

UNIT 4: “The Bible’s ‘Blank Page’”

NOTES

I. LOOKING BACK

- A. Jesus tells us to study the Old Testament in light of what we now know about him and the Gospel:
- B. This gives the “big picture,” creating one book with one story broken into two “movements.”
- C. This provides us with a clearer sense of the purpose and direction of the Old Testament story.
- D. It causes us to see ourselves in the same “old, old story” as King David, not merely Paul.

II. THE BIBLE’S “BLANK PAGE”

- A. Is Called The “Intertestamental Period” By Scholars
 - 1. Is the time period between the voices of Malachi and John the Baptizer (c. 425 BC - 29 AD)
 - 2. Care must be given to to maintain the continuity of God’s story, not an unbiblical “break.” (God is actually fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant!)
- B. The Time Frame in Perspective
 - 1. It is comparable to the length of the captivity in Egypt (c. 1840-1440 BC)
 - 2. It is comparable to the period of the judges (c. 1406-1040 BC).
 - 3. It is comparable to the length of the monarchy (c. 1040-586 BC).
 - 4. *God* may have been “silent,” but humanity certainly was not!
 - 5. The truth is, all “roads” were leading to Bethlehem, not Rome.

III. FOUR “HIGHWAYS” OF HEAVEN

- A. **The Persian Period:** 536 – 330 BC
 - 1. **539** – Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon; his empire spread from India to Greece and from Egypt to the Caucasus Mtns.
Cyrus allowed conquered peoples to return, *with their gods*, to their native lands (the Jews brought back “utensils” but no images; Ezra 5:14!)
 - 2. **536** – 1st group of Jews returned to Jerusalem (Daniel didn’t!)
- the Samaritans emerge as a distinct people group at this time (2 Kgs. 17:24,41; Ezra 4).
 - 3. **525** – Cambyses conquers Egypt; work on Jerusalem Temple stops.
 - 4. **515** – Temple completed.

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5. **480** – Greek navy destroys navy of Xerxes at Battle of Salamis (Esther is Queen of Persia)
 6. **338** – Philip of Macedon and his son, Alexander, defeat Athens.
 7. **336** – Darius III of Persia and Alexander ascend thrones.
 8. **331** – Battle of Gaugemela ends Persian Empire
- B. **The Greek Period:** 330 - 167 BC
1. First time in history the “West” was felt throughout the world.
 2. Alexander is called “the apostle of Hellenism” (even though he was not a Greek!):
 - a. He was educated by Aristotle.
 - b. He carried *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey* with him on campaigns.
 - c. He built the city of Alexandria in Egypt:
 - library was largest in the world
 - the Septuagint was translated here
 - Apollos (Paul’s associate) was educated here (Acts 18:24)
 - Stephen argued with Greek-Jews from here (Acts 6:9)
 - both of Paul’s ships to Rome were built here (Acts 27:6; 28:11)
 - “Church Fathers” taught here (Clement, Origen, Eusebius)
 - d. He brought Greek culture and the Greek language to the world.
 - e. He paved the way for the notion of a “unified humanity.”
 3. At his death in 323 BC the Empire was divided among his generals.
 4. A period of constant conflict between the Seleucids (in Syria) and the Ptolemies (in Egypt).
 5. Greek influence in Palestine his an all time “high” (or low!) under the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes, “the illustrious”):
 - a. He was born and educated in Athens.
 - b. Spent 12 years as a hostage in Rome.
 - c. Had the passion to “Greek” the world, and a Roman sense of power and cruelty to “make it happen.”
 6. The descent into darkness:
 - a. He attacked Jerusalem on a sabbath.
 - b. He built a gymnasium in Jerusalem.
 - c. He deposed the orthodox High Priest and appointed his own (a non Levite!)
 - d. Equated Yahweh with the Roman god, Jupiter.
 - e. Erected a statue of Jupiter on the Temple altar.
 - f. Sponsored pagan rituals in the Temple courts.

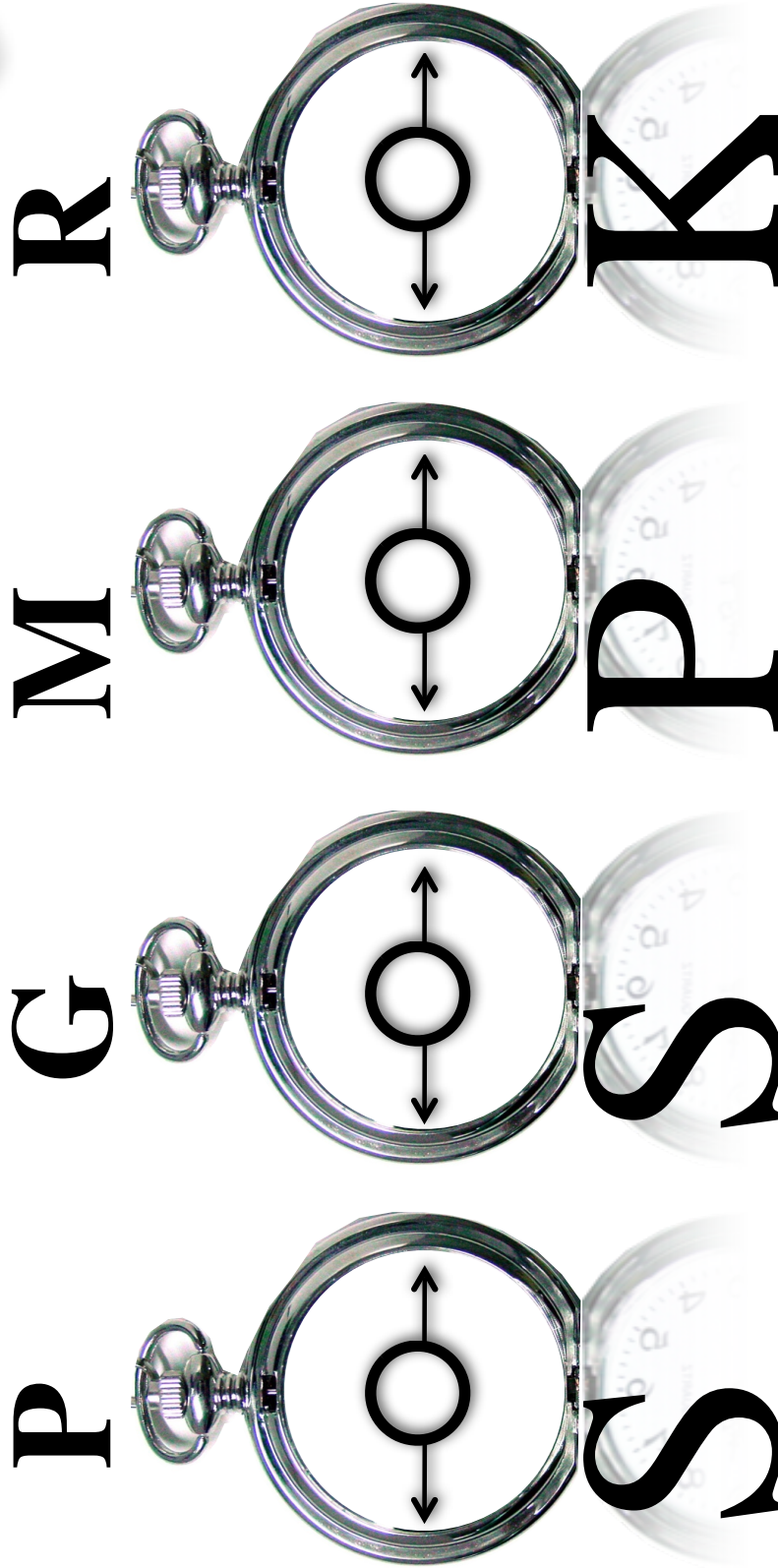
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- g. The drunken orgy of Bacchus was made compulsory.
 - h. Circumcision was made illegal upon penalty of death.
 - i. Sabbath and Jewish feasts were outlawed.
 - j. Hebrew scriptures were destroyed.
 - k. Pigs were sacrificed on the Temple altar.
7. Two factions solidified at this time, based on their association with Antiochus:
- a. The Hasidim (“Pious Ones”; precursors to the Pharisees)
 - b. The Hellenists; precursors to the Sadducees.
- C. **The Maccabean Period:** 167 – 63 BC
- 1. A rural priest and his 5 sons led a revolt against the paganism of Antiochus.
 - 2. In 164 Palestine was retaken, the Temple cleansed and purified.
 - a. This became known as the Feast of Dedication (cf. Jn 10:22).
 - b. It is still celebrated as the Feast of Hanukkah.
 - 3. Over time, the office of High Priest became increasingly political and corrupt.
 - a. On one occasion, a Priest/King murdered 800 Pharisees who had led a revolt.
 - b. During this time, one of the Priest/Kings named Hyrcanus had a powerful administrator named Antipater, who was the father of Herod the Great.
- D. **The Roman Period:** 63 – 4 BC
- 1. In 63 BC, Pompey conquered Jerusalem and shattered the priestly dynasty that had controlled Palestine.
 - 2. Antipater had supported Julius Caesar’s part in Rome’s war, and was given the title, “Procurator of Judea” in gratitude.
 - 3. He appointed his 25-year old son, Herod, as ruler over Galilee.
 - 4. In 37 BC, Herod formally conquered Jerusalem and established himself as “King of Judea.”
- E. Herod the “Builder”
- 1. Herod the Great is one of the most ambitious builders in antiquity.
 - 2. In his 33 years as King, he built, enlarged or fortified a long list of cities and structures, including:
 - a. Masada - the desert fortress as old as King David on the SW coast of the Dead Sea.
 - b. Machaerus – a citidel on the eastern side of the Jordan River; Josephus tells us that John was beheaded here.

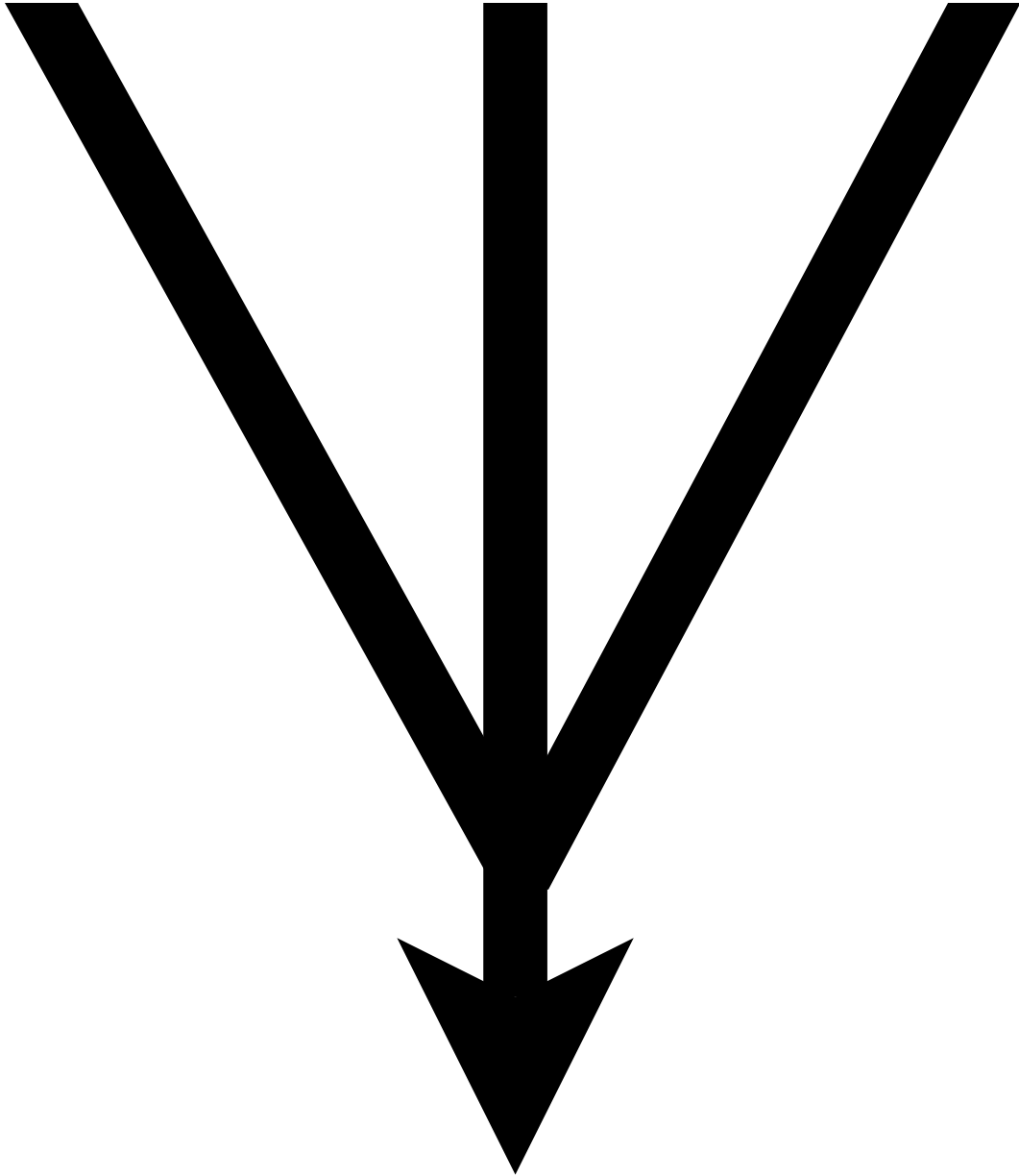
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- c. Jericho – the legendary ancient city; he built an elaborate palace here.
 - d. Herodium – another citadel 3 miles SE of Bethlehem
 - the only structure to bear his name
 - had slaves “move” on hill on top of another!
 - took four years to build (23-20 BC)
 - upper and lower palaces; swimming pool for boats!
 - used mirrors to signal from the Temple to here to Masada
 - Herod’s burial site
 - e. Caesarea – one of the 2 largest ports in the Roman world
 - was an “anti-Jewish” city in every way possible; bath houses, theater, gymnasium, hippodrome, temples.
 - f. Temple – took 10,000 men ten years to complete.
 - this 35-acre platform would hold 24-football fields.
 - the “Wailing Wall” is what is left of the western side of this enormous “retaining wall” built to level the area.
 - g. Caesarea Philippi – Roman city built by his son, Herod Philip
 - h. Sephoris – Roman city restored by Antipas; 4 miles from Nazereth; Made his capital.
 - h. Tiberis – pagan city built by his son Herod Antipas on the Sea of Galilee; made his capital instead of Sephoris.
- E. Herod the “Butcher”
1. Kept the vestments for the High Priest in a fortress in Jerusalem. He appointed the High Priests personally (after executing 46 members of the Sanhedrin!)
 2. Arranged the drowning of his wife’s brother, the execution of his “favorite” wife Miriam, and his own two sons.
 3. On his deathbed, arranged for revolting Jewish leaders to be burned alive.
 4. Arranged for the systematic execution of children under the age of two out of fear of news of another “King of the Jews.” (Matt. 2:16).
 5. Augustus purportedly said, *“It is better to be Herod’s dog than his son!”*

Four “Hunks” of History



Three “Pathways” of Preparation



—Y E S H U A I N F O U R D I M E N S I O N S—
