

August 16, 2009 by Steve Brandon



Twelve Stages in the Bible - Silence

Daniel 2, 8

We have been in an overview study of the history of the Bible. We have taken the Bible and divided it up into historical eras, or, as I have called, "stages." [\[1\]](#) We have taken one stage each week, preaching though large chunks of the Bible.

We began with the **creation** stage, starting with the creation of the world and working through the recreation of the world after the fall and the flood. We continued on to the **patriarch** stage, when God initiated His redemption plan through a Chaldean named Abraham. We continued on to the **exodus** stage, looking at how God remembered His covenant to Abraham and redeemed his descendants from slavery in Egypt. Next came the **conquest** stage, when God worked through Joshua to give the promised land to the descendants of Abraham. After this followed the **judges** stage, the dark ages of the Bible when everyone did what was right in their own eyes, yet God faithfully raised up judges to deliver his people. Then came the **kingdom**. First of all, we saw the united kingdom through Saul and David and Solomon. Then, we traced the divided kingdom, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, until both were conquered. Two weeks ago, we came to the **exile**, when God exiled His people to Babylon to teach them of the fruit of their sin. Last week, we looked at the return from **exile**, in which the people of God returned to Judah and began to rebuilt it, beginning with the temple and proceeding to the walls and to the city.

Today, we will be looking at the silence stage. There has been some speculation as to what exactly my message will be like this morning. One teenager, who cannot be here this morning, said, "I'm really disappointed, because I want to hear your message on the silence to hear what you would say." Perhaps her comments stem from some conversations that my teenage daughter had with several of her friends in the church, "What's your dad going to do for his 'silence' sermon?" Is he just going to stand there looking at us without saying anything?" As you can see, there has been some anticipation and some confusion as to exactly what the "silence" period is and what my message will cover this morning.

To help clear any confusion concerning my aim this morning, let me give you an overview of the aim of my message this morning. This morning, I want to give you a feel of what was happening between the Old and New Testaments.

The silence stage is the period of time between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It's called a period of silence, because we have no written revelation from God during this time. Malachi was the last prophet in Israel to speak and for more than 400 years, the people heard nothing from God. There were no kings anointed by God to rule. There were no prophets during this time. There were no judges raised up to deliver the people of God. It was a time of silence.

Now, this doesn't mean that this was a time in which God abandoned Israel. Nor was it a time in which Israel entirely abandoned God. Indeed, God was present among them. He was protecting them and providing for all of their needs, leading up to the time of the Messiah's coming. There were many during these days who were trusting the LORD, as we shall see.

I believe that the best way to get at our subject this morning is by thinking about the experience that you would have as you read straight through the Bible. You begin in Genesis and read of the creation and the patriarchs. When you get to Exodus, you read of how God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt. Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy tend to drag along as you encounter the rest of the law. But, by the time you get to Joshua, you are in high-action drama, watching the Israelites take the land. In Judges you see the sin of Israel and God's faithfulness. The book of Ruth slots right into the time of the judges.

Then, you encounter the historical books, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles. These books take you through the united kingdom and the divided kingdom, right up until the exile. In the next two books, Ezra and Nehemiah, you read of the return from the exile. You get a glimpse of life during this time in Esther, which you can slot into the time of the exile and return.

Then, you come to the wisdom books, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. These books deal with large questions of life and death and justice and wisdom and longing for God.

Then, you find yourself in the prophetic books, all 17 of them. They come in great variety of forms. Some are long and some are short. Some are difficult to understand and others are easier. Some are written to the people of Israel and some to Judah. Some are even written to foreign nations. But, every single one of them, you can put into the historical setting of the Old Testament.

And then, in your reading of the Bible, you come to the New Testament. And in so doing, you notice that some things have changed. You notice that there is discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. Until this point, you have been able to slot all of the books of the Old Testament into the storyline of the Bible. Though some books of the Bible may be difficult to understand fully, you feel as if you are in the flow of the Scriptures. But, this is all different when you come to the New Testament.

First of all, when you finished reading the Old Testament, Israel was under Persian rule, and now as you begin the New Testament, Israel is under Roman rule. You have no information in the Scriptures about how that came to be. The Romans are just in power. How did that happen?

Additionally, you see that the Israelites have some new spiritual leaders in town. They are called the Pharisees and Sadducees. But, they aren't mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament. Where did they come from? How did they come to have authority over the spiritual matters of the people of God?

How about the synagogue? As you read into the New Testament, you see that the Jewish synagogue has come into a place of prominence in the New Testament. There's no mention of the synagogue in the Old Testament. When did the synagogue begin to take precedence in the life of Israel?

If you are attentive at all to the original language, you will notice that the language has changed. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew, with an occasional Aramaic thrown in there. But, the New Testament is written entirely in Greek. Why the change in language?

These are the sorts of questions that arise when you get into the New Testament after coming off the Old Testament. The reason for the confusion is because of a lack of inspired testimony between the testaments.

And then, there are some questions about some particular verses, which become clear when you know a bit about the history between the testaments. For instance, in Acts 6:1, we see "Hellenistic Jews" being identified as distinct from the "native Hebrews." What's the difference between these two? The difference becomes clear when you understand Jewish history from Malachi to Matthew.

Or, John 10:22 mentions "the Feast of the Dedication." What's that? That feast isn't mentioned at all in the Old Testament. It seems as if the Jews felt obligated to celebrate this feast. But, should you know a bit about the history of Israel between the testaments, you would know.

Furthermore, when Jesus speaks of the "Abomination of Desolations" in His Olivet Discourse, how would the Jews of that day understand His words? Something took place in the years of silence that will help you to understand these things.

Though we are without inspired revelation during this period of time, we are not without reliable, historical records to help us to know what took place in Israel during this time. We have historians, like Josephus and Tacitus, who wrote of what took place during these days. We also have a set of books called, "The Apocrypha," which were books written during the inter-testamental period, after Malachi and before the time of Christ.

Now, regarding the Apocrypha, there has been great debate down through the centuries as to whether or not those books are to be included in the canon of Bible. The Bibles that we have in our laps do not contain the apocrypha. However, there are some Bibles that do contain the apocrypha.

For instance, on my shelves of books, I have a book called, "The Jerusalem Bible," which is a translation of the Bible originally published in 1966. The translation was funded by the Roman Catholic Church. When you look at the table of contents, you find books that we have in our Bibles, but you find more. For instance, in this table of contents, toward the end of the historical books, it contains 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, just like our Bibles. And then, it includes, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees. In the wisdom literature, the Jerusalem Bible also includes the book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. With the prophets come an extra book, Baruch, who "prophesied" during the exile. These seven books are included in the Apocrypha, which the Roman Catholic Church accepts. The Orthodox Church also accepts the Apocrypha as well.

Now, it's not quite as simple as that. There are other books as well, which comprise the Apocrypha, like 3 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees, the four books of Esdras, the book of Enoch, and the Prayer of Manasseh. Some think that these books should be included in the Apocrypha, and some think that they ought not to be in the Apocrypha.

To give you some background, these books have been around for a long time. Some of the books of the Apocrypha were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were around during the days of Jesus and the apostles, as they were included in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was quoted by the New Testament writers. They were known by the early church. Early church theologians, such as Origen and Tertullian knew of these books and quoted from them at times.

Jerome knew of these books. Jerome lived around 400 A. D. and was commissioned by the Roman Catholic Church to translate the Bible into Latin. He translated many of the books of the Apocrypha into Latin as well, although he made clear that he believed them not to be inspired and shouldn't be included in the canon of the Bible. And this was pretty much the position of the church down through the ages, namely, that the apocrypha should not be included in the Bible.

But, during the days of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church declared them to be a part of the Bible at the Council of Trent. I think that there was a clear reason for this. It all has to do with what was taking place during the days of the Reformation. The Protestants had been reading their Bibles and were discovering that it teaches that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This is the message that was spreading like wildfire throughout Europe.

The Roman Catholic Church hated these doctrines. In fact, they condemned these doctrines, saying, "If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sin for Christ's sake; or that this confidence alone is whereby we are justified, let him be anathema" (Session 6, Canon 12). [\[2\]](#)

This means that the Roman Catholic Church has condemned us all to hell, because we are trusting in Jesus, alone for our salvation. I know that there are many Catholics that you might encounter, who sound like they agree with justification by faith alone in their religious talk. They may mix with Christians as well. But know this, there is no mixing the Protestant faith with the Catholic faith. Those Catholics who do are being inconsistent with the teachings of their mother church.

And so, when it came to the time of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church sought to muster everything within its power to suppress

the wave of the Reformation that was sweeping Europe. I believe that this is the primary motivation behind the sudden inclusion of the Apocrypha at the time of the Reformation. This is because the Apocrypha contains some doctrines that supported the Roman Catholic Church in opposition to the Protestants. For instance, ...

The Apocrypha teaches, contrary to the rest of the Bible, of the reality of purgatory. Judas Maccabaeus offers a sacrifice for the dead, "so that they might be released from their sin" (2 Maccabees 12:45). ^[3] Additionally, the Apocrypha teaches salvation by works. ^[4] Including these books in the canon of inspired books would help the cause of the Roman Catholic Church. I do believe that this was the primary motivation of the church to include these books in the canon of Scripture at the time of the Reformation.

Now, we have merely scratched the surface of the issues surrounding the Apocrypha, and there is much more that could be said about these things, which are out of the scope of my message this morning. Suffice it to say that I believe that the Apocrypha isn't inspired and shouldn't be included in our Bibles.

However, that's not to say that the Apocrypha isn't useful to us. It does contain reliable history. And as the scope of my message this morning is to give us a grasp of what took place between the Old and New Testament, the Apocrypha is very helpful to us. Perhaps most helpful to us this morning is the book of 1 Maccabees, which gives us a glimpse of the history of Israel in the days between the testaments.

For much of my message, I want to read from 1 Maccabees, to give you a glimpse of Israel between the testaments. But, as I do, I want to give you a Biblical perspective at the same time. So, we begin in Daniel 2. In this chapter Nebuchadnezzar has a dream (2:1). He became quite anxious about the dream and summoned his magicians and conjurers and sorcerers to tell the king the dream and its interpretation (2:2-5). When none of these men could do it, they summoned Daniel, who received divine revelation to interpret the dream. The dream and the interpretation comes in verse 31, ...

Daniel 2:31-43

You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Daniel was able (through supernatural means) to know the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. He told him that his dream was about a statue. The head was gold. The bust was silver. The belly and thigh of bronze. The legs and feet were iron and clay. Each of these body parts represented a different kingdom of the world, which Daniel goes on to describe. He begins with the golden head, which is representative of Babylon.

Daniel 2:36-38

This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

Babylon was made of gold and ruled by Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonians were in power at the time of the dream. The gold was representative of the quality of the Babylonian kingdom (see Dan. 2:39). But, the Babylonian kingdom would to an end and there would come another after Babylon. In verse 39, Daniel relates what sort of kingdoms would arise after the Babylonian kingdom.

Daniel 2:39

After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

Daniel tells of another kingdom that would arise and conquer the Babylonians. As mentioned above, they would not quite achieve the glory of the Babylonian kingdom (and thus, made of silver and not of gold). Through the course of history, we know that the first kingdom mentioned by Daniel was Persia (or sometimes called Medo-Persia, because the Persian empire was really a combination of two people groups: the Medes and the Persians). Last week when we studied the return from exile, we saw that the Persians were in power.

Additionally, Daniel told of a third kingdom to arise, powerful enough to conquer the Persians. Again, this kingdom would be less glorious than the first two (and thus, the bronze). In the course of history, we know that this was the Greeks. The story of the Greeks ruling over Israel is told in the Apocrypha, which we will pick up in a little bit.

After the rule of the Greeks came the next kingdom, which Daniel describes beginning in verse 40, ...

Daniel 2:40-43

Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong

and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

In the course of history, we know this to be Rome. They came to power shortly before the time of Christ, exactly as Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream had prophesied. Finally, the dream turned to the final kingdom, the divine kingdom. This would be more powerful than all of the kingdoms, as it will crush them to dust that blows away in the wind. Here is Daniel's description of the kingdom, ...

Daniel 2:44-45

In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.

This is talking about the divine kingdom, the kingdom of Christ. At this point in time, His rule hasn't yet come to be fully realized, as Christ is now seated in the heavens, waiting the time when his enemies are made a footstool for his feet (Psalm 110:1). But, there will be a day when His kingdom is fully realized. This is the day to which these verses point.

At this point, it's appropriate for us turn to the Apocrypha to help us with our historical survey of Bible history. The book of 1 Maccabees begins this way, ...

1 Maccabees 1:1

Alexander of Macedon son of Philip had come from the land of Kittim and defeated Darius king of the Persians and Medes, whom he succeeded as ruler, at first of Hellas.

This Alexander is known in history as "Alexander the Great." He lived about 350 B. C., some 100 years after Malachi finished prophesying. He was a Greek ruler, who had great success during his military campaigns. He ruled at Hellas, which is the Greek word for "Greece." We get the word, "Hellenism" from this work.

It says in verse 1 that he defeated "Darius king of the Persians and the Medes." This is why the Persians were no longer in control over Israel during the days of the New Testament. Alexander the Great had conquered them. In fact, Alexander the great conquered the world. This is how 1 Maccabees continues, ...

1 Maccabees 1:2-4

He undertook many campaigns, gained possession of many fortresses, and put the local kings to death. So he advanced to the ends of the earth, plundering nation after nation; the earth grew silent before him, and his ambitious heart swelled with pride. He assembled very powerful forces and subdued provinces, nations and princes, and they became his tributaries.

The whole world at that time was under the rule of Alexander the Great. The whole world was under Greek control. It was the heyday of the Greek empire (in accordance with Daniel's prophecy). However, Alexander's reign didn't last long. He died at the age of 32 (in 323 B. C.), after only a few years in absolute power. The cause of his death is under great speculation. Some say that he was poisoned. Others say that he contracted a disease, which took his life. Others say that alcoholism destroyed him. Others say that he was disheartened at conquering the world, which left him nothing more to live for. The approach of his death is recorded in 1 Maccabees.

1 Maccabees 1:5-9

But the time came when Alexander took to his bed, in the knowledge that he was dying. He summoned his officers, noblemen who had been brought up with him from his youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. Alexander had reigned twelve years when he died. Each of his officers established himself in his own region. All assumed crowns after his death, they and their heirs after them for many years, bringing increasing evils on the world.

Alexander had no rightful heir to his throne, so he divided up the kingdom into four regions. Eventually, there came to be four rulers over these regions.

1. Ptolemy became ruler over Egypt, the southern part of the empire (321 B. C.)
2. Cassander became ruler over Macedonia, which was in the western part of the empire (317 B. C.)
3. Seleucus became ruler of Babylon and Syria, which was in the east (311 B. C.)
4. Antigonus became ruler of Asia Minor in the north (306 B. C.), but was soon after slain in battle.

Amazingly, all of this was prophesied in Daniel.

Daniel 8:1-8

In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal. Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a

ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last. I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself. While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power. Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

Here's a summary of the vision that Daniel saw. He saw two animals: a ram and a goat. The ram had two horns and the goat had one. The goat became great, but soon fell, as its horn was broken into four horns.

This vision corresponds to the reality of Greece conquering Persia. The ram was Persia (with two horns representing the Medes and the Persians). The goat was Greece, who conquered the ram. However, the victory was short-lived, as Alexander the Great died so soon afterwards. His kingdom was divided into four parts (just at Dan. 8:8) had predicted. Daniel's dream continued by focusing on one of the four horns that grew from the goat.

Daniel 8:9-14

Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?" He said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."

These verses are prophesying of a man named Antiochus Epiphanes, who began ruling over the eastern portion of the nation in 175 B. C. He was an arrogant man and a wicked king. He assumed lofty names for himself far beyond what any other Hellenistic king had ever done. For instance, he took the name, Theos Epiphanes, which translated means, "God Manifest." Such a name and an attitude fulfilled Daniel 8:11 when he magnified himself to be equal with the Commander of the host, God Himself!

After his victory of the Egyptians, he assumed the name, Nikephoros, which means, "Bearer of victory." He identified himself with the power behind the military victories of their country! For such arrogance, he was hated by many of the Jews, who were inclined to call him Antiochus Epimanes, which translated means, "The Mad One."

However, there was another reason why he was hated so badly. He defiled the temple of the Jews and stopped the sacrifices upon the altar (Daniel 8:12, 13). After 2,300 evenings and mornings, the sacrifices were resumed (Daniel 8:14) as we shall see in a bit.

Daniel's vision continued on with an interpretation of the vision, ...

Daniel 8:15-22

When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man. And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, "Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision."

So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end."

Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright. He said, "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end. The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power.

In some ways, this is like the prophecy in Daniel 2 of the kingdoms coming up. Only, this time, the vision focuses upon two empires. The first kingdom was that of Media and Persia, the one ram, with two horns (8:20). The second kingdom was that of Greece (8:21). From Greece would arise four nations (8:22), which took place exactly as prophesied. It was very accurate, "as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken" (8:8). That fits Alexander the Great perfectly. The prophecy of Antiochus Epiphanes is exact as well.

The accuracy of these prophecies is one reason why many liberal scholars say that the book of Daniel wasn't really written in the time of the Babylonians, because nobody could ever have predicted the nations arising to power as accurately as he has done. It must have been written later, after it was evident that Rome was soon to come to power. I believe in the power of God's word.

When we turn to the Apocrypha, we see some of these things spelled out in detail.

1 Maccabees 1:10

From these there grew a wicked offshoot, Antiochus Epiphanes son of King Antiochus; once a hostage in Rome, he became king in the 107th year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

At this point, 1 Maccabees jumps ahead more than a century to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who began ruling over the eastern portion of the nation in 175 B. C. He was hated by many of the Jews. During his reign, he made several trips down south to conquer Egypt. Coming from Syria, this means that he trampled through Israel on several occasions to get down there. It was on one of these trips that he stopped the sacrifices.

Here is how the account in the Maccabees continues.

1 Maccabees 1:11-15

It was then that there emerged from Israel a set of renegades who led many people astray. 'Come,' they said, 'let us ally ourselves with the gentiles surrounding us, for since we separated ourselves from them many misfortunes have overtaken us.' This proposal proved acceptable, and a number of the people eagerly approached the king, who authorized them to practice the gentiles' observances. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, such as the gentiles have, disguised their circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant, submitting to gentile rule as willing slaves of impiety.

Here is a partial account of the Hellenization of the Jews during the inter-testamental period. We see the Jews sacrificing their culture for political peace. Tacitus, the ancient historian, said that it was because of the political instability of the time, that Antiochus Epiphanes instigated an effort to introduce Greek civilization to those he governed. [\[6\]](#) And so, certainly, there was a give and take in the Hellenization of the Jews.

What took place in Israel wasn't unique to Israel. Worldwide the Jews were being influenced by the Greek culture and language. As the Greeks had world-wide dominance, they were naturally able to extend their culture to foreign nations.

For instance, many Jews were living in Alexandria during the rise of the Grecian empire. For them, in order to survive in the world of business, they needed to know Greek, the language of trade. Over time, these Jews were being Hellenized. They were becoming influenced by the Greek culture.

Then, a librarian in Alexander approached the king and asked if it would be possible for them to add to their great collection a Greek translation of the "Jewish laws." This met with favor with the Jews in Alexander, who were more comfortable speaking their Greek than their Hebrew. And so, with governmental funding, a Greek translation of the Old Testament was made. It has come to be known as the Septuagint (which means 70, because there were 70 translators who worked on the project). The Septuagint is often called the LXX (after the Roman numerals for 70).

This translation of the Bible was well received and extended throughout the world. The Septuagint became the translation of the Bible that Jews all over the world began to use, and thus, it makes sense that the New Testament would be written in Greek. After all, the most common usage of the Old Testament was the Greek Septuagint. This also accounts for many of the differences in quotations from the Old and New Testaments, because the New Testament is quoting from the Greek translation, while the Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew text.

Back to Jerusalem, we get more detail of the Grecian influence upon Jerusalem in 2 Maccabees. In chapter 4 we read, ...

2 Maccabees 4:7-12

When Seleucus had departed this life and Antiochus styled Epiphanes had succeeded to the kingdom, Jason, brother of Onias, usurped the high priesthood: he approached the king with a promise of three hundred and sixty talents of silver, with eighty talents to come from some other source of revenue. He further committed himself to paying another hundred and fifty, if the king would empower him to set up a gymnasium and youth centre, and to register the Antiochists of Jerusalem. When the king gave his assent, Jason, as soon as he had seized power, imposed the Greek way of life on his fellow-countrymen. He suppressed the liberties which the kings had graciously granted to the Jews at the instance of John, father of that Eupolemus who was later to be sent on an embassy to negotiate a treaty of friendship and alliance with the Romans and, overthrowing the lawful institutions, introduced new usages contrary to the Law. He went so far as to found a gymnasium at the very foot of the Citadel, and to fit out the noblest of his young men in the petasos.

Here was a Jew, named Jason, who bought power from Antiochus and ruled over the Jews. His strategy was to incorporate Greek culture upon Israel, by bringing the Greek culture to Israel. He introduced new laws, brought a gymnasium into Israel, and compelled the Jews to engage in athletic activities. You might say, "so what's the big deal about a gymnasium?" In the Greek culture, the gymnasium was an immodest place here they would run around naked. Indeed, the word, gymnazw (gumnazo) means, "naked." Such was contrary to the laws of decency to which the Jews held. And, the immorality that begun in the gymnasium continued through neglect of the law of God in their lives. The wickedness spread throughout all Israel. 2 Maccabees continues, ...

2 Maccabees 4:13-16

Godless wretch that he was and no true high priest, Jason set no bounds to his impiety; indeed the hellenising process

reached such a pitch that the priests ceased to show any interest in serving the altar; but, scorning the Temple and neglecting the sacrifices, they would hurry, on the stroke of the gong, to take part in the distribution, forbidden by the Law, of the oil on the exercise ground; setting no store by the honors of their fatherland, they esteemed hellenic glories best of all. But all this brought its own retribution; the very people whose way of life they envied, whom they sought to resemble in everything, proved to be their enemies and executioners.

This is the account of the rise of Hellenistic influence in Jerusalem. There were many who willingly bent to the ways of the Greeks in their life, abandoning the holy covenant of the LORD in the process (1 Maccabees 1:15). Jews betrayed their God and supported the Greeks.

But, not everybody followed after these ways. There were pious Jews in Israel who resisted this change. Rather than succumbing to the ways of the Gentiles, they remained loyal to the covenant which the LORD had given to His people. Those Jews who kept themselves pure learned their lesson from the Old Testament. The Jews were not to mix with the Gentiles. Time after time after time when they did, disaster was the result.

And so, there was a group of people who "separated" themselves from those Jews who had adopted many of the Gentile customs. These people came to be known as the "Pharisees," who we encounter in the New Testament. Their name comes from a Hebrew word, *Pharasi*, which means "to be distinct, to separate."

It was right here, during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, that they experienced their formation. When the Greek influence was coming heavy into the culture, they were the separatists of the day.

Because we know the account of the life of Jesus so well, we are inclined to think that the Pharisees were all bad. However, I believe that they began with good intentions, a bit like some of the early pilgrims of our country, who separated themselves from the religious establishment of the day. In fact, some of them were called, "non-conformists." They wanted religious freedom and so they sailed to the United States. The early Pharisees were a bit like this.

When the Pharisees began, they were merely religious, but later, they became more political and corrupted and legalistic and proud. Such is the danger of all who separate themselves for some religious reasons. At first, their cause is genuine. But, those who have separated themselves can often lose focus after a while, once they have a large following. Then, they can become proud of their separatist position and become separatists for the sake of separating, becoming negative and critical of everything.

Anyway, that's how the Pharisees started, when the Greek influence upon the culture became too much for them to tolerate. The Greek influence was pressed hard upon them by Antiochus Epiphanes. But, Antiochus Epiphanes did far more than merely press the Jewish culture upon the Jews. He defiled their temple, all in seeking to obtain power. Continuing on in Maccabees, we read, ...

1 Maccabees 1:16-25

Once Antiochus had seen his authority established, he determined to make himself king of Egypt and the ruler of both kingdoms. He invaded Egypt in massive strength, with chariots and elephants (and cavalry) and a large fleet. He engaged Ptolemy king of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned back and fled before his advance, leaving many casualties. The fortified cities of Egypt were captured, and Antiochus plundered the country. After his conquest of Egypt, in the year 143, Antiochus turned about and advanced on Israel and Jerusalem in massive strength. Insolently breaking into the sanctuary, he removed the golden altar and the lamp-stand for the light with all its fittings, together with the table for the loaves of permanent offering, the libation vessels, the cups, the golden censers, the veil, the crowns, and the golden decoration on the front of the Temple, which he stripped of everything. He made off with the silver and gold and precious vessels; he discovered the secret treasures and seized them and, removing all these, he went back to his own country, having shed much blood and uttered words of extreme arrogance. There was deep mourning for Israel throughout the country:

Here we see the temple being plundered. Antiochus took away all of the vessels of the sanctuary that Cyrus had returned to Jerusalem which Ezra had brought back into Israel. This took place, even though Jason, the high priest had schemed together with the Greek rulers in power.

This was the first attack that Antiochus made upon Jerusalem. The second one had a similar result. Here's how 2 Maccabees records the event, ...

2 Maccabees 5:11-16

When the king came to hear of what had happened, he concluded that Judea was in revolt. He therefore marched from Egypt, raging like a wild beast, and began by storming the city. He then ordered his soldiers to cut down without mercy everyone they encountered, and to butcher all who took refuge in their houses. It was a massacre of young and old, a slaughter of women and children, a butchery of young girls and infants. There were eighty thousand victims in the course of those three days, forty thousand dying by violence and as many again being sold into slavery. Not content with this, he had the audacity to enter the holiest Temple in the entire world, with Menelaus, that traitor to the laws and to his country, as his guide; with impure hands he seized the sacred vessels; with impious hands he seized the offerings presented by other kings for the aggrandizement, glory and dignity of the holy place.

Now, one thing that isn't mentioned here is exactly what happened in the holy place. Through other historical sources, we find out that Antiochus "slew Jason ... and dedicated the Temple to Zeus, erecting an image of Zeus in his own likeness on the altar, and, ... , sacrificed a pig in the Temple." [\[8\]](#)

This is the ultimate disgrace that could ever happen to the Jewish people. A pig was the dirtiest of animals. And the altar in the holy of holies, the most sacred place on the planet. And Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the holy place in 168 B. C. We have already read of this event prophesied (in Daniel 8:11). It is one of four times in Daniel in which the sacrifices are stopped and the temple is described as being desecrated (Daniel 8:11; 9:27; 11:31; 12:9-11). These relate to Jesus' words about the Abomination of Desolations (Matt. 24:15) and can give you insight into these words.

Obviously, the action of Antiochus Epiphanes didn't sit well with the Jews. They came to hate Antiochus Epiphanes with a passion. And there was one hero, who arose to incite the Jews in rebellion against Antiochus Epiphanes. His name was Judas Maccabaeus (after which the Maccabees is named). He was a man with Gideon-like faith, who rallied the Jews to fight against the Greeks. When a large force of people came from Samaria led by Apollonius to fight against Israel, Judas Maccabaeus rallied Israel who fought against them and defeated them (1 Maccabees 3:10).

When Seron, commander of the Syrian troops, heard about the success of Israel against Apollonius, he rose up to take revenge on the Israelites. Again, Judas mustered some people to meet them for war. Some of those fighting with Judas were fearful of the numbers coming against them.

They asked, "How can we, few as we are, engage such overwhelming numbers? We are exhausted as it is, not having had anything to eat today" (1 Maccabees 3:17).

Full of faith, Judas Maccabaeus replied, "It is easy for a great number to be defeated by a few; indeed, in the sight of Heaven, deliverance, whether by many or by few, is all one; for victory in war does not depend on the size of the fighting force: Heaven accords the strength. They are coming against us in full-blown insolence and lawlessness to destroy us, our wives and our children, and to plunder us; but we are fighting for our lives and our laws, and he will crush them before our eyes; do not be afraid of them" (1 Maccabees 3:18-22).

"When he had finished speaking, he made a sudden sally against Seron and his force and overwhelmed them" (1 Maccabees 3:23). At the news of these events, Antiochus Epiphanes was enraged (1 Maccabees 3:27). He ordered that many rise against Israel, "to crush and destroy the power of Israel and the remnant of Jerusalem, to wipe out their very memory from the place, to settle foreigners in all parts of their territory and to distribute their land into lots" (1 Maccabees 3:35-37).

Well, they came up against Israel, and Judas and his brothers, who knew that the king had ordered the people's total destruction (1 Maccabees 3:42), encouraged each other saying, "Let us restore the ruins of our people and fight for our people and our sanctuary" (1 Maccabees 3:43).

When they rose up to fight again, they prayed to the Lord, "How can we stand up and face them if you do not come to our aid?" (1 Maccabees 3:53). Judas encouraged them saying, "Be brave; Be ready to fight in the morning against these pagans massed against us to destroy us and our sanctuary. Better for us to die in battle than to watch the ruin of our nation and our holy place. Whatever be the will of heaven, he will perform it" (1 Maccabees 3:58-60).

To make a long story short, Israel won the battle. And now, I give you the rest of the story, ...

1 Maccabees 4:36-61

Judas and his brothers then said, "Now that our enemies have been defeated, let us go up to purify the sanctuary and dedicate it." So they marshaled the whole army, and went up to Mount Zion. There they found the sanctuary deserted, the altar desecrated, the gates burnt down, and vegetation growing in the courts as it might in a wood or on some mountain, while the storerooms were in ruins. They tore their garments and mourned bitterly, putting dust on their heads. They prostrated themselves on the ground, and when the trumpets gave the signal they cried aloud to Heaven.

Judas then ordered his men to keep the Citadel garrison engaged until he had purified the sanctuary. Next, he selected priests who were blameless and zealous for the Law to purify the sanctuary and remove the stones of the "Pollution" to some unclean place. They discussed what should be done about the altar of burnt offering which had been profaned, and very properly decided to pull it down, rather than later be embarrassed about it since it had been defiled by the gentiles. They therefore demolished it and deposited the stones in a suitable place on the hill of the Dwelling to await the appearance of a prophet who should give a ruling about them. They took unhewn stones, as the Law prescribed, and built a new altar on the lines of the old one. They restored the Holy Place and the interior of the Dwelling, and purified the courts. They made new sacred vessels, and brought the lamp-stand, the altar of incense, and the table into the Temple. They burned incense on the altar and lit the lamps on the lamp-stand, and these shone inside the Temple. They placed the loaves on the table and hung the curtains and completed all the tasks they had undertaken.

On the twenty-fifth of the ninth month, Chislew, in the year 148 they rose at dawn and offered a lawful sacrifice on the new altar of burnt offering which they had made. The altar was dedicated, to the sound of hymns, zithers, lyres and cymbals, at the same time of year and on the same day on which the gentiles had originally profaned it. The whole people fell prostrate in adoration and then praised Heaven who had granted them success.

For eight days they celebrated the dedication of the altar, joyfully offering burnt offerings, communion and thanksgiving sacrifices. They ornamented the front of the Temple with crowns and bosses of gold, renovated the gates and storerooms, providing the latter with doors. There was no end to the rejoicing among the people, since the disgrace inflicted by the gentiles had been effaced.

Judas, with his brothers and the whole assembly of Israel, made it a law that the days of the dedication of the altar should be celebrated yearly at the proper season, for eight days beginning on the twenty-fifth of the month of Chislew, with

rejoicing and gladness. They then proceeded to build high walls with strong towers round Mount Zion, to prevent the gentiles from coming and riding roughshod over it as in the past. Judas stationed a garrison there to guard it; he also fortified Beth-Zur, so that the people would have a fortress confronting Idumaea.

This took place in 164 B.C., which was 2,300 evenings and mornings from the desecration of the temple, which is exactly what Daniel 8 prophesied. [8] And from that day onward, the Jews have celebrated the feast of dedication, which we know today as Hanukkah. This is the feast that Jesus celebrated during his lifetime (John 10:22).

This gives you a flavor of what was taking place during the days between the testaments. Jerusalem was constantly under siege. They were constantly fighting back. The temple was being damaged and rebuilt, often. The specific stories that we have looked at this morning are pretty typical of the whole time.

Perhaps this was one of the greatest factors that led to the rise of prominence of the local synagogues. Temple worship was becoming so unstable that the Jews needed a stable place to meet for worship and store their written writings. Anything left in the temple was liable to plunder and loss.

As I close my message this morning, let me mention one final thing about the time between the testaments. This time was filled with a great Messianic hope! After seeing the exploits of Judas Maccabaeus, the Jewish people knew that they needed another deliverer. They were looking for and expecting the Messiah to come.

In Galatians 4:4-5, Paul writes, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." The time between the testaments was a time of waiting for the right time for the Messiah to come. The written revelation was complete and ready for the Messiah to appear. It was merely a time of waiting until the time was perfectly right, politically, spiritually, and prophetically, for Jesus to come.

Praise the Lord that He came to redeem us from our sins!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 16, 2009 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] These stages basically deal with the storyline of the Bible. They are not original to me. Rather, they are found in the book, *Thirty Days to Understanding the Bible*, by Max Anders.

[2] See <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/ct06.html>.

[3] The New Jerusalem Bible translates 2 Maccabees 12:43-45 this way:

2 Maccabees 12:43-45

After this he [Judas Maccabaeus] took a collection from them individually, amounting to nearly two thousand drachmas, and sent it to Jerusalem to have a sacrifice for sin offered, an action altogether fine and noble, prompted by his belief in the resurrection. For had he not expected the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead, whereas if he had in view the splendid recompense reserved for those who make a pious end, the thought was holy and devout. Hence, he had this expiatory sacrifice offered for the dead, so that they might be released from their sin.

[4] In Ecclesiasticus 3:30 we read, "Water puts out a blazing fire, almsgiving expiates sins." In other words, by giving to God, you can have your sins forgiven and wiped clean. Also, Tobit 12:8-9 says, "Prayer with fasting and alms with uprightness are better than riches with iniquity. Better to practice almsgiving than to hoard up gold. Almsgiving saves from death and purges every kind of sin. Those who give alms have their fill of days." Again, the same thing is taught, giving forgives sin. Such things are contrary to the rest of the Bible, but in line with the Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation by faith *and* works.

[5] See <http://www.biblestudy.org/maps/empire-of-alexander-the-great-map.html>.

[6] Tacitus, *The Histories*, 5:8.

[7] See http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Antiochus_IV_Epiphanes

[8] If you are observant, you will notice that 2,300 days are approximately 6 1/2 years. However, from 168 B. C. (when the temple was desecrated) to 164 B. C. (when the sacrifices were resumed), is only a bit over three years. How is it that the temple was restored 2,300 evenings and mornings after the sacrifices stopped (Daniel 8:14)?

There are really two solutions to this problem. The first is to regard Daniel 8:11 as speaking of the beginning of the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, which began in 171 B. C. Then, as you calculate to the restoration of the temple in 164 B. C., you get 6 1/2 years.

The second solution to the problem is to look closely at what Daniel says. He says, 2,300 "evenings and mornings" (Daniel 8:14). This may easily be understood as 1,150 evenings and 1,150 mornings, which would put the time frame at 3 1/4 years, rather than 6 1/2 years. This

way, the 168 B. C. date for the destruction of the altar fits perfectly.

Either of these solutions can account for the 2,300 evenings and mornings according to Daniel's prophecy. While I prefer the later solution, the former is believed by many.