I Soter and he was strong. Dan. 11:5
 - a. One of his princes is Seleucus I Nicator, would rise to be the stronger, king of north.
 - b. This entire period centers on two of Hellenistic empires, south being Egypt, Ptolemy, the north being Syria, Seleucid with many kings involved during this period, covering approximately 137 years of wars, 312-175 B. C.
 2. The marriage of the daughter of Egypt to the king of Syria was attempted to join forces by an alliance by intermarriage.
 - a. The daughter of King Ptolemy Philadelphus, Bernice" to Antiochus Theos "God, the Seleucid king of north, 252 B. C.
 - b. The agreement was with one condition that Antiochus had to put away his wife Laodice to marry Bernice and her children would not succeed the throne.
 - c. Two years after Ptolemy died, Bernice did not retain the power of her authority, so Antiochus restored Laodice and she murdered him, Bernice and her infant son

3. During this time the Old Testament was translated into Greek at Alexandria in 225 B. C.

IV. The Syrian period. (204-165 B. C.)

- * This became the most tragic period for the Jews in the land of Israel.
- A.** The land of Israel was divided into five provinces.
1. Judea.
 2. Samaria.
 3. Galilee.
 4. Perea.
 5. Trachonitis.
- B.** Antiochus the Great was harsh towards the Jews.
1. Antiochus the Great alone carried on the fight against the king of the south, 217 B. C. Dan. 11:10-11

* He came with 75,000 soldiers, 6,000 horses and 102 elephants and Ptolemy Philopator defeated Antiochus the Great.
 2. Ptolemy lifted in pride gave himself over to a life of luxury and pleasure, consequently his own people revolted. Dan. 11:12
 3. Thirteen years later in 203 B. C. Antiochus the Great having conquered the Parthians and others of the east, accumulated great wealth to finance another campaign against the south. Dan. 11:13

- C. Antiochus Epiphanes followed and was much worse calling it the “reign of terror”. 175-164 B. C. Dan. 11:21-35
1. In 170 B. C. he plundered and desecrated the temple and brought awesome cruelties.
 2. Temple sacrifice was abolished, the Holy of Holies rifles and furniture carried away.
 3. Jewish religion was banned and circumcision at point of death.
 4. All copies of the law were burned or defaced and many Jews apostasized.
 5. In 168 B. C. he sacrificed a pig on the altar and caused the High Priest to eat the meat, then erected a statue of Jupiter Olympus.

V. The Maccabean period. (165-63 B. C.)

- A. This period was the most heroic period of Jewish history in holy jealousy for God as a reaction against Antiochus Epiphanes blasphemy.
1. Mattathios the priest and his five sons were the prominent figures: Judas, Jonathan, Simon, John and Eleozer.
* Maccabeus means “hammer” in Hebrew.
 2. They called for a willing sacrifice of a godly multitude.
 3. Through various battles Jerusalem was recaptured by Judas Maccabeus and the temple rededicated on Dec. 25, 164 A. D.

* The Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah commemorates the miracle of God providing the oil for the lamps. Jn. 10:22

- B. Later the Maccabees were almost defeated, but peace restored civil and the priestly authority under Jonathan the High Priest in 152 B. C.
1. The “Hasmonean” line of High Priest was murdered in 143 B. C.
 2. Simon, his brother, followed regaining independence from Syria, John Hyrcanus succeeded then Aristabulus, ending with Herod’s family with the support of Rome in 63 B. C.

VI. The Roman period. (63 B. C. onwards)

- A. The Judean independence ended when the Roman general Pompey subjugated Jerusalem and Judea became a province of the Roman empire.
1. Antipater the Idumean was appointed procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar in 47 B. C.
 2. Then Antipater appointed Herod his son as governor of Galilee being 15 years old.
- B. When war between Pompey and Caesar broke out, Herod fled to petition for the crown of Judea and was appointed King of the Jews about 40 B. C.

1. He married the granddaughter of the Asmonean, John Hyrcanus of the priestly line and appointed her brother Aristobulus High Priest.
 2. Herod lavished the temple greatly as the center of worship. (Zerubbabel's)
 3. Herod was Called "The Great" due to his building projects. (Herodian, Masada, etc.)
- C. Herod was an Idumean, a descendant of Esau, a type of the flesh murdering anyone he felt threatened by and was an enemy of God's people.
1. He slew three of his wives brothers: Antigonus, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus.
 2. He murdered his wife Marianne, his mother-in-law and his own sons Aristobulus and Alexander.
 - * He massacred the infants from two years old and under, to kill the King of the Jews. Matt. 2:16
 3. This political perspective show us how we get to the New Testament time.

This was the political perspective revealing the external state of the world powers!

The religious perspective deals with the internal state of God's people!

I. David to captivity.

- A. David was the sweet psalmist of Israel whom God had chosen to be king.
 - * He loved God but was not allowed to build the temple because he was a man of war and blood.
- B. Solomon epitomized the worship of Yahweh, wisdom and riches by the blessing of God, until his wives led him away from God into idolatry.
- C. The kingdom became divided into the Northern Kingdom of Israel (10 tribes) under Jeroboam and the Southern Kingdom (Judah and Benjamin) and Raoboam, Solomon's son.
- D. The calf worship was established at Dan and in the years to come Jezebel expanded its idolatry.
- E. In 722 B. C. the Northern Kingdom went intocaptivity by Assyria.
- F. From 606-586 B. C. the Southern Kingdom was seized by Nebuchadnezar three times and Jerusalem leveled beginning the 70 year captivity, in violation of her Sabbaths. 2Chron. 36:21
- G. Ezekial the prophet had been telling the people to settle in and not listen to the false prophets, as Jeremiah in Jerusalem.

H. God had already placed a godly man within the palace, Daniel, through whom He would be working.

II. The Return after captivity.

A. A remnant of 50,000 returned with Zerubbabel in 536 b.c. according to Scripture. 2Chron 36:22; Jer 29:10; Is 45:1

1. They returned because of their faith in God and His Scriptures.
2. They returned because they believed in the Messianic hope.

B. Ezra arrived 80 years after to give expository teaching of the word.

C. Nehemiah returned in 445 B. C., 13 years after Ezra to build the walls and city, the law became the standard as it was expounded by Ezra the scribe.

D. The prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi prophesied during the post captivity denouncing sin, complacency and not returning to the Lord.

E. As the voice of the Lord ceased through the prophets, the synagogue became the place where the scribes expounded, translated and explained the Scriptures.

III. The synagogue.

A. Nowhere in Scripture is the synagogue found prior to captivity in Babylon.

1. The word appears in Ps. 74:8 (KJV), it means solemn feasts or set seasons, but the association in Ps. 74:8 is the place where they observed the feasts, not synagogue as in the New Testament.
2. The word appears 200 times in Old Testament and Ps. 74:8 is the only place it is translated synagogue in the KJV.

B. There is no evidence in Ezra or Nehemiah of any full development, but the background and roots are there. Ezra 7-10; Neh 8:1-12; 9:1

1. James said the synagogue had been around for many generations. Acts 15:21
2. Therefore what began as a regular study of the Scriptures as a passion to keep the law gradually developed into a legalistic, religious and traditional externalism.

C. The law became interpreted and supplemented by oral law which was to protect the law, but instead became the law itself.

* Many had lost their Hebrew language!

1. The Mishna was the “oral law” originated in what is called “Mishnashim” commentaries on the law and Old Testament.

2. The legal exegesis, conformed to the Pentateuch, called “Shemata”, the heard and received.
3. The Haggadoth was the moral, practical and fanciful explanation of all Scripture.
 - * About the end of the Second Century it was committed to writing by Rabbi Jehuda into the “Talmud”.
4. The Talmud contained two things.
 - a. The Mishna, the oral law under six main subjects: agriculture, festivals, women, civil and criminal, sacred and purification.
 - b. The Gemara meaning “that which is learned” commentaries on the Mishna.
 - 1) There was the Babylonian Gemara from the time of exile and the longer, sixty-six printed volumes.
 - 2) There was the Jerusalem Gemara from 200-400 A. D. the shorter, twelve printed volumes.
 - 3) You can better understand when Jesus said, “You have heard it said but I say”, Jesus taught God’s original intent and meaning over their interpretations.

- D.** Interesting that the offices of the church are taken from the synagogue:
1. Bishop “episkopoi”.
 2. Deacons “diakonoi”.

3. Elders “presbuteroi”, but never is the word “priest” mentioned for that was temple and worship, the synagogue was for instruction.

- G.** There were the “rulers”, a council of elders “rulers”. Mk. 5:22; Acts 13:15
1. The “legate” recited prayers.
 2. The “deacons” took alms.
 3. The “chazzan” called names of appointed readers and stood by them to see that they read and pronounced properly.
 - * He cared for the Scripture rolls, blew trumpets, announced approaching Sabbaths, lit the lamps, supervised the furniture and applied the scourge in discipline, called minister. Lk. 4:20

IV. The sects.

- A.** The Scribes in the Old Testament meant to write, set in order or count, they were recorders, transcribers or secretaries.
- * Ezra was a ready Scribe in the law of Moses. Ezra 7:6, 12, 21; Neh. 8:1, 4, 9, 13
1. The New Testament scribes were also called lawyers and were a new breed who had evolved to guardians of the law providing interpretation and meaning.
 2. The original aim was to make every person responsible to keep the law but resulted in legalistic, traditional hypocrisy, caring for tradition above the law. Mk. 7:7-8

* Jesus pronounces woes to scribes. Matt. 23

B. The Priests were the officials of ceremonies and temple duties, though a priest could also be a scribe.

1. David had divided the priest into 24 divisions. 1Chron. 24:1-19
2. Zechariah was serving in the temple according to his duty. Lk. 1:5
3. Gabriel announced to Zecharias his prayers were heard by God and that Elizebeth his barren wife would bear a son and his name was to be John, to be know as the Baptist.
4. John the Baptist was the forrunner of Jesus, his cousin, six months older than Jesus.

C. The Pharisees were the ecclesiastical religionists and ritualists of the day.

1. The word means “the separated ones” which had its roots in Ezra, but now was self-righteousness.
2. They appeared for the first time in the period of the Maccabees 135-63 B. C.
3. They were spiritual successors of the “Chasidim”, the “Pious Onea” who 30-40 years earlier had bonded together to preserve the Jewish faith against Antiochus Epiphanes.

D. The Saducees were the aristocrats of Jesus day who were more motivated by political ambition, prestige and power.

1. They rejected the oral law, denied the resurrection, angels or spirits. Matt. 22:23; Acts 23:8
2. Annas and Caiphas were both Saducees and High Priests.

E. The Herodians were a political party looking to Herod as the one Jewish hope to independence. Matt. 22:16; Mk 3:6; 12:13

* He was an Idumean. (Esau)

1. The Zealots were Jewish nationalists avowed to fight against any power over the Jews.
2. Simon the Caananite was a zealot. Matt. 10:4; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13
3. Opposed taxation in A. D. 6 at Galilee.
4. Became a lawless land a decade before 70 A. D.

G. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish Supreme Court.

1. Origin unknown, but believed it arose during the Greek period 333 on.
2. 71 members: 1 high priest, 24 chief priests, 22 scribes, 24 elders.
3. Operated daily between morning and evening and had a 23 member quorum.
4. 39 had to declare vote of guilty for death.

H. The Apocrypha contains 14 books in Old Testament written during the First to Third century before the birth of Christ.

1. The authors are unknown and were added to LXX.
2. Josephus rejected them as a whole and Jews.
3. Jesus never quoted them nor church fathers.
4. When the Latin Vulgate was translated it was translated from the Greek LXX not the Hebrew, therefore the Apocryphal books were carried over to the Latin Vulgate.
5. The Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in a.d. 1546 attempting to stop the Protestant movement declared these books canonical.

I. The Apocolyptic writings.

1. This type of literature was pseudepigraphic, written in the name of some past prophet or person.
2. The literature is characterized by Judgment, the coming of God and pessimism, giving no hope.
3. Matthew opens up with the geneology of Jesus Christ linked to Abraham, after the seed of David to announce the Virgin birth of the Messiah of the Jews. Matt. 1

This was the religious perspective revealing the internal state of God's people!