

# Intertestament period

[Religion](#), [Jesus](#)



Exploring the Bible 3 October, 2011 Inter-Biblical Period: 400 Years The Old Testament focuses on God's covenant with his people and the stories of men of great faith and also men of prophecy, foretelling Christ coming. The New Testament, however, focuses on the redemption side. The Redemption side is Christ's story here on Earth and his ministry to other people. Malachi, the last book written in the Old Testament, was written around 424 B. C. Then 418 years after, the book of Matthew, the first book of the New Testament, was written.

The Intertestamental Period is the period of history between the two testaments. Since God did not speak to his people directly through prophets, this period is also known as the 400 years of silence. Now, what happened in those four hundred years? The Intertestamental Period was a time where many empires came along, new religious groups formed, and where theological and literature pieces were developed that molded Israel going into the time of Christ. Politics in a nation help dictate and run the people, in Israel's case, they had to deal with many empires coming in.

During the Intertestamental Period, they had five key periods of leaders and kingdoms. The Persian Empire arrived around 430 B. C. and they ruled until 332 B. C. The Persian rule was recorded as being mild and tolerant. (Scott, 1783) The Persians were taken over by the Greeks. The Greek period went from 331 B. C. to 167 B. C. (Scott, 1783) Alexander the Great, son of King Philip of Macedonia, was given the control of the Greek army around the age of 20. (Halley, 402) With the control of the army, he was able to sweep over and take over Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia.

Alexander the Great was very compassionate towards the Jews and he spared the city of Jerusalem. He established Greek cities in his conquered places and he did it with the plan to spread Greek culture and language throughout the world including Israel. After Alexander's death, his empire was separated to his four generals. (Halley, 402) Egypt and Palestine was given to Ptolemy and under him the conditions of the Jews were at a peaceful state. In Egypt, Alexandria was the influential center of Judaism. In 167 B. C. was the beginning of the Period of Independence also known as the Maccabean period.

Mattathias was a priest and he was upset at Antiochus' motivation to destroy the Jews, so he gathered Jews and raised a revolt. Mattathias had five sons, Judas, Jonathan, Simon, John, and Eleazar. (Halley, 404) The Maccabean period lasted until 63 B. C. and the Romans followed after. Palestine was conquered by the Romans under Pompey. Idumean was the first to be appointed ruler of Judea. His son, Herod the Great, succeeded him. (Halley, 404) Herod was a shrewd politician who wanted to get good with the Jews. He was very cruel and brutal towards his people.

Politics and leaders are key roles in establishing a nation. In this case, these five empires helped develop rules and guidelines that led the people and that eventually grew and prepared Israel for the coming of Christ. During the 400 years of silence, religion was another area that grew in Israel. During this time, the religion was not set up as polytheistic or monotheistic but instead it was groups of people. For example the four main groups of the religions groups or parties are Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and Herodians.

These four groups followed what they believed and chose to do whatever they wanted to do. The Pharisees is the group most people probably know because of their role in the Gospels and the fact Paul was one. They took the Law and believed it was their job to take it and to put into new conditions. (Hester, 325-326) They accepted both the Torah and tradition. The Pharisees rejected anyone who didn't live by the standards they did. On the opposite side were the Sadducees. They were the second main group and they had more power than the Pharisees until 70 A.

D. when their temple was destroyed. (Hester, 325-326) The Sadducees consisted of the wealthy priests. They were a conservative group and they didn't try to take the Law and put into a new situation but they instead took and limited themselves to the five books of Moses. After 70 A. D, the Pharisees were the leaders of the Jewish people by giving them a religious life aside from the temple. The other two parties were more political than religious groups. The Zealots were a nationalist group that opposed the Romans.

Simon, one of Jesus' disciples, was a Zealot. The other group, the Herodians, basically supported Herod and his dynasty and supported what he did for the nation. These four groups are the religious groups that developed the main teachings and guidelines people believe until Christ's ministry began. Even though religion and politics are a big part of a civilization, another key role is the literature and writing of a nation. Literature and writing in Israel or any nation is an influential part because it is what the people follow and speak.

In Israel, Hebrew was the language of the Old Testament. This was the main language of religion. Latin was the language of Roman and it was commonly

spoken among the people. Greek was another language and it was the language that tied the Roman Empire together. The most common language of Palestine in Jesus' day was Aramaic. (Halley, 410) Most writings are believed to have been written in Aramaic and translated into Greek. (Halley, 410) The Old Testament was written in Hebrew but was spoken in Greek. Septuagint is a translation of the Old Testament into Greek.

The Torah was translated first. It was called the Septuagint because of the 70 translators and Septuagint means 70 in Greek. (Halley, 409) Another type of translation was Targums and they are translations of the Old Testament into Aramaic. They were first oral translations, paraphrases, and interpretations these types of languages and writing were influential in the development of the social status during the Intertestamental Period. Even though writing is important the question is what was the theology being taught during this period?

Theology is important because it is what the people studied and how they viewed God. The Apocrypha, is writings which the writer assumed the name of a hero long since dead, and rewrote history in terms of prophecy. (Halley, 406) Some of this included, Books of Enoch, Assumption of Moses, Ascension of Isaiah, Book of Jubilees, Psalms of Solomon, and more. These books are the books that were written by people in the period of the 400 years of silence, and they preached about the prophecies that the prophets spoke and also the birth of Christ and the end times.

This theology is the closest literature that the people had to connect to God and the prophecies that was spoken. All of these books spoke of Christ coming and his ministry that he will live for and preach. The Intertestamental

Period consisted of political powers overtaking each other, religious groups, and theological books and literature that preached Christ coming and that developed the nation of Israel. The political side consisted of Persian, Greek, Egyptian, the Maccabees, and the Romans. The religious side had the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and Herodians and they all had different views and theories. And the language part consisted of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. The theology piece was the Apocrypha, which re-emphasized the prophets foretelling. All these pieces and parts put together made up the Intertestamental Period and it formed Israel and it carried over into the ministry of Jesus. The 400 years of silence at last was broken, and God sent his son Jesus Christ to testify the truth and overcome the world.

Work Cited Scott, J. Julius Jr. "Time Between the Testaments." *ESV Study Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles. 2008. 1783-1789. Print. Halley, Dr. Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook: with New International Version*. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Zondervan Publishing House. 2000. 402-412. Print. Hester, H. I. *The Heart of Hebrew History: A Study of the Old Testament*. Liberty, Missouri, The Quality Press, Inc. 1962. 313-330. Print.