

## Four Hundred Years of Silence?

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The period of time between the Old And New Testaments, between, Malachi and Matthew, is commonly known as the Intertestamental Period. It is also generally referenced as a period of four hundred years of silence. It is so named, due to the fact that there was no word from God in terms of prophecies given to any prophets. These four hundred years of silence are troublesome to some believers, who struggle to understand why God would be silent for so many years?

What many fail to understand is that God was anything but silent regarding these approximately 400 years. Perhaps we would do well to stop referring to them as years of silence. The reason no prophecies were specifically given during this period is that God had already prophetically revealed, in great detail, many of the events that would occur in those 400 years. These events were outlined for Daniel, and they are recorded throughout the book bearing his name.

In the second chapter of Daniel, God's prophet interprets a dream for Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. In the interpretation of the dream, we find the rise and fall of four nations: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The changing of powers from Medo-Persia to Greece, and from Greece to Rome, occurred during the Intertestamental Period. Did God need to repeat this information to another prophet, during the Intertestamental Period, when he had already given the information to Daniel? Of course not! Especially when we consider that God had twice repeated the future changing of these world powers to Daniel! He does so in chapters seven and eight, where these nations are identified as beasts.

When one studies the eleventh chapter of Daniel, they find a very detailed prophecy of the Intertestamental Period. It is in fact, so detailed, that critics suggest Daniel actually lived during this period, and not during the period of Babylonian captivity, and that he recorded *history* not *prophecy*.

The eleventh chapter begins with Medo-Persia in power. However, in Daniel 11:3-4, Daniel is shown the rise of Greece through Alexander the Great. Daniel also alludes to Alexander's death at a young age. His early death is seen in prophetic words such as, "as soon as he was mighty, the large horn (Alexander) was broken" (Dan. 8:8); and in, "But as soon as he (Alexander) has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out" (Dan. 11:4).

Daniel is then shown how Alexander's kingdom would be divided between four of his generals (Daniel 8:8; 11:4). This sets up the bulk of the content for Daniel chapter eleven: The wars between the king of the North (Seleucids) and the King of the South (Ptolemies). These wars between the North and the South occur during the Intertestamental Period. The battles are covered in great prophetic detail. In many respects, they are the most detailed of all the prophecies in the Bible!

In Daniel 11:21, a warning is given of a despicable person. In modern premillennialism, this despicable person is said to be the infamous antichrist. However, history reveals him to be a man named Antiochus Epiphanies (meaning: the manifest one, or the manifest god). This title was a statement of the man's foolish arrogance. The Jews called him, Antiochus Epimanes (The mad man). Antiochus made possession of the Hebrew Scriptures, and circumcision of babies, crimes worthy of death. Daniel is shown just some of the evil of Antiochus, including the abomination of desolation (Dan. 11:31). The persecution of Antiochus against the Jews led to the Maccabean revolt, which one might prophetically interpret from verses 33-34.

As the eleventh chapter comes to a close, and chapter twelve begins, Rome is now the world power. With Rome in power, an earlier prophecy in Daniel is ready for fulfillment:

In the days of those kings [Rome] 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.

Daniel 2:44 (Addition in brackets mine)

With the time table of "in the days of those kings" set, the prophetic words of Isaiah were ready to be fulfilled (Isaiah 2:1-4; 7:14; 9:6-7; 53). Indeed, many other Messianic prophecies were all to be fulfilled during the days of those kings. Jesus said it well in a discussion with his disciples:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Luke 24:44

With only this brief sampling of Old Testament prophecy, it is hoped that you can see that the Intertestamental Period was anything but silent, *as to what was going to occur*. Yes, God was silent in terms of prophecy given specifically during this period. However, He had previously revealed so much detailed information to Daniel, there was really no need to reveal anything else to anybody.

During these "years of silence," the Jewish people were not without information from God. They had the writings of Daniel as well as, the other prophets. As an example, the Jewish historian, Josephus, records how, when Alexander the Great arrived in Jerusalem, the Jews showed him information from the book of Daniel:

"And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended..."

Antiquities of the Jews 11:8:5

The Jewish people were not without instruction from God during these "years of silence." Relating all of this to us, there has been no new revelation from God for the past two thousand years. Yet, we can hear from God everyday, through the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). We have been given all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). God speaks to us very clearly through His word.

The word of God is a treasure chest of truth. Let us continually dig in and explore the wonders and beauties it contains!