BIBLE 901
Introduction to the New Testament

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Introduction to the New Testament

Introduction

The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit and was written for us in two main divisions. The first contains thirty-nine books and is called the Old Testament. The second has twenty-seven books and is known as the New Testament. The term testament means covenant or agreement. The death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ brought the old covenant to an end and began the new agreement. He is the focal point of all history. Hebrews 1:1-2 states that God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son.

Studying this LIFEPAC® you will learn about the events between the Old Testament and the New Testament. You will see how the way was prepared for the coming of the Messiah and the spreading of the good news of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. A look at the political and religious situation will set the scene for the events that are shared in the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation. After you examine the inter-Testamental period, you will learn how the four Gospels were written. You will see how they relate to one another and to the rest of the New Testament. You will also realize that Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation are really rooted in the facts which the Gospels record.

As you study the sequence of events in the New Testament, you will understand that the Bible is a living organism. Every part is vitally connected with every other part. The Holy Spirit, who is the Author, made sure of this. The central subject of the whole Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. Learning the names of the books of the New Testament and how they fit into the time sequence will give you a better grasp of the events of the first century. Studying about the authors will help you to appreciate the fact that God used ordinary men to pen the greatest Book the world has ever known. You will become aware that the Lord made sure that we would have a reliable written record so that we could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and find abundant life in Him.

In this LIFEPAC you will study as background information the history between the Old Testament and New Testament periods. You will look at the religious literature that was written during that time and see the rise of religious parties or sects which were in existence in Jesus’ day. In this LIFEPAC an overview of both the content and the chronological sequence of the New Testament books will be presented.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAC. When you have finished this LIFEPAC, you should be able to:

1. Tell how the events in the inter-Testamental period paved the way for the coming of Christ and the spreading of the Gospel.
2. Name the three divisions of the New Testament and tell how they relate to each other.
3. Tell about the major events in the Gospels, the early church, and the Revelation.
1. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The last book of the Old Testament is Malachi. Between Malachi and the first book of the New Testament, Matthew, 400 years of history elapsed. The period between Malachi and Matthew has been called the inter-Testamental period, and also the Silent Years. The term *silent* is used because no words from any prophets of God were recorded as Scripture during this period. In Malachi 4:4-6 the prophet had warned the people that the next main event from God would be a ministry similar to that of Elijah. This prophecy was fulfilled at the beginning of the New Testament period in the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 11:7-15; 17:9-13).

The various empires that came into power during the inter-Testamental period had a great effect on the Jews. Each new empire gained or fought for control of the Land of Israel. The Gentile empires helped to mold Jewish life and thought. The attitudes and actions of the Jews during Christ's day were a result of the impact of the inter-Testamental period on their nation. The main empires during this time were the Persian, Grecian, and Roman, with Egyptian, Syrian, and Maccabean periods between the Grecian Empire and the Roman Empire. The religious literature of this period included the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Septuagint. The conflicts which the Jews had with these empires helped to shape the religious groups within Judaism. The three main groups in Jesus' day were the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees.

**SECTION OBJECTIVES**

*Review these objectives.* When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Tell how the events in the inter-Testamental period paved the way for the coming of Christ and the spreading of the Gospel.
   
   1.1 Tell how the various empires changed Jewish thought and life.
   
   1.2 Tell how the religious literature of the inter-Testamental period had good and bad effects on the Jewish nation.
   
   1.3 Name the religious groups of Jesus' day and state how their views differed from His.

**VOCABULARY**

*Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.*

- **apocalyptic** (ap´ o kal´ tip). Containing or pertaining to revelation.
- **compromise** (kom´ pru mī z). To surrender or give up one's principles.
- **denounce** (di nounz´). To condemn strongly as evil.
- **desecrate** (des´ u krā t). To profane or treat as not sacred.
- **Hellenism** (hel´ u niz´ um). The adoption of the Greek language and customs.
- **hypocrite** (hip´ u krit). One who pretends to be what he is not.
- **immortality** (i´ môr tal´ u tē). The condition of being deathless or undying.
**inspiration** (in´ spu rā´ shun). A divine influence upon human beings resulting in writing.

**monotheistic** (mon´ u thē is´ tik). Believing that there is only one God.

**persecute** (pe´ r´ su kyūt). To afflict or harass constantly so as to injure or distress.

**polytheistic** (pol´ ē thē is´ tik). Believing in or worshiping many gods.

*Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.*

**Pronunciation Key:** hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, īce; hot, őpen, őrder; oil; ou; cup, pūt, rūle; child; long; thin; /TH/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /lu/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /l/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

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**Complete these sentences.**

1.1 The last book of the Old Testament is a. ______________________________________________________ , and b. ______________________________________________ is the first book of the New Testament.

1.2 Between the books of Malachi and Matthew, ______________________________ years of history elapsed.

1.3 The period of the “Silent Years” is also called the _____________________________ period.

1.4 John the Baptist had a ministry similar to that of ______________________________ .

1.5 Each major empire and power fought for control of the land of a. __________________________ , where the b. ___________________________________________________ lived.

1.6 The three main empires in the silent period were the a. _____________________________________ , b. _______________________________________ , and c. ________________________________________ .

1.7 Other periods in between included the a. ______________________________________________ , b. ______________________________________ , and c. _______________________________________ .

1.8 The three main religious groups in Jesus’ day were the a. ________________________________ , b. ______________________________________ , and c. ______________________________________ .
VARIOUS EMPIRES AND PERIODS

The Persian Empire, which existed during the time of Malachi, was followed by the Grecian Empire, which was divided into four segments following Alexander the Great’s death. Following 323 BC, the Land of Israel was controlled by:

- Egypt – 323-204 BC,
- Syria – 204-165 BC,
- Maccabeans – 165-63 BC (Jewish independence)

**The Persian Empire.** The Persian Empire was in existence during the time of Malachi. This empire dates from approximately 539 to 334 BC. The Jewish people had just come out of the Babylonian captivity under which they had been taken captive to the land of Babylon for 70 years. This captivity had cured them of idol worship, and they now knew that Jehovah was the one true God. Two main groups of several thousand people returned to Land of Israel under Zerubbabel and Ezra during the Persian period. Many others decided to stay in the land where they had been captive. Under Persian rule the Jews were allowed to be governed by their high priest, who had to answer to the Persian rulers. The priest’s office should have been used to give the people spiritual guidance. Instead, it became a much-sought-after political office. The violence connected with the priest’s office caused the Persian government to send troops to occupy Jerusalem. They began to persecute the Jews and to impose fines on them. The Samaritans, Jews who had intermarried with Gentiles, meekly obeyed the Persian rulers and escaped persecution. The Jews hated the Samaritans for disobeying the law of Moses and compromising with the Persian rulers.

**The Grecian Empire.** The Grecian Empire followed the Persian Empire (334-323 BC) as

Alexander the Great became a world conqueror. He came to power at the age of twenty and reigned for twelve years until his sudden death. When Alexander approached Jerusalem for battle, Jaddua, the high priest, went out to meet him. With other priests and in full dress, he begged for mercy on behalf of Jerusalem. Alexander had a previous dream in which he saw priests coming out to meet him in peace, so he spared the city. He even offered sacrifices to the God of the Hebrews, Jehovah.

The priests told Alexander about Old Testament prophecies concerning him (Daniel 8:5, 21). Afterwards, Alexander showed the Jews favor. He used them in his army and granted them equal rights with Greeks as first citizens in his cities. The influence of Alexander upon many of the Jews caused them to become Hellenistic in attitude. This attitude met with opposition from the conservative nationalistic Jews.
Write the correct answers on the blanks. Choose from the list to the right.

1.9 The Persian Empire was in existence from answer numbers
   a. ______________ to b. ______________ BC.

1.10 The Jewish people had been captive in the land of Babylon for ________ years.

1.11 The Grecian Empire lasted from a. ______________ to b. ______________ BC.

1.12 Alexander came to power at age a. ______________ 
   and reigned for b. ________________ years.

Answer these questions in complete sentences.

1.13 Why was the high priest's office important under the Persian Empire? ______________
   ______________
   ______________

1.14 Who were the Samaritans and why did the Jews hate them? ______________
   ______________
   ______________
   ______________
   ______________

1.15 Why did Alexander the Great spare Jerusalem, and what favors did he show to the Jews?
   ______________
   ______________
   ______________
   ______________
   ______________
The Egyptian period. The Egyptians came into control of land of Israel after the death of Alexander the Great (323 to 204 BC). The Grecian Empire was divided among four of his generals. General Ptolemy Soter ruled over the southern section known as Egypt. Judea was a part of this kingdom. The northern part came under control of the Seleucid dynasty. The Syrian nation arose from this sector. General Soter’s son, Philadelphia, ruled after his father in the southern kingdom. During his reign the Jews who lived in Alexandria in Egypt wanted to preserve their heritage. They were losing the use of their Hebrew language because the business world of Egypt had forced the Jews to adopt the Greek language. The Hebrews had their Old Testament Scriptures translated into Greek by seventy scholars. This translation became known as the Septuagint, or LXX version. We will learn more about this translation later.

The Syrians to the north were now beginning to increase in power. The land of Israel became the battleground between the Syrian princes (Seleucids) and the Egyptian rulers (Ptolemies). When invading Judea, Ptolemy Philopator tried to desecrate the Temple by entering the Holy of Holies, the most sacred part. He retreated from the Temple in confusion, encountering Jewish opposition for his act. He returned persecution for their opposition. Eventually, Judea came under the control of Syria.

The Syrian period. The Syrian Period (204-165 BC) was a period of constant persecution and martyrdom. Hellenistic (Grecian) Jews were fighting the conservative nationalistic Jews over the high priest's office. The political fighting in Jerusalem gave the Syrian ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes, a reason to invade the city. He hated the Jews, and, upon entering Jerusalem, he desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a pig on its altar. Later he erected a statue there to the heathen god, Jupiter Olympius.

Antiochus killed thousands of Jews and sold the women and children into slavery. He tried forcibly to make the Jews into pagans by cruel acts. He tore down the city walls and forbade sacrifices and circumcision, a sign to the Jews of their covenant relationship with Jehovah. He had them beaten with whips until many died. He tried to break their wills, but they resisted. The Samaritans again escaped persecution through compromise, gaining even more hatred from the Jews.

Finally, a priest by the name of Mattathias and his five sons rose in rebellion against Syrian bondage. After the father’s death, the sons continued the struggle until eventual freedom was gained. The descendants of Mattathias became known as the Maccabees.
Write the correct letter and answer in the blank.

1.16 The Egyptian period ran from __________________________ BC.
   a. 539-334  b. 343-246  c. 323-204
   d. 434-364  e. 204-165

1.17 The Greek Old Testament Scriptures became known as the ________________.
   d. Grecian  e. Septuagint

1.18 The Egyptian rulers were called ________________.
   a. Generals  b. Ptolemies  c. Philopators
   d. Syrians  e. Greeks

1.19 The Syrian period dated from __________________________ BC.
   a. 334-263  b. 413-287  c. 324-264
   d. 204-165  e. 214-163

1.20 The Syrian ruler was ________________ Epiphanes.
   d. Mattathias  e. Olympus

1.21 The descendants of Mattathias, the priest, were known as the ________________.
   a. Syrians  b. Grecians  c. Seleucids
   d. Romans  e. Maccabees

Answer these questions in complete sentences.

1.22 Why and how did the Septuagint come into being? ________________

1.23 Why was Antiochus Epiphanes hated by the Jews? ________________
The Maccabean period. The Maccabean period (165-63 BC) was a continuation of the battles with Syria. The Maccabean family led patriotic Jews in revolt against Antiochus. After the Syrian ruler died of a dreaded disease, Judas Maccabaeus became governor of the Land of Israel. His first act as governor was to purify and rededicate the Temple in Jerusalem. The occasion gave rise to the Jewish Feast of Purification.

When the Syrians renewed their war against Israel, Judas asked for aid from the Romans, an upcoming power. He was killed in battle before help arrived. His descendants took his place but later fought among themselves as to who would rule in the office over the Land of Israel. As Rome came into greater power, General Pompey took Jerusalem in order to stop the political fighting. After three months of siege, he took over the city and entered the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The Jews forever hated the Romans for defiling their Temple, since according to the Law of Moses no Gentile was allowed to enter the sacred chambers of the Temple.

The Roman Empire. The Roman Empire came into real power around 63 BC and continued until hundreds of years after the death of Christ. It existed the longest of any earthly empire. When Judea fell under Roman rule, the high priest’s office had no governing power, only a minor political influence. Rome made the Jews pay tribute or taxes to the government, to which the people were much opposed.

To govern their large empire, the Romans developed an extensive road and water travel system. A strong central government located in Rome guaranteed a measure of peace and safety for its citizens. The Romans were greatly influenced by the Greeks. They adopted much of Grecian art, philosophy, and language. The common language of the empire was Greek, which made commerce and travel easy for everyone. The majority of the New Testament books were written in the common Greek language.

The Roman Empire provided an ideal setting, in some respects, for the coming of the Messiah. An efficient travel system and common language aided the spread of the Gospel. Jews, who were scattered all over the empire, had built synagogues in which to worship God and to read the Old Testament Scriptures. Small rebellions against Rome were always brewing within Jewish society. The Jews had long awaited any sign of a prophet or Messiah to free them from Roman bondage.
Answer these questions in complete sentences.

1.24 In your own words, how would you describe the Maccabean Period? ________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

1.25 How did the Roman Empire provide a good setting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ?
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________________

Just as the political situation during the four centuries between the Testaments helped mold Jewish thought, so the religious literature of this period was an important influence on Jewish life. We turn now to study the literary activity in the inter-Testamental period.

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

The religious literature produced during this time is in three main divisions: the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Septuagint. We shall examine first the Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha. The voice of prophecy was silent for 400 years between Malachi and Matthew. Many wars and persecutions had taken place, but they had not stopped the Jews from writing literature for their own inspiration. The literature of this period, however, lacks proof of Holy Spirit inspiration. It does help us, though, to understand some of the history and problems experienced by the Jewish nation.

The first group of books is called the Apocrypha. The word means hidden or secret. This meaning implies that the writer often used objects, numbers, or symbols to hide the real meaning. The Apocryphal books of the inter-Testamental period number from eleven to sixteen. The Jews who were taken captive into Egypt included the Apocryphal books in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, The Septuagint. The Jews of

| APOCRYPHAL SCROLLS IN RANDOM ORDER |

1 ESDRAS
2 ESDRAS
BARUCH
1 MACCABEES
2 MACCABEES
JUDITH
TOBIT

THE EPISTLE OF JEREMIAH
THE HISTORY OF SUSANNA
BEL AND THE DRAGON
THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON
THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH
ADDITIONS TO ESTHER
ECCLESIASTICUS
THE SONG OF THE THREE HOLY CHILDREN
Review the material in this section in preparation for the Self Test. The Self Test will check your mastery of this particular section. The items missed on this Self Test will indicate specific areas where restudy is needed for mastery.

Match these items (each answer, 2 points).

1.01 _____ covenant a. no prophecy recorded at this time
1.02 _____ John the Baptist b. last book in the Old Testament
1.03 _____ 400 years c. religious writings of the inter-Testamental period
1.04 _____ Septuagint d. Jews who intermarried with Gentiles
1.05 _____ Silent Years e. agreement
1.06 _____ Hellenism f. believing there is only one God
1.07 _____ Alexander the Great g. Sanhedrin
1.08 _____ Malachi h. same type of ministry as Elijah
1.09 _____ Samaritans i. approximate time between testaments
1.10 _____ Jewish religious council j. Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures
1.11 _____ Apocryphal k. influence of Greek culture
1.12 _____ Alexandria l. interchangeable with covenant
1.13 _____ testament m. land where Jews were in captivity
1.14 _____ monotheistic n. city in Egypt where Septuagint was written
1.15 _____ polytheistic o. Greek ruler
1.16 _____ believing in many gods
1.17 _____ Hebrew Old Testament
Write the correct letter and answer on the blank (each answer, 3 points).

1.016 The Syrian ruler who defiled the Jewish Temple altar and martyred many Jews was _______________________________________________.
   a. Ptolemy Philopator  
   b. Alexander the Great  
   c. Herod Antipas  
   d. Antiochus Epiphanes  
   e. Caesar Augustus

1.017 The Persian Empire allowed the ________________________ to rule the Jews.
   a. Persian satrap  
   b. religious council  
   c. political parties  
   d. Maccabean family  
   e. high priest

1.018 The Empire that was ruling when Jesus Christ was born was the ________________ Empire.
   a. Grecian  
   b. Roman  
   c. Egyptian  
   d. Syrian  
   e. Persian

1.019 The ruler who showed the Jews great favor was ____________________________________ .
   a. General Ptolemy Soter  
   b. Alexander the Great  
   c. Caesar of Rome  
   d. Pharaoh Ptolemy Philopator  
   e. Mattathias the Maccabean

1.020 The Jews who intermarried with the Gentiles were called _______________________________ .
   a. Hebrewites  
   b. Jewish migrants  
   c. Palestinians  
   d. Syrians  
   e. Samaritans

Complete these statements (each answer, 4 points).

1.021 The eleven to sixteen books written during the inter-Testamental period, but not included in the Protestant Bible are called ____________________________________________________________ .

1.022 In the book of Jude, verse 14 is a quote from the book of ____________________________ .

1.023 The literature written during the inter-Testamental period, which carried the names of false authors, is called ___________________________________________________________________________ .

1.024 The most valuable literature produced in the inter-Testamental period was _______________ ________________________________________________________________________________________________ .
Answer these questions (each answer, 5 points).

1.025 What three main Jewish religious groups were in existence by the time Jesus was born?
   ___________________________________________ ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

1.026 What false views did the Jews have of the person and work of the Messiah?
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

1.027 What did the Sadducees believe to be the law?
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

1.028 What did the Pharisees believe that the Sadducees did not?
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

1.029 Why did Jesus denounce the Pharisees more than any other group?
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

1.030 When and why did the Sadducees oppose Jesus?
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________