

Session 18 | Dr. Randy White | Between the Testaments

The Close of the Old Testament

- The Old Testament closes **prophetically** with the prophet Malachi.
- The Old Testament closes **chronologically** with the book of Nehemiah.
 - The Kingdom of Judah had its final day on the 9th of Av, 586 BC, when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar.
 - The Babylonian captivity ended in 536 BC when Cyrus the Great of Persia signed a decree allowing the Jews to return from Babylon.
 - Under the civil leadership of Zerubbabel and the spiritual leadership of Joshua the High Priest, about 50,000 Jews made the first “Alyah” of the Hebrew nation.
 - Encouraged by Haggai and Zechariah, the people rebuilt the Temple from 520-516BC.
 - Under the burden of Nehemiah, the people of Jerusalem rebuilt the walls in approx.. 444BC under the reign of Artaxerxes I of Persia.
- When the Old Testament closes out, Jerusalem is under the sovereignty of Persia and Judaism is in great need of a revival.

The Transition of Empires

- The prophet Daniel gave the progression of empires in Daniel 2:31-45
- Alexander’s Greek Kingdom was divided among his generals after his death.
 - The two greatest divisions were the Seleucids and the Ptolomies.
 - Antiochus the Great of the Seleucids secured control of Jerusalem in the late 100s BC.
- The goal of the Greek empire: Hellenism.

“There is hardly anything secular in our culture that does not come from Greece” – William Durrant

The Transition of Judaism

- Before the exile, the Davidic King was the focus of Jewish life.
- After the exile, the High Priest became the supreme ruler of all things Jewish.
 - When the Old Testament closed, the priesthood had become corrupt and Judaism was in great need of a spiritual revival – Mal. 1:6, 2:1

- With the corrupt nature of the priesthood, the Scribes became the gauge of Jewish piety.
- Jews divided into *Hasidic* and *Hellenistic*.
- By the time of Antiochus the Great, the High Priesthood was an appointed position by the Seleucid King.
- By the time of Antiochus IV Epiphenes (175BC), Hellenism had become so dominant in Jewish life that, had God not intervened, Judaism would have become unrecognizable.

What Saved Judaism?

- Judaism is the only ancient eastern religion to have freed itself from Hellenism.
- The attempted complete abolishment of Jewish worship saved Judaism!
- Antiochus IV Epiphenes is the despot God used to revive Judaism.
 - Eccentric to the point of insanity.
 - Sold the High Priesthood to Jason, a highly Hellenized Jew.
 - Got caught in a no-win battle with Egypt in 168 BC. In rage, he took his frustrations out on the Jews of Jerusalem.
 - The final “nail in the coffin” was to sacrifice a Pig on the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem, now dedicated to Zeus.
 - But... Religious enthusiasm waits not to ask about the possibilities of success!

The Maccabean Revolt

- The Jews had been compelled to be Greek.
- There was a great amount of passive resistance.
- The Maccabees, active resistance began.
 - The location: the town of Modein
 - The leader: an old priest: Mattathias
 - He believed the slaughter of a large group of Jews on the Sabbath was “a poor way of contributing to the cause of God.
 - The first death was a fellow Jew, killed by Mattathias himself.
 - The odds: 6,000 to 40,000
- The result: The restoration of Temple Worship!
- Maccabean kings reigned from 165-64 BC.
- The Roman General Pompey was practically given the Kingdom in 64BC