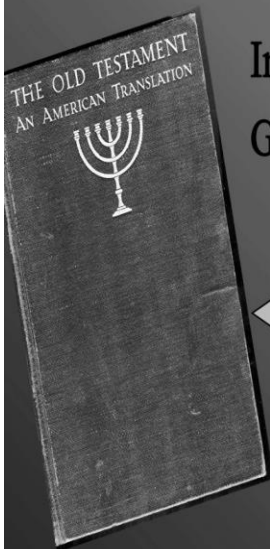
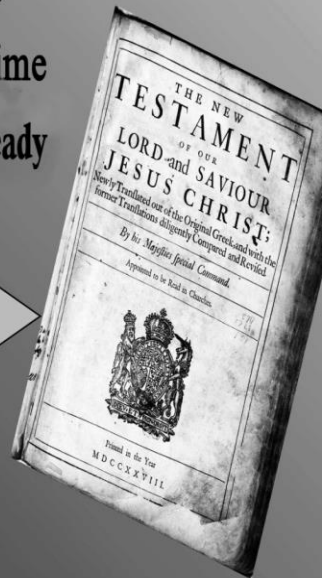


# Between The Testaments

The Silent Years  
When God is Silent  
In The Fullness Of Time  
Getting The World Ready



400 Years



Dr. Frank Leeds III

## In The Fullness Of Time

It is my contention that one of the most beautiful biblical stories of all is not found in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. Rather, it is found in the space between the two. There are those who would call this approximately 400 years, the years of silence. There are no prophetic statements made in this period. Nothing is written as the oracles of God as revealed through the prophets. The “word of the Lord” does not appear again until the Gospels when the angel of the Lord appears unto the priest and informs him that his wife will have a child named John.

**Luke 1:11 *Then the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was started and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid Zechariah, your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you are to give him the name John.***

So what happened during these four hundred years? Was there silence? Were there activities? Life always goes on but was there anything significant in these years?

My intent with this little book is rather clear in my mind. I would like to tell you a story. If you went to high school or college, you have already heard the story. I have nothing “new” to share with you. It has been my experience in studying history that it is so very easy to become swallowed by the dates, the names, and the places, that history can become as tedious as reading a phone book. For that reason, I promise not to list any dates. I will offer you few names and when I do, the information I will share with you regarding them will be skimpy by design. I do not want you to become so side-tracked with individual people, philosophies, places, and dates, that you lose the overall picture.

Back to my goal: It is my intent and hope that this little read will allow you to hear the music. To hear the glorious music of the movement of history as it exist between the Old Testament’s

ending with the promise of the anointed one to come at an appointed time [Habakkuk 2:1-4], and the New Testament's claim that the One arrived "in the fullness of time" [Gal 4:4].

As you begin to hear the music, I hope you will bow afresh to the birth of Christ. Having heard the music, then by all means I would encourage you to go back and check out the people, events, and dates. Catch the big picture and then go back to fill in as much detail as you will. The detail can be found anywhere and in numerous history books of your choosing for this period of time.

At the close of the Old Testament, the Hebrew people are limited by the rest of the world not knowing their language. They are small in area. They are small in numbers which was made even small by the number of people that were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. When finally released, many of these people who have never lived in the land surrounding Jerusalem, simply chose to live in any place where they had business contacts and could support their families. As a result,

Jewish communities developed both in the north and south sides of the Mediterranean Sea, but mostly on its far East coast.

The land of Israel was also located in a rather insignificant portion of the world. There was some traffic passing through on the North/South interchange but little on the East/West.

Likewise, sailors of the Mediterranean have little need to go east to the dead end side of the Mediterranean. Thus, they were relatively small and insignificant on the big picture scale.

One thing they did have was an unusual claim. Beginning with Abraham, and then later with Isaac and Jacob, and the prophets, they made the claim that the Holy One, the creator of heaven and earth, the invisible one in the visible universe, had spoken to them. Now these people are not naive. After several generations of these 'encounters' they set up a way to 'Test the Spirit'. Even though they had a trustworthy history of hearing "thus said the Lord" and it was so, they were more than aware of manipulations and other possible shenanigans. Thus, the three way test was this. Whenever someone said "Thus said the

Lord” they would pick up stones and be prepared to kill the one who would make such a statement. Then the would-be prophet would have to give a sign and the sign would have to come true. If it did not, the prophet was stoned to death. If the sign did come true, then the obligation was theirs to heed the advice or warning.

The prophets foretold that the Holy One would send someone. This someone would reveal the connection between the visible world and the invisible. His coming they were told would be at the **appointed time**. {Habakkak 2:1-4] The prophets then turn silent.

If you were to look at a map of the Mediterranean Sea area at this time, you would see all of its coastal areas with the little area of Israel on the far- east coast. But the lights of history would shine on the area we know as Greece. Perhaps dear reader you are Greek and would totally embrace the words of the father in the movie “The Big Fat Greek Wedding” who said, *“When the rest of the world was still swinging on trees, we were writing*

*philosophy.*” There have been many great cultures of the world before and after the Greeks, but at this time, the father of the bride is not far off. Think of any Greek sir name you have ever heard of. With the exception of Aristotle Onassis, just about every one of them surfaces at this interlude between the testaments.



[Picture of Raphael's School of Athens]

In Raphael's painting of the School of Athens, this painting portrays my thought. All of these 'heavy thinkers' come from this period. Raphael not only paints them, but he organizes them as well. In the center of the painting we find the two 'Big Boys' in Plato and Aristotle. This isn't too far off from conversations about the separation of 'right-wingers' and 'left-wings' or 'right-brain' and 'left-brain' activities.





Plato in red, with his hand up, is interest in the invisible things in life. His interest is in unity, or what the classical philosophers called “universals.” He wanted to know what holds everything together and his thinking was upward and outward. He was interested in transcendence. You beauty lovers who not so much care for how it works, but are mesmerized by its beauty would be considered followers of Plato.

Aristotle on the other hand, with his hand pointing down, was interested in what was visible, what he could see, and hold, and take apart. He was more into what is known as ‘immanence.’ Those of you who are scientists in any-way with all of its off-springs would be considered followers of Aristotle.

Not to belabor the point, but other sitting at the feet of Plato and Aristotle are:

Zeno, Epicurus, Averocs, Pythaggers, Aleibides, Xenophon, Aeschines, Parmenides, Socrates, Heraclitus, Diagenes, Euclid, Zoroaster, Ptolemy.

You may not be familiar with all of them but you have probably heard of at least some of them. They changed the way people thought. By all of their questioning, they underscored the category of the ‘individual’ rather than just one person in the ‘herd.’ As an individual, one had privileges, duties, responsibilities. These people of Greece wanted to produce good citizens. A citizens ‘civita—civilized one’ was not to be ruled by a despot but would be able to rule themselves.

Although it was many years later when the Emmanuel Kant said there were four big philosophical questions:

1. What may I know? [epistemology]
2. What must I do? [ethics]
3. What may I hope? [eschatology]
4. What is man? [anthropology]

These Greek philosophers incorporated all of that.

You may be asking yourself at this time, “so what. What does this have to do with the significant events between the scriptures?” Please bear with me. The story goes on.

North of Greece, there is a ruler by the name of Phillip. He is Phillip of Macedon. He is the warrior. He is the one who wants to go to battle, to fight, to control. He is also one who recognizes that these people we call Greeks are not typical humanity. They seem more advanced than everyone else. They are more civilized, more cultured, more aware.

I have already acknowledged there were other great cultures in the world so let me share two things that they did not possess. They did not have the number zero. You may be saying to yourself, “so what? What is the big deal with having a zero?” Acquiring the zero from the Egyptians is what allows our economic system to work with our currency. Every time you handle money, move a decimal point, etc. you are indebted to the Egyptians for that magnificent zero. Another thing they did not have but borrowed from the Babylonians is counting by 12.

You are probably asking the same question: “So what?” Are you wearing a watch? There is a reason those numbers go from 1 to 12. You can thank the Babylonians for figuring out that system.

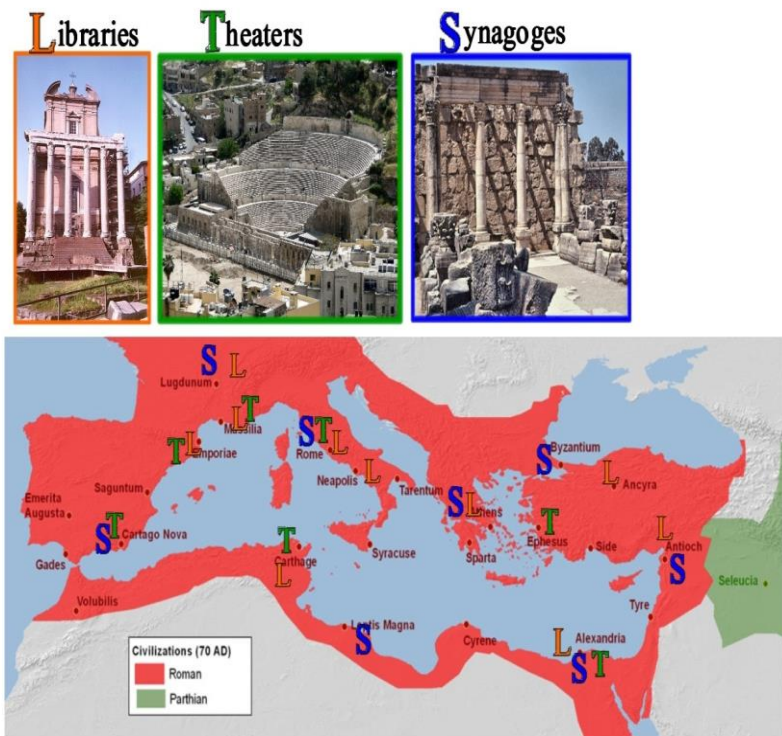
Anyhow, Phillip of Macedon is so impressed with these Greeks that he insisted that his son go to school there to learn of the ways and thinking process. He sends his son to the Academy to study with Aristotle. After absorbing a great deal from Aristotle and his new found Greek culture, Phillip dies. His son, Alexander, decides it is time for him to do his own conquering, and so he does. His goal is not to destroy the world around him, but to conquer and expose these tribes or peoples of the world [nations is too strong a term] to the Greek culture. In his path, he leaves the Greek language for people to learn. He leaves Greek food and culture. He leaves libraries where the people are exposed to the books of all of the philosophers previously mentioned. He leaves theaters where the questions of the philosophers are asked. Because he is opening up the minds of the people to cultures different than their own, it becomes a

time when synagogues flourish and expand westward as far as Spain and along the north African coast.

Having libraries, theaters, and synagogues may not seem like a big deal to you who have TV sets in your home or on your ipads, iphones, etc. but these were all channels of communication. It allowed for people who were preoccupied as we are with providing shelter for our families, food on the table etc. to learn about other people. It gave them a time to listen to other people and to know what others were thinking and doing. It encouraged them to think for themselves and to ask those haunting questions about what is real and what isn't. What is important and what isn't? Why am I here? What am I supposed to believe? In a world where everyone dies, what may I hope?

At the age of 33, Alexander the Great dies. The entire Mediterranean area is marked with his footprints and the sound of the Greek language, Greek books, Greek theaters, and synagogues are everywhere.

In the following picture, the libraries, theaters, and synagogues are shown for the purpose of illustrating how this area has changed.



With the death of Alexander, a different people have begun to expand. Unless the expansion of Alexander with the desire to conquer and to spread the virtues of Greek culture, these people expand with the idea of control, power, and money. Beginning in the area we call Rome, a series of smaller expansions turned into larger and larger expansions. They wanted to 'annex' all of their neighbors. Motivations often become mixed. They quickly discovered that if they could build A, and you could build B, together they could be A&B. Likewise, if this new 'merger' could build A&B, and you could build C, then the combined group could build A, B and C.

It was the same for the opportunity to purchase from a larger area and to sell to a larger area. They would import grains that they needed and sell wines that they produced. Over the years they had their hands on where to get what was needed. They did not have their Home Depots, Lowe's and Wal-Marts, but they knew exactly where to go to get their tin and marble, silk worms and cloth, fruits and vegetables. With this knowledge and power, they became more knowledgeable and more powerful---

and richer. The cast of their shadow expanded everywhere that Alexander had controlled and a great deal more.

They were in this consciously for the long haul and such an expansion needed to be managed. Although the Greek language continued around the great Sea, these people who became known as the Romans spoke Latin. That was the central language of the government and all of the government workings were conducted in Latin. The military, the politicians, the Roman post office, the governors and managers of this large and every growing turf spoke Latin. Thus, three languages existed throughout the land: Native tongues, Greek, and Latin.

These great builders built massive municipal projects and extensive roads, with all roads leading to Rome. It is tough to manage without a language that all of the government employees speak, but with their common language of Latin, their network of roads become essential ingredients both for management, commerce, and military control.



As part of the management, and building on the Greek's concept of citizenship, with privileges, rights, and obligations, they built a system of law. The citizens were accountable to the law. This is where it becomes interesting. Not everyone in the Roman Empire was a Roman citizen. The people of the City of Rome were but the empire was a different story. The residents of the empire were not the same as "A Roman Citizen". A Roman citizen was protected by law throughout the empire. So valuable was the Roman Citizen title that much of the land was often conquered not by force but by this bribe.

It is not my intent to romanticize the Roman expansion with all of its warfare. It was often a bloody war with blood stained deaths throughout the lands. But it was not always that way. Sometimes they would simply surround the town and make a deal with the movers and shakers of the city. "Don't fight with us, just join us. If you do, we will make you Roman citizens." There was generally about a 10% limit on the number of people they would do this for in any city.

Especially for the merchants, the Roman citizenship classification was a “Golden Ticket” in the world of commerce. It meant that one could travel throughout the empire and still be protected by Roman law. Thus the merchant was free to endeavor to sell his wares anywhere. He could even sell someone else’s wares and a sales representative for someone else. This was a time when merchants from different lands could be found throughout the empire and they pursued the buying and selling that makes commerce work. It was the time when signage came into being. Before people traveled a great deal, the shops of the village did not need a sign that said “Butcher” “Baker” or “Candle-stick Maker”. One simply knew where to buy their shoes, get a hair-cut, or purchase cloth. With all of the strangers in town, signage was needed.



In Alexandria, which is a city named for Alexander, decides that it will build the biggest and the best library in the world. They

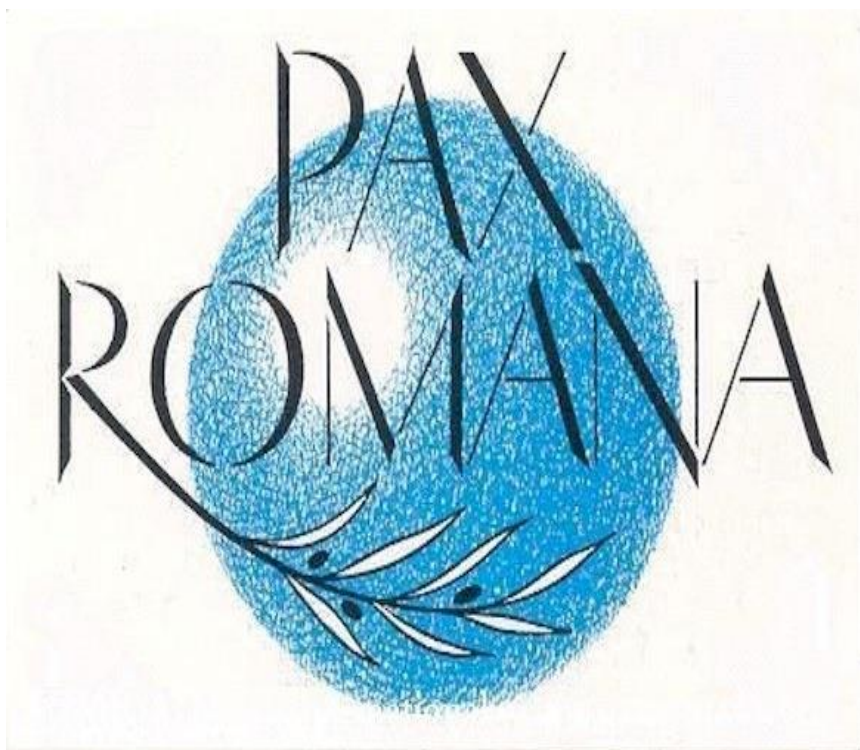
wanted a copy of every book written. This was especially interesting and important to the Jewish communities. The synagogues around the Sea of Galilee did not speak Hebrew. That was lost to them. They spoke Greek. They requested of the library in Alexandria that they get the Old Testament scrolls translated into Greek. The library then contacted the Jews in Jerusalem and made their request known. The Jewish authorities then appointed six Hebrew scholars from each of the 12 tribes. They did all of the translation work and this highly significant Old Testament translation is known as the Septuagint and you may see it written simply as LXX for the 70 translators who did the work. This Old Testament was then shared with the synagogues around the great sea.

Are you getting a glimpse of how the world had changed? Looking at the same map, with its libraries, theaters, and synagogues spread around the Sea, look again at the land of the Hebrews. It is still in the same location, but now it is more than being on the dead end of the cul-de-sac. Rather, it is in the middle of the significant commercial trade routes between north

and south. Given the nature of the mountain, one has to travel through a narrow pass known as Megiddo. The New Testament speaks of Armageddon and notes that whoever controls this pass controls the world. As the sand travels through the hour glass at its narrowest point, so too the land travels must go through here.

We have arrived at that point in time when the entire area is tied together with language, with roads, with commerce, with communication centers with the theaters, libraries, and synagogues. In order for it to function so that trade is not interrupted, where money and supplies continue to flow freely, where prosperity can continue to be a hope and dream, there has to be peace in the land. There is always war and rumors of war, but turf battles interrupt business. All of these diverse cultures, though united in language, and dependent on commerce, and law, and free and encouraged to maintain their own culture as long as they kept the peace.

Encouraging peace, and successfully keeping the peace, was a Roman accomplishment that became known as the PAX ROMANA.



Look what has happened in these four hundred years. How many changes can you identify? This will largely assist in helping you to understand the New Testament.

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Let us now turn our attention to the New Testament. It is not my intent to offer NT lessons, but merely to connect a few of the dots. Let us begin with the birth of Christ.

And when the entire area of in this part of the world was with one tongue [Greek]

- When the ground work has been laid where people knew they were individuals, with rights and obligation,
- When the major questions of the world were being asked, when theaters and libraries flourished,
- When synagogues were numerous and the old testament scrolls were being translated into Greek,

- When merchants and scholars possessed Roman Citizenship that allowed them to travel anywhere in the empire and still be protected by law,
- When Peace with plentiful, and the rule of the land,
- When this little land of Israel became the gateway connecting North and South,
- then and only then did God send an angel to a young girl named Mary and say to her:

*The time has come. The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Luke 1:35.*

Let us now take a quick look at Pentecost. Christian look at Pentecost as the time when God gave his Holy Spirit and a time when those gathered were speaking in tongues. To the Jewish community, which represented the people who were attending this regular service of worship, Pentecost was a time to celebrate God's "Giving". People receive, but it is the Lord who "gives". How does the Lord give? The Lord gives in three specific ways.



**1. The Lord gives through His harvest.** Human kind may plant and water and work, but it is the Lord who gives of the harvest. It is all the Lord's creation. I have come to the persuasion that if one properly understands the term "creation" one understands the rest. If one fails to properly understand "creation" then one does not understand the rest of the scriptures.

**2. The Lord gives through His law.** It is the gift of the law that leads to prosperity. It is the law that forms the type of person we are. It is the law that points to the direction that we need to go.

**3. The Lord gives "as in the book of Ruth".**  
Without going into it, the book of Ruth is a great story. It never tells the reader what to do, what to say, nor what to believe. It shows you what the Lord does and how He does it. The workings of the Lord are such an "easy yoke", such a mature

and smooth wine, so kind and gracious, that His workings become revealed after events and generally not before or during. Whenever you smack your forehead and say in amazement, “look how that all came together!” you will understand. The Old Testament used the term “HESED” throughout the Scriptures to indicate the “Loving Kindness of the Lord”

These are the three characteristics of the Lord that are being worshipped when the worshippers are gathered together in Acts 2. They are worshipping the Lord—the GIVER. Now, take a look at the people who are at this service.



Acts 2:5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard them speaking in his own language. [Remember, they all knew Greek so there was no need for them to hear in their native tongue]. Utterly amazed they asked, “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; resident of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Tonus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the part of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome [both Jews and Jewish converts], Cretans and

*Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”*

Jewish merchants from around the Sea are in the major trading center of Jerusalem when they hear the story of the resurrected Christ from Peter and when the Holy Spirit is another gift given by the Giver who they have come to celebrate and worship.

These merchants are all passing through on business but eventually they journey home. When they get to wherever the homes are, and the wife and children meet him at the door and say, “Daddy, what did you bring me? How was your trip? What did you learn? When the time is right, perhaps after dinner, he shares with him his story and his experiences at the Jewish Pentecost Service. The wife will eventually ask, “What will our Rabbi say to all of this?”

I image the Rabbi asking him to remain quiet awhile until the Rabbi himself can examine the scriptures. Rabbis seek counsel from other Rabbis and a Rabbi in Cappadocia can readily contact [via Roman snail mail] any Rabbi throughout the empire. And so

he does. When he does, he soon learns that the story he heard from the merchant in his synagogue is the same story other Rabbi's are hearing from the merchants in their own. Pretty soon, the Jewish community is spreading the gospel of Christ throughout the Roman Empire.

And the questions! Oh, the questions!!! All of the rabbi's have them and they need to ask for help. The news quickly spreads that the rabbinic scholar in Jerusalem, originally from Tarsus, has gone from trying to kill the Christ followers to becoming one. He even changed his name from the Hebrew Saul to the Greek Paul. So, they write to him. When he writes back, his letters become circulated from synagogue to synagogue. He even travels to a number of these places. As a Roman Citizen, he is free to travel the Roman Empire and to be protected by Roman law.

It is my hope that this little story has helped you connect some of the dots. During these 400 years of silence, it may not seem that anything significant happened, but as you can now tell, one

of the ways the Lord works is “as in the book of Ruth” where the truth sneaks up on you.

Regarding your celebration of Christmas, my prayer continues to be that you will be able to bow afresh to the Christ child and all of the events that had to happen before he came. If He had arrived a few hundred years earlier, no one would have known about it. It would have been an isolated event amongst a far away people. If it had happened a few hundred years later, everyone was embarrassed in war. It happened, as foretold, in the fullness of time.

In your personal life, you too will discover periods of silence. You too have had and will have your years of silence. When you do, smile. He who gives the harvest, and gives the law, and gives “as in the book of Ruth” gives silently, graciously, easily, and smoothly. It is done with such purity that the movement of the spirit is generally seen in hind-sight. Remember, Robinson Caruso only had to see one footprint in the sand before he knew, he was not alone.