

## 400 YEARS OF SILENCE

### 1) Introduction

- a) God told the Jews that a time would come when prophesy would cease indefinitely – **Amos 8:11-12**
  - i) This period of 400 years is the gap that exists between OT and NT history
- b) When the OT ended, the Jews were very negligent in their keeping of the law (Mal 1-4)
  - i) Tithes were not brought in so that the Levites could perform their duties (Neh 13:10-14)
  - ii) The Jews governed their own territory with only minor oversight by the Persians
  - iii) The Jews controlled only about 25 square miles of territory surrounding Jerusalem
- c) But when the NT begins, many things have changes
  - i) Jews are so strict about the law, they want to kill Jesus for healing on the Sabbath (Luke 6:11)
  - ii) Jews are so strict about tithing, they count the leaves on their herbs plants (Matt 23:23)
  - iii) The Jews are no longer a sovereign nation, but strictly controlled by the Roman Empire
  - iv) Jewish parties, political and spiritual, have risen up; the rivalry between them is intense
  - v) The Greek language is universally spoken, and the Greek OT (Septuagint) is regularly quoted
- d) What happened during these 400 years of silence that led to such radical changes?

### 2) The Greek Empire

- a) King Xerxes of Persia burned down Athens, Greece in 480BC (Dan 11:2). The Greeks vowed revenge
  - i) Persia remained in control for 100 years after the OT, but Greek mercenaries upset their hold
  - ii) Phillip of Macedon was able to rally Grecian city states in an attempt to overthrow Persia
  - iii) These plans were hindered in 336BC when Phillip was assassinated. His son Alexander became king
- b) History indicates that Alexander was a prodigy in every respect imaginable (Dan 8:5,21; 11:3)
  - i) Personally tutored by Aristotle, he was a genius, exceedingly strong, though rash and impulsive
  - ii) To intimidate Greek city states into submission, he burned Thebes to the ground when they rebelled
- c) Alexander led the Greeks to defeat the Persian Empire, with many notable victories (Dan 8:6-7)
  - i) Tyre was taken because a land bridge was built a half mile long and 200 yards wide (Ezek 26:12)
  - ii) Gaza was taken by building an earthen ramp up to the city and digging a huge tunnel under the wall
  - iii) Egypt surrendered w/o a fight. Alexandria was built there to be a model Greek city
  - iv) Alexander went as far north as India, capturing the Persian capital cities and a vast amount of wealth
  - v) His heavy drinking eventually killed him. Alexander died at just 32 years old (Dan 8:8a)
- d) Four Greek generals took control when Alexander's successors were assassinated (Dan 8:8b, 22; 11:4)
  - i) Battles erupted between them over who controlled which parts until a treaty was signed in 301BC
  - ii) Two of these directly affected the Jews, with Israel being caught up in many conflicts (Dan 10 – 12)
    - (1) Ptolemy's kingdom was "Egypt" and Alexandria became its capital. It lasted to 30BC
    - (2) Seleucus' kingdom was "Syria", building Antioch of Syria as its capital. It lasted to 64BC
  - iii) Hellenistic influence spread throughout the entire empire w/the Greek language being predominant
  - iv) 280BC, the Ptolemies had the OT translated to Greek and added to Alexandria's library (Septuagint)
  - v) Antiochus of Syria finally won control of Judea from Egypt in 198BC

### 3) The Rise of Rome & Grecian Decline

- a) Founded in 753BC, Rome began to grow in power around the time the OT closes (Dan 2:40; 7:7)
  - i) As Rome began expanding its reach beyond Italy, Carthage was also trying to extend its borders
  - ii) Rome and Carthage fought in the 3 Punic wars for control of the western Mediterranean world
- b) In the 2<sup>nd</sup> war, Philip V of Macedon allied w/Hannibal of Carthage against Rome and was defeated
  - i) Some Greek city states asked for Rome's help against Antiochus of Syria's expansion west
  - ii) Other Greek city states asked for Syria's help against Rome's "liberation" of Philip V's rule over them
  - iii) This escalated into the first Roman-Syrian conflict which Rome won decisively

- iv) Syria was forced to secede most of its western territory, its ships, and pay 15,000 talents of gold
- v) In 187BC, King Antiochus III was killed raiding the temple at Susiana to pay the indemnity
- c) As a result of its loss to Rome, most powerful Syria was greatly weakened
  - i) A power struggle over the Syrian throne occurred immediately after Antiochus III's death
  - ii) In 175BC, Antiochus IV was crowned but struggled to sustain his control; Syria is crumbling
  - iii) In the east, Parthia gained power and began slowly taking away Persia and Mesopotamia from Syria
  - iv) Struggling to pay its debt to Rome, Syria decided to seek money elsewhere

#### 4) The Maccabean Revolt

- a) Having no king, the role of high priest became the assumed political local leader of Judea
  - i) Jason bribed Antiochus VI for the role. He encouraged Jews to participate in nude gymnastics
  - ii) He was later outbid for the position by Menelaus and had flee for his life to Transjordan
  - iii) Menelaus allowed Antiochus to take money from the temple and strip it of its costly decorations
- b) Jason eventually gained enough support to retake the high priest position. This angered Antiochus
  - i) In 167BC, soldiers were sent to Jerusalem and many Jews were killed and sold into slavery
  - ii) Antiochus suspended sacrifices, Sabbath/festival observances, circumcision, and burned scripture
  - iii) An altar of Zeus was built on top of the temple altar and idols were setup throughout the land
  - iv) Jews were forced under threat of death to offer sacrifices to Grecian idols.
  - v) Antiochus elevated himself to the manifestation of Zeus (Dan 8:9-14, 23-26)
- c) Mattathias Hasmonaeas, with his five sons, rebelled and waged guerrilla warfare against the Greeks
  - i) When Matthias died, his son Judas "The Hammer" became commander; his brother Simon was his advisor
  - ii) Though hopelessly outnumbered, the Maccabeans consistently outmaneuvered the Seleucid troops
  - iii) When Antiochus VI died in 164BC, Judas and his men regained control of Jerusalem
  - iv) The temple is cleansed, rites restored, the altar of Zeus removed and the 1<sup>st</sup> "Hanukkah" is celebrated
  - v) Hasmonaeans continued the fight; the last brother alive, Simon, won Judean independence in 142BC
  - vi) Simon was made high priest, but was assassinated in 134BC. His son John Hyrcanus I succeeded him

#### 5) Rome and Israel Intertwine

- a) John Hyrcanus subdued the Idumaeans and Samaritans, forcing them to become nominal Jews
  - i) When he died, what began as religious for the Maccabeans turned into political, bitter rivalry
  - ii) The Roman general, Pompey, heard about the strife and looked into how Rome could take advantage
  - iii) In 63BC, one side of the Jewish rivalry opened the gates of Jerusalem to Pompey and Roman control
  - iv) An Idumaeen governor, Antipater, provided military support for the Romans, fortifying his position
- b) In 60BC, Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Crassus formed the first Triumvirate of Rome
  - i) Crassus died and Julius Caesar fought and defeated Pompey in battle, w/the help of Antipater
  - ii) While Julius was swayed by Cleopatra, he awarded Antipater the position of Procurator of Judea
  - iii) Antipater made his 2 sons military prefects: Phasael over Judea and Herod over Galilee
- c) In 44BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated and civil war broke out
  - i) Mark Antony and Octavian defeated the conspirators and divided the empire amongst themselves
  - ii) Mark Antony received the eastern portion of the Roman Empire, but fell under Cleopatra's control
  - iii) When Antipater was poisoned, he made Phasael and Herod joint rulers of Judea
- d) In 40BC, Parthia invaded Judea and captured Phasael; he would die in prison. Herod escaped to Rome
  - i) Mark Antony and Octavian promised Herod the kingship of Judea if he won it back, which he did
  - ii) Though under Roman control, Herod took the title of Herod the Great and reigned from 37BC-4AD
  - iii) Octavian grew tired of Cleopatra's control over Marc Antony and defeated him in battle in 31BC
  - iv) The Senate gave Octavian the title of Augustus Caesar, which he is called in the NT (Luke 2:1)