

## LESSON 1 – BACKGROUND

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Assignments: Tapes 1 & 2  
Textbook – Chapter 1  
Bible: Ezra 1 - 10

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### I) Introduction.

#### A) Why study 400 “silent” years?

- 1) Provides rich historical and cultural background for understanding the New Testament.
- 2) The “silent” years were not silent historically - what does this phrase mean?

#### B) Where do we find out about these years?

- 1) Flavius Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews (ca. 90 A.D.)  
The Jewish War (ca. 75 A.D.).
- 1) Apocryphal Books: primarily I and II Maccabees.
- 2) Some references in Philo and Roman historians.

#### C) Overview of the Course.

- 1) From the Persians to the Romans (ca. 538-63 B.C.).
- 2) The Family of Herod (63 B.C.-66 A.D.).
- 3) The Jewish Rebellion (66-73 A.D.).
- 4) Jewish Literature of the Period (Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha).
- 5) Jewish Sects of the Period.
- 6) Religious Life of the Period (Temple, Synagogue, Sanhedrin, etc.).

II) From The Persians To The Romans (ca. 538-63 BC).

A) The Persian Period (538-333 B.C.).

1) Decree of Cyrus to end the exile and subsequent returns under Zerubbabel (to rebuild the \_\_\_\_\_); under Nehemiah (to rebuild \_\_\_\_\_); and under Ezra (to rebuild the \_\_\_\_\_)

2) Ministries of post-exilic prophets.

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

3) Restored Jewish community ruled over mainly by “High Priests,” descendants of “Zadok.”

(a) “Joshua, son of Josedech” (Hag. 1:1; Zech. 3:1-10)

(b) “Simon the Just” (220-198 B.C.)

These high priests were descendents of “Zadok” (I Sam. 2:35; I Ki. 2:35)

4) Reorganization of Jewish religious life under Ezra. (ca. 438 B.C.) Four contributions

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

5) The Jews of Elephantine (Egypt).

(a) Jewish military colony on an island in the Nile.

(b) The presence of a “temple”...

6) Rise of the Samaritan schism.

(a) Racially mixed group (cf. 2 KI. 17:24-29).

(b) New “religion” started with marriage of Manasseh, son of High Priest, to a Samaritan (see Neh. 2:10, 19: 13:28).

(c) Construction of Temple on Mt. Gerizim (cf. Josephus. Ant. XI.7,8).

(d) Destruction of Temple by John Hyrcanus- 128 B.C. and resulting enmity.

(e) Note role of Samaritans in New Testament - John 4; Luke. 9:51-56; Luke 10:29-37; Luke 17:11-19; Acts. 8:25.

B) The Hellenistic Period (333-165 B.C.).

1) Career of Alexander the Great (335-323 B.C.).

(a) Issus (333).

(b) Tyre (332).

(c) Jerusalem (331).

(d) Guagamela (331).

(e) Conquests and Changes.

2) Alexander's Successors: (died 323 B.C.).

Cassander: \_\_\_\_\_

Lysimachus: \_\_\_\_\_

Ptolemy: \_\_\_\_\_

Antigonus: \_\_\_\_\_

(a) Ptolemies (Egyptian) ruled over Judea approximately 300-200 B.C.

(1) Importance of Alexandria.

(2) Development of Septuagint (LXX) - first translation of the Bible into another language