



Ask, Father James:

Please explain the 400 years of God's Silence before Jesus appeared in the scene.

Since the time of Adam and Eve until the last prophet of the Old testament, God have always spoken to His people. God last spoke to the people through prophet Malachi. After that, there was 400 years of silence when God did not speak to the Jewish people. The people had returned back from Babylonian captivity, the monarchy had come to an end and Israel was no longer ruled by kings and at the same time, prophecy also ended. This four-century period is known as the inter-testament silent period.

During this 400 year gap, the people wondered why God isn't speaking. Was God sleeping, angry, absent or ignoring humanity and not performing miracles. This great silence troubled the peoples' spirituality. They however recall that all the prophets spoke about a coming messiah but they didn't know when exactly he would come.

The fundamental Jewish belief rests in God, the Creator and final redemption of Israel and universal peace which will be wrought by the expected Messiah. This final redemption was to be preceded by "The Day of the Lord." All prophets believed that this Day would lead to repentance and redemption. In the height of their expectation, the temple became the center of Jewish worship. The people of Israel had become split into three major parties; the Pharisees and Sadducees and the Sanhedrin and Scribes, depending on which interpretation of the messianic expectation one was convinced about. Of course there were other smaller groups like the Essenes, the Amhares, the Herodians, the Publicans and the Zealots, etc.

The years from A.D. 1 to A.D. 33 happened to be a high point for the holy city. Jesus enters the scene through the announcement by John the Baptist. John proclaimed that the who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah is here and called for the people to Prepare the way for the Lord and to make straight paths for him (Matthew 3:3). God spoke through John the Baptist when he announced that; God is among us, God in our midst, God is with us and that this God Self-Revelation is in Jesus Christ. On hearing this, the people rushed to the Jordan and emissaries were sent from the Temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 3:1-12). St. Paul would later write about this coming in these words; "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship" (Galatians 4:4-5).

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