

# Between the Testaments

## Linking Old and New

The period between the Old and New Testaments has been called "the four hundred silent years." We are aware of no direct oral revelation from God during this period. The books of Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, and Malachi were written between 458 BC and 400 BC. The New Testament opens with the birth of Christ at about 6—4 BC, but there is a real sense in which it opens with John the Baptist (see Mt. 3: 1; Mark; Luke; Jn. 1:6). Malachi (4:5-6) closes with the promise of the coming of "Elijah the prophet," and the New Testament opens with the birth of John the baptist as the fulfillment (Lk. 1:8-25; see esp. vs. 17).

During those 400 silent years God was preparing for the coming of Christ. In Nebuchadnezzar's image there was foretold the history of world empires from the Babylonians to the Romans (Dan. 2:3145).

---

Head of Gold	- BABYLONIAN EMPIRE	- 626 to 539 BC.
Breast of Silver	- MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE	- 539 to 331 BC
Belly & Thighs of Brass	- GRECIAN EMPIRE	- *331 BC & following
Legs of Iron	- ROMAN EMPIRE	- BC to 5th Cen. AD.

\*Exact Dates Difficult

---

The Old Testament closes during the Persian period and the New Testament opens in the days of Rome. What happened between these periods?

### 1. BRIEF SURVEY OF LATTER OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY AS RELATED TO THE GREAT WORLD EMPIRES.

#### A. The Babylonian Period (626—539 BC).

I . Judea captured and Jerusalem destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar: 605, 597, 586 BC. Many Judeans taken captive. Temple destroyed, 586 BC.

#### 2. Prophets: Zephaniah, Nahum (tells of the fall of Nineveh, 612 BC), Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Ezekiel.

#### B. The Persian Period (539—331 BC).

##### 1. Cyrus (550-530 BC).

a. Capture of Babylon, Oct. 29, 539 BC.

b. Cyrus Cylinder (in British Museum) says Cyrus allowed captives to return to their homelands, build temples, etc. See 2 Chron36:22-23. The first group of Israelites returned from captivity in 536 BC.

c. Daniel was active during this period (Dan. 10:1).

d. Who is the Darius the Mede (539—525 BC) of Daniel 9: 1? Some think he is the same as Cyrus (Wiseman); others think he is the

---

same as Gubaru (Gobryas) (?), the governor of Babylon under Cyrus (Whitcomb).

2. Cambyses (530—521 BC).
  - a. Not mentioned in the Old Testament.
  - b. Defeated the Egyptians.
3. Darius "the Great" (521—486 BC).
  - a. Rebuilding of the Temple (520—516 BC; Hag. 1: 1; Ezra 6:15ff.).
  - b. Left a tri-lingual inscription on the Behistun Rock (in Iran) which became the key to unlock Babylonian cuneiform before 1850 AD.
  - c. Efficient organizer. Built roads, postal system, etc.
4. Xerxes (486-464 BC).
  - a. Same as Ahasuerus. The Septuagint version, Josephus, and several Jewish sources identified Ahasuerus with Artaxerxes. Modern scholars, on the basis of inscriptional evidence, say, "there is no doubt that Ahasuerus was Xerxes-. -the son of Darius I" (Yamauchi 187; 228-29).
  - b. The events of the book of Esther took place during his reign.
5. Artaxerxes (464-423 BC).
  - a. Ezra returns with second group of captives (458 BC).
  - b. Nehemiah rebuilds the wall of Jerusalem (444 BC). Close of Old Testament.
6. The Persian dominion continued for another century until the rise of Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander.