

T301/521/721 The Defense of the Faith

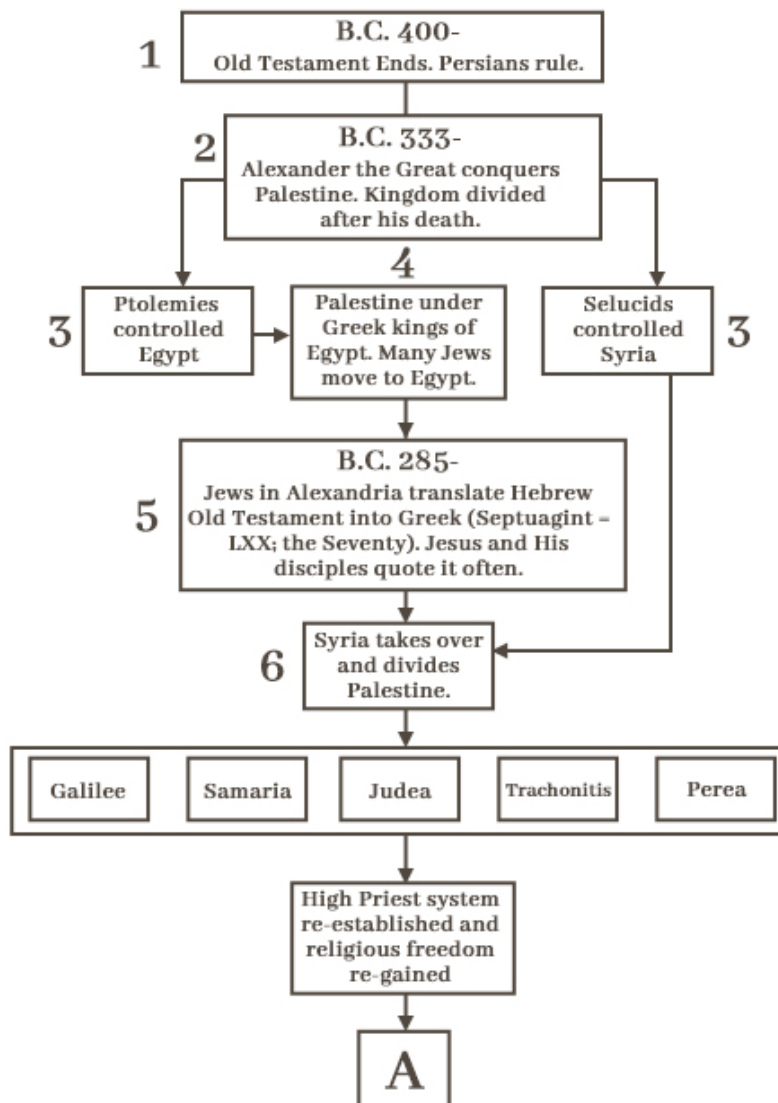
Appendix O:

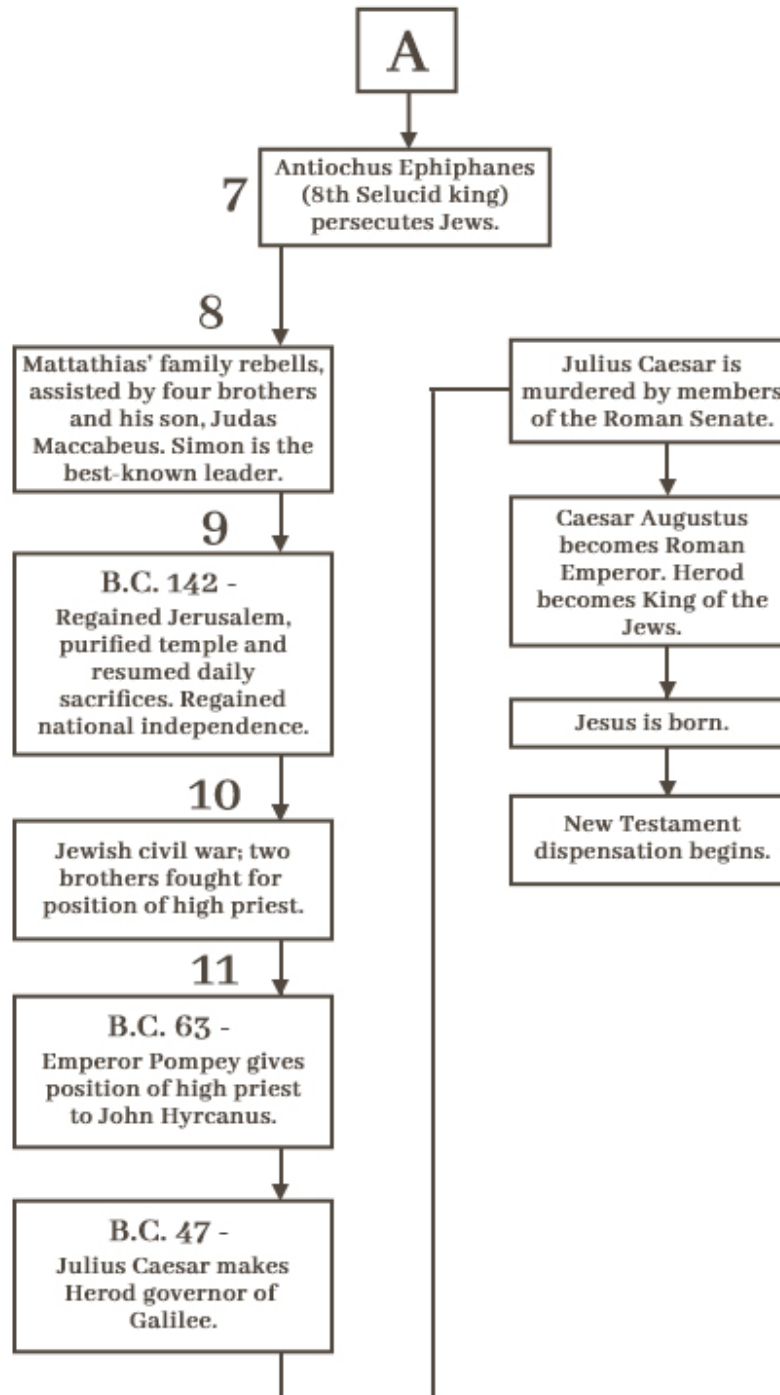
The 400 Silent Years Introduction

The period from the close of Malachi until the opening of the New Testament is known as the "400 Silent Years," because the events of this time are not recorded in the Bible. Other books describe this period as one in which momentous historical events took place. Great Empires rose and fell and many battles were fought.

The best way to describe the chronological events during this time is to present the facts in a pictorial format. The diagrams on the following two pages were designed to show a summary of the historical highlights which occurred during this 400-year period of time.

Each major historical event is further described later in the report. Numbers were assigned to the diagram to create the association between them.





Description of Diagrams

1. End of Persian rule - At Marathon in B.C. 491, Greece defeated the Persian armies of Darius the First. Later, they smashed the Persian fleet at Salamis, off Athens, in B.C. 480.

2. Alexander the Great

a. Alexander, the son of Philip of Macedon, defeated Darius, king of the Medes and Persians. Alexander reigned over Greece and fought numerous battles, winning many strongholds (1 Maccabees).

- b. Alexander defeated the Persian king Darius III in B.C. 333 at Issus, near the present-day seaport of Alexandria, In Northern Syria. After this victory, the Macedonians arrogated to themselves the leading role among the nations of the world.
- c. Alexander's first target was Egypt. At the age of twenty-four, with a picked force of 32,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry, he marched south, accompanied offshore by a fleet of 160 ships.
- d. The Phoenician city of Tyre was heavily fortified and protected by strong, high walls, and was built on a small island which guarded the coastline.

"Alexander performed here a miracle of military ingenuity by building a 2,000-foot mole in the sea out to the island city. To safeguard the operations, mobile protective shields, so-called 'tortoises,' had to be employed. His engineers were on shore building veritable monsters: 'Helepoleis.' These were mobile protective towers many stories high, which held the detachments of bowmen and light artillery. A drawbridge on the front of the towers enabled a surprise attack to be made on the enemy's walls. They were the highest siege towers ever used in the history of war. Each of them had twenty stories, and the topmost platform towered at a height of over 160 feet, far above the highest city walls. When, after seven months of preparations, these monsters, bristling with weapons, slowly and clumsily rolled toward Tyre, the fate of the maritime stronghold, which was considered impregnable, was sealed."

Werner Keller, *The Bible As History*. William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1982; p. 339

3. Power split after Alexander's death

- a. After Alexander died, his generals crowned themselves and ruled in his place. They, and their sons after them, ruled Alexander's empire for many years. The generals had no scruples about murdering Alexander's whole family: his half-brother Philip Arrhidaeus; his mother Olympia; his widow Roxana; and his son.
- b. The conflict over ascendancy came to a head when the empire was divided into three kingdoms.

1. The kingdom of Macedonia in northern Greece.

2. The kingdom of the Seleucids, which extended from Thrace through Asia Minor and Syria to the border of India. Antioch, in northern Syria, situated on the lower reaches of the Orontes River, was founded as the capital of this second, and by far the largest, of the successor states. Thereafter, almost all the Seleucid monarchs added the name of this city to their own names; hence "Antiochus."

Werner Keller, *The Bible As History*. William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1982; p. 343

3. The third kingdom was the Ptolemaic kingdom on the Nile, with Alexandria as its capital. It was ruled by a dynasty whose last representative, Cleopatra, has ever since enjoyed a certain amount of fame for having so successfully turned the heads of her distinguished contemporaries, Julius Caesar and Marc Antony. Ptolemy the First was the first ruler of this dynasty.

4. The reign of Ptolemy the First

a. Two unusually far-sighted rulers, Ptolemy I and his son Ptolemy II (Philadelphus), developed their capital city of Alexandria into a nursery of Hellenistic culture and learning. Its fame extended far beyond the borders of their own kingdom and made it a radiant center of attraction for emigrants from Judah, among others. In this crucible, they steeped themselves in the beauty of the Greek language, the only means of tasting the delights of the prodigious advances of the human mind and spirit. It was the international language of learning and of commerce, the language of tens of thousands of Israelites who knew no other home.

b. The rising generation no longer knew Hebrew as their mother tongue. They could no longer follow the sacred text in the services of the synagogues. Thus it came about that the Jews in Egypt decided to translate the Hebrew scriptures. Around B.C. 250, the Torah was translated into Greek, a feat of immeasurable importance for Western civilization.

5. Bible translation under Ptolemy

The translation of the Bible into Greek was, for the Jews in Egypt, an incredible step. Philadelphus, the second of the Ptolemaic dynasty, took great pride in the fact that he possessed a collection of the finest books in the world. One day, the librarian realized that the greatest books of all, the five books of Moses, were not included in the collection. Therefore, Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) sent envoys to the High Priest to ask for a copy of the books.

At the same time, he asked for men to be sent who could translate them into Greek. The High Priest granted his request and sent, together with a copy of the Torah, seventy-two learned scribes. Great celebrations were organized, in honor of the visitors from Jerusalem. After the festivities, they began the difficult task assigned to them, for which there was neither prototype nor dictionary. They set to work on the island of Phares, off Alexandria, at the foot of the 300-foot lighthouse (one of the seven wonders of the world) that Ptolemy II had erected as a warning for ships. Each man worked in a small room by himself. When the scholars had completed their work, and the translations were compared with one another, all seventy-two are said to have corresponded exactly, word for word. Accordingly, the Greek translation of the Bible was called the "Septuagint," meaning "the seventy."

Werner Keller, *The Bible As History*. William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1982; p. 344

6. The Seleucids take over Judah's attachment to the kingdom of the Ptolemies lasted for more than 100 years, after which the Seleucids forced their way south from Syrian Antioch. After defeating the armies of Ptolemy V at the northern end of the Jordan River, Antiochus III (called "the Great") took over Palestine in B.C. 195, and Judah once more came under a new ruler.

7. The cruelty of Antiochus IV

a. King Antiochus IV, called "Epiphanes," plundered and desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem in B.C. 168, but the Temple treasures were not enough for him. He then sent his chief tax collector, Apollonius, to Jerusalem with an armed force.

"When he had taken the spoils of the city, [he] set it on fire, and pulled down the houses and walls thereof on every side. But the women and children took they captive, and possessed the cattle." (1 Maccabees 1; 2 Maccabees 5)

"And taking the holy vessels with polluted hands, and with profane hands putting down the things that were dedicated by other kings to the augmentation and glory and honor of the place, he gave them away." (2 Maccabees 5)

b. Worship of the Greek god Zeus was established in the Temple of Yahweh. For taking part in any Jewish religious ceremonies, the traditional sacrifices, the Sabbath, or circumcision, the penalty was death. The holy scriptures were destroyed.

8. Mattathias' family rebels

a. Resistance among the Jews began to grow, beginning with an incident in Modin, a small village twenty miles from Jerusalem on the western fringe of the highlands of Judah. Today it is the market town of el-Medieh. It was here that the priest Mattathias lived with his five sons. When Antiochus' officers came to Modin to force the inhabitants to "forsake the law, to offer sacrifices and to burn incense, Mattathias steadfastly refused to obey the order; and when he saw one of his countrymen offering a sacrifice, he could not forbear to show his anger according to judgment: wherefore he ran and slew him upon the altar. Also the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down." (1 Maccabees 2)

b. This act was the signal for open resistance, for a life-and-death struggle for religious freedom known as the "Wars of the Maccabees." Mattathias and his sons escaped. In their secret haunts in the mountains and caves, they gathered a band of men who shared their beliefs. With their assistance, Mattathias and his sons waged bitter guerrilla warfare against the occupying power.

9. Judas Maccabaeus regains national independence

a. After the death of Mattathias, his son Judas, whose surname was Maccabaeus, became the leader. It was in the highlands that the rebels achieved their first successes. This small, untrained and badly equipped band mastered the well-drilled and numerically-superior occupation troops. Beth Horon, Emmaus and Beth-Zur were captured. The Seleucids had to retreat until reinforcements arrived from Antioch. Judas Maccabaeus liberated Jerusalem in B.C. 164 and restored the old order in the Temple. The altar was rebuilt, and sacrifices to Yahweh were offered, as in former times. Judas Maccabaeus entered Galilee and Transjordan, and wherever there were Israelites who remained true to the faith.

b. In a decisive battle, which took place a few miles southwest of Bethlehem near Beth-Zachariah, the Seleucids employed elephants, flanked by detachments of cavalry. The Maccabeans were unable to cope with this colossal superiority and were defeated. Dissension among the victors drove them to make peace with surprisingly favorable terms for the vanquished. The decrees of Antiochus IV Epiphanes of B.C. 167 were rescinded, liberty of worship was guaranteed, and the religious community of Jerusalem was once more recognized (1 Maccabees 3). The aims of the Jewish rebellion had been achieved.

Werner Keller, *The Bible As History*. William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1982; p. 343

Not content with that, the Maccabees wanted political independence as well as freedom of religion. The successors of Judas Maccabaeus, his brothers Jonathan and Simon,

began the struggle anew. It ended in B.C. 142 under Simon, with Syria also granting them political freedom (1 Maccabees 15).

10. The Jewish civil war

The biblical record ends with the murder of Simon, brother of Judas Maccabaeus. The spiritual and political leadership of Judas was transferred, along with the office of High Priest, to Simon's son John, who was also called Hyrcanus.

11. Pompey enters Jerusalem

a. As time passed, the Seleucids became less threatening as adversaries to the Ptolemies. They lacked the strength to cope with the Maccabeans, while Rome had expanded its sovereignty beyond Greece into Asia Minor.

b. Pompey, the Roman general, marched through the kingdom of the Seleucids into Palestine. After a three-month siege, Roman legions entered Jerusalem in B.C. 63. Judah then became a Roman province, at which point the political independence of Israel came to an abrupt end.