



400 Years of Silence

Lesson Overview

1. Video

Watch *It's Intermission—Scenery Change* (7min 43sec) at bit.ly/BibleIntermission OR *Between the Old and New Testaments* (15min) at bit.ly/BetweenONT

2. Read

Learn about changes in Jewish religious practices between the Old and New Testaments. p. 2

3. Discuss

New Church Concept Human Race One Form

The Lord from creation regarded the whole human race as one Person, in which each individual is likewise created for use or is a use. And since the Lord Himself...is the life of that Person, it is clear that the universe was so created that the Lord is in things first and in things last, also in the center and in the circumference, that is, in the midst of all, and that the things in which He dwells are uses. *Apocalypse Explained* 1226.8

The Lord, by means of His Divine providence, arranges the affections of the whole human race into one form, which is the human form. *Divine Providence* 201

FaithBuilder 3 | Lesson 2 | Period Between the Old and New Testaments

What Happened Between the Old and New Testaments?

The Old Testament ends at a difficult time in the history of Israel. After reaching its height under King Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. It became weaker and weaker until the northern kingdom of Israel fell in 722 BC and was carried away captive. The ten tribes of Israel, from the northern kingdom, are sometimes called the “lost tribes”. After being carried away they were never seen again because they were scattered and assimilated into other nations. Later, in 586 BC, Judah was taken into captivity in Babylon. After 70 difficult years there they were allowed to return, but they never regained their glory and from then on were ruled by political leaders from other nations. Prophets promised that a Messiah would come, and people waited in patient expectation that a Savior would be born who would restore the kingdom of Israel to its former glory as an independent nation. During this time Jews had the laws of the Old Testament and lived by them as best they could. But for four hundred years there were no new messages from God.

These four hundred years were times of great change. In order to understand New Testament times, it's helpful to have an idea of the political and cultural conditions in which people lived when the Lord came to earth.

Watch a Video

Choose one video to show. (Enter bitly links in the web browser bar at the top of your screen.)

It's Intermission — Scenery Change! at bit.ly/BibleIntermission (7min 43sec).

Created in 2011, the narrator uses maps to show how the land was divided and came under rule of various nations.

WARNING: Circumcision, a Jewish ritual, was outlawed under during Greek rule. The narrator mentions problems Jewish men had when competing in sports naked with their circumcisions (see 4min31sec-5min13sec). He is matter-of-fact. Please preview the video and decide whether to show this part, skip it, or use the alternate video instead.

Between the Old and New Testaments at bit.ly/BetweenONT (15min. Stop at 12min 24sec when the topic switches to New Testament.)

Created in 1962, this vintage Moody Bible Institute film has been slightly updated. It offers a look at cultural figures in Israel's history and their influences on the culture there. It also gives a brief look at maps showing the extent of Roman rule and the political boundaries of Palestine.

Read

A number of important changes happened in the Jewish faith during the 400 “years of silence.” Judaism spread throughout the Mediterranean region.

Greek and Aramaic become common Jewish languages. Many could not speak or read Hebrew. Ptolemy II, a Greek King of Egypt, hired seventy-two Jewish scholars to translate the Torah (the five books of Moses) from Hebrew into simple Greek. This important translation is called the Septuagint.

The Hebrew scriptures and other Jewish writings continued to be copied too. Manuscripts from this period include the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are among the oldest copies of the Hebrew Word today. The scrolls lay hidden in caves above the Dead Sea until discovered by Bedouin farmers in 1947.

In ancient Israel all worship took place in the temple in Jerusalem. The temple was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC, but was rebuilt after the Jews returned to Israel, in 515 BC. After the return synagogues (gathering places) were built for congregational worship in towns throughout Israel. They were used as places to gather for prayers and readings of the Old Testament.

Jews split into several sects. **The Pharisees**, the spiritual fathers of modern Judaism, believed that God gave Moses oral (spoken) laws at Mount Sinai in addition to the laws written in the five books of Moses. They believed that God also told Moses what these laws meant and how they should be applied. This oral tradition was written down roughly three centuries later in what is known as the Talmud. They also believed in an after-life and were waiting for a Messiah who would bring an era of world peace.

The Sadducees wanted to maintain the priestly caste, but they were also liberal in their willingness to incorporate Greek practices into their lives, which the Pharisees opposed. They rejected the oral law of the Pharisees, and insisted on a literal interpretation of the written law. They did not believe in an after life because it is not mentioned in the Torah. The main focus of their religious practices was rituals associated with the Temple. These two religious factions served in the Great Sanhedrin, a Jewish Court made up of 71 members who interpreted civil and religious laws.

Discuss

1. How did changing political leadership in Israel impact Jewish life?
2. In what ways did the Pharisees’ belief in an after life lay groundwork for Jesus’ message?
3. In what ways is it important for religions to remain pure (as the Sadducees believed) and in what ways is it important for them to integrate with other people living in the same area (like the Pharisees).
4. Does the New Church believe God has given oral laws in addition to the written Word? Give examples to support your views.
5. In what way(s) was the Septuagint important?
6. The Word has been preserved for millennia; carefully copied, translated and printed. List all the steps it has taken for us to have the Word today.

The states of churches on our globe have been similar to the stages of a person who is being reformed and regenerated.... The church, from most ancient times to the end of the Jewish church, progressed like a person who is conceived, born, and grows up, and is taught. After the end of the Jewish church, from the time of the Lord to the present, these states have been like a person increasing in intelligence and wisdom. To this end the interior things of the Word, of the church, and of worship were revealed by the Lord when He was in the world; and now again, still more interior things are revealed. And in the measure that interior things are revealed a person can become wiser. See *Apocalypse Explained* 641.4

The Advent

Before the Lord came into the world the Divine Itself flowed into the whole heaven.... Through this influx light which was in the heavens, and thereby wisdom and intelligence, were brought forth. But after the human race had removed itself from the good of love and charity, that light could no longer be produced through heaven, nor, consequently, the wisdom and intelligence that would penetrate down to the human race. In order that people could be saved, the Lord came into the world, and made the Human in Himself Divine, in order that as to His Divine Human He might become the Divine Light, and might light up the universal heaven and the universal world. See *Arcana Coelestia* 4180.5