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400 YEARS OF SILENCE

The period between the end of the book of Malachi and the time of Christ coming to earth is often referred to as the “400 years of silence.” It is commonly referred to in this way because, in these years, there were no inspired books written. Because this is true, some might assume that God left man alone and waited for Christ to be born. We might think nothing of importance happened in these years. Yet, this is not an accurate assumption of this time in man’s history. Just because God did not inspire men to write books in this time, are we safe in assuming that this means God was not speaking to man? Were men only “counting time” for 400 years? Personally, I see these 400 years as a fascinating time in Bible history and the history of men in general. Why do I say this? It is because

living during these 400 years meant – **Men Saw Bible Prophecies Fulfilled.** A prime example of this is seen in the book of Daniel. Daniel was called to be God’s prophet when he was taken into Babylonian captivity at an early age (Dan. 1-2). While still a young man, he stood before Nebuchadnezzar, and by God’s inspiration, told Nebuchadnezzar his dream and interpreted it (Dan. 2:29-45). This dream prophesied of four coming kingdoms, three physical and one spiritual, that would arise in future years after Babylon. It was during these four hundred years of “silence” that much of his dream was fulfilled. Some years after the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel had a vision of a ram and goat who fought with one another by the river Ulai (Dan.

8). This vision was a foretelling of the kingdoms of the Medes and Persians and their struggle and loss to the Greeks (Dan. 8:19-27). The fulfillment of these events is not recorded for us in Scripture, because it happened during those 400 "silent" years! Yes, God's word was fulfilled during those days! Men and women with eyes to see and ears to hear would have taken note of this and realized that God is powerful and very much in control (Dan. 4:17, 32, 5:21).

Men Had The Completed Old Testament By Which To Live.

During these 400 years, the Jews would have had access to all thirty-nine Old Testament books. They had access to the knowledge of God's word that folks in Moses' day or David's or Isaiah's, etc. didn't have. They had all the truth God had revealed up to that point! In these years, folks could see the "big picture" as they looked forward to Messiah coming. No doubt, such knowledge is what kept people like Simeon and Anna going and faithful to God all of their days (Lk. 2:25-38). Remember, they would have been living at the end of these 400 years. All they had to follow was the written word, and they kept it faithfully. God's word then had the power to produce faith in people (Rom. 10:17). This is what

those folks lived by until they saw the Lord's Christ with their own eyes! Just think of the people unknown to us, but known to God who faithfully continued in the Lord's will all of those years. Think of those who lived toward the end of those 400 years and got to see and hear Christ upon this earth!

Men Could Receive God's Blessings.

Remember that those living in this time had passages of Scripture to comfort and strengthen them, as well as God's promised blessings to them for their obedience. They had access to such passages as:

"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Ps. 37:25).

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).

"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deut. 10:12-13).

In addition to these passages, we know they could become wise through their study and learning of God's word (Ps. 119:98-100;

II Tim. 3:15). Those people could read the Scriptures, learn from them, live them, and be blessed during those 400 years. They also had numerous examples of folks living by faith, living examples of those who pleased God. Those living during the 400 years were in a unique place in history. They saw many Old Testament prophecies fulfilled, and this would build their confidence that other prophecies, such as Messianic prophecies would be fulfilled as well! As I think about those folks during the 400 years, I think we Christians have much in common with them. Can you see any similarities? One way we are similar is that, just like those folks, we can see fulfilled prophecies. Though they looked forward to Christ coming to earth, in our case, we point to the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies. The Lord's Christ came to this earth, and while here fulfilled 332 prophecies concerning Himself. The existence of so many fulfilled prophecies makes it plain that God inspired the Bible we read and study (II Tim. 3:16-17)! Not only is this the case, but we also have the completed word to guide our lives (Jude 3). Like those folks, we have access to God's knowledge; knowledge to which the people from the first century

and before did not have access. The glaring difference between us and those in those 400 years is that they lived according to the Old Testament's mandate, but a New Testament was to come (Jer. 31:31-34)! We, on the other hand, have the New Testament to hear, believe, and obey (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:6-13, 12:24; II Cor. 3:6-14). Of course, we are also aware of the fact that by following the New Testament, we will be blessed by God (Jas. 1:25; Rev. 1:3, 22:14). This principle of hearing, believing, obeying, and receiving a blessing has been seen throughout time, and it is still true today! Just as folks during those 400 years were blessed when they followed the Lord's will, so also, we today are blessed by God when we are obedient (Rev. 22:14)! When we think about it, we see that describing the time between the Old and New Testaments as a time of "silence" is a misnomer, isn't it? True, God did not inspire men to write a book or letter which was included in the canon of Scripture. Yet, does this mean God was "silent"? Could men today say that God has been silent since there have not been any more verbally inspired books since the first century (Jude 3)? Of course, not! We now have access to His completed word. God speaks today just as clearly as ever through the words of Christ recorded for us on the printed page (Heb. 1:1-2; Eph. 3:4; Rev. 1:3; II Tim. 2:15; etc.). Let us hear, believe, and obey!

- Jarrod Jacobs

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



Nehemiah's Wall Found

It was supposed to be a simple salvage operation to repair a crumbling Hasmonean tower. But after Dr. Eilat Mazar and her team started excavating, they soon realized that this project would be far more. By the time they were done, they had made a sensational discovery. Situated in the City of David, at the upper northern end of the Stepped Stone Structure, the Northern Tower was a poorly constructed fortified structure. It had the remains of a *mikveh* (ritual purification bath) on top. The Northern Tower was largely unearthed in the 1920s. Until 2007, archaeologists, including Dr. Mazar, generally assumed the tower dated to the Hasmonean period (second century B.C.E.). By 2007, the Northern Tower was in a perilous condition, at risk of collapse. The structure had clearly been built quickly in antiquity, with its stones loosely cobbled together. Most significantly, nearly a century of nearby archaeological digs had compromised its structural integrity. Without immediate intervention, the tower would collapse. Early that year, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) attempted to carry out restoration work, yet the soundness of the tower continued to deteriorate. Thus, the IAA approved Dr. Mazar to lead a salvage excavation to repair the tower. During the excavation it also became clear that the Northern Tower had been built at the same time as a straight section of wall atop the Stepped Stone Structure and that the tower and this section of wall were part of the same edifice. Though the discovery of the Perian wall and tower was unexpected, when considering the historical sources, it is entirely unsurprising. The Bible discusses just such a wall, at length and in great detail. The biblical account of “Nehemiah’s wall” is well known. Studying Nehemiah’s account, Sr. Mazar noted that the construction of the Northern Tower and associated wall matched precisely with the biblical account. Not only did the dates match, so did the quality of construction, built hastily – just as Nehemiah recorded.

