

S T U D Y   G U I D E

# DUST *to*

An Overview of the Bible with R.C. SPROUL

# GLORY



N e w   T e s t a m e n t

S T U D Y G U I D E

# Dust to Glory

An Overview of the Bible with R.C. Sproul

## New Testament



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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# The Intertestamental Period

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Gospels open the New Testament with the announcement that the fullness of time had come and God was about to reveal His Messiah to the world. The coming of the promised Redeemer ended a four hundred year period of silence between the Old and New Testaments. God brought His people from an old to a new covenant and the words of the prophets began to see their fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the Intertestamental Period.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the historical period between the Old and New Testaments.
2. To outline the major empires that controlled Palestine during the Intertestamental Period.
3. To track the evolution of Judaism during the Intertestamental Period.

## QUOTATIONS

*The four hundred years between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ were important years in the history of Israel. During this time, the nation witnessed the fall of the Persian Empire, the rise and fall of the Greek Empire, and the rise of the Roman Empire. But Israel did not witness these events from afar. The crises and suffering experienced during these years led to the production of numerous writings. In these writings, the*

*hopes of the Jewish people are expressed. They look forward to the coming of a Messiah, one who would judge their enemies and establish the kingdom of God forever.*

—Keith Mathison

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The Gospels open the New Testament with the announcement of the *pleroma*, which is the “fullness of time”.
  - 1. The history of redemption reaches a period of fruition with the advent of Christ in the New Testament.
  - 2. The Old Testament recounts the long period of time in which God was preparing the world for the coming of His Son.
- B. The historical record of the Old Testament closes approximately four hundred years before the opening events of the New Testament.
- C. The reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem was completed in 445 BC under the leadership of Nehemiah.
  - 1. The small post-exilic Jewish nation struggled to survive in the ancient Near East.
  - 2. Palestine continued to be a hotly contested geo-political land-bridge between the major military powers.
- D. The Persian Empire remained the dominant power in the Ancient Near East until 331 BC when it was conquered by Alexander the Great.
- E. Alexander the Great had completed his conquest of the Persians at the age of 24.
  - 1. Alexander was the son of Philip of Macedon and the pupil of the Greek philosopher Aristotle.
  - 2. Aristotle was the pupil of Plato and Plato was the pupil of Socrates.
- F. Aristotle emphasized unity and a search for the system that would unify all branches of knowledge.
  - A large host of scientists and philosophers accompanied Alexander in his conquest of the ancient world to help Aristotle advance his studies.
- G. Throughout his empire, Alexander emphasized Hellenism, which was the spread of Greek language and culture.
  - 1. Alexander’s empire would be unified in language, customs, and philosophy.

- 
2. The New Testament was written in Greek due in large part to the successful Hellenization of the ancient world.
- H. Alexander died in 327 BC in Babylon and his kingdom was divided among four generals.
- I. Eventually the Grecian empire was divided between the two dynasties of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.
1. The Ptolemies ruled Palestine and Egypt and the Seleucids ruled Syria and Asia Minor.
  2. Ptolemy I annexed Palestine in 320 BC.
  3. Palestine was taken by Antiochus III (223–187 BC) for the Seleucids in 198 BC.
  4. Antiochus accelerated the process of Hellenization in Palestine.
- J. The process of Hellenization was fiercely opposed by conservative Jews.
1. The Hassidim or “the pious ones” fought in vain against the growing Greek influence on the Jews.
  2. Many groups struggled to maintain the purity of their traditions including the Pharisees who appear frequently in the New Testament.
  3. The Pharisees or “separated ones” were to be zealous for the covenant and obedient to every aspect of the law.
  4. The Pharisees degenerated into self-righteous legalism and ritualism by the time of Christ.
- K. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BC) became king of the Seleucids in 175 BC.
1. Epiphany means “manifestation” and Antiochus IV Epiphanes was considered to be the “manifest god”.
  2. Antiochus was driven to insanity in his latter years.
- L. Antiochus IV Epiphanes fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of the “abomination that makes desolate” (Dan. 9:27).
1. Antiochus IV Epiphanes inaugurated a radically anti-Jewish program in Palestine and was nicknamed Antiochus Epimanes which means “insane” or “madman”.

2. Antiochus made observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, and possessing a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures each a capital offense.
  3. Antiochus had a pig sacrificed on the sacred altar in the Jerusalem temple in 167 BC.
- M. The Maccabean revolt began in 164 BC.
1. A devout Jew named Mattathias who had five sons rose up in protest against the abominations of Antiochus.
  2. The Maccabean family launched a guerrilla war against the forces of Antiochus.
  3. After the death of Mattathias, leadership of the revolt fell to his third son Judas “the Hammer” Maccabeus.
  4. The Maccabean revolt succeeded in securing concessions from Antiochus including religious freedom and opening the temple for religious ceremonies.
  5. The reopening and rededication of the temple is still commemorated today in the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.
- N. The Jews secured their freedom in 142 BC from foreign powers and remained independent until 63 BC.
1. The Romans conquered Palestine in 63 BC under the command of Pompeii.
  2. Pompeii was a member of Rome’s first great triumvirate.
- O. An Idumean chieftain named Herod the Great was appointed as a local king over the Jews in 40 BC.
1. Herod the Great founded a dynasty and rebuilt the Jerusalem temple.
  2. Herod was appointed by Marc Anthony and Octavius or Caesar Augustus.
- P. The New Testament opens with the Jewish people languishing under the domination of the Romans and an oppressive king.

## BIBLE STUDY

Although no inspired books of Scripture were written during the Intertestamental period, many other non-canonical books were written. Some of these are contained within the Apocrypha. These books are not inspired Scripture, but like other merely human writings, they can be helpful for understanding the historical and religious developments that occurred during these four hundred years between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New. Among the most helpful of these books for understanding the historical developments are 1 and 2 Maccabees. Those interested in the religious and literary developments of this era may also want to read some of the other apocryphal books such as Tobit, Judith, or the Wisdom of Solomon.

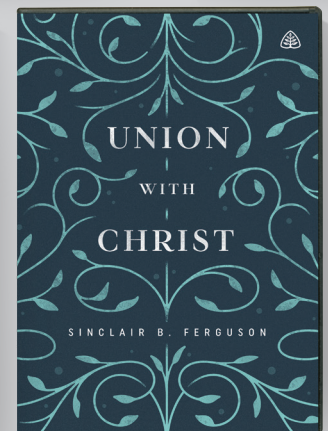
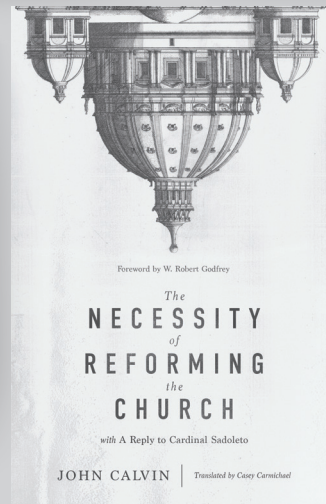
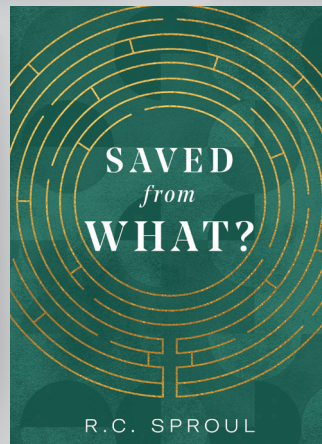
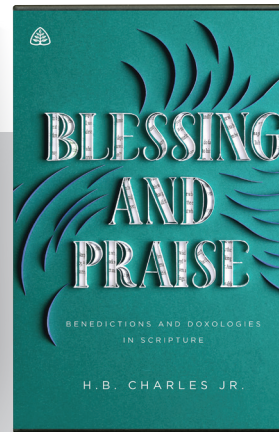
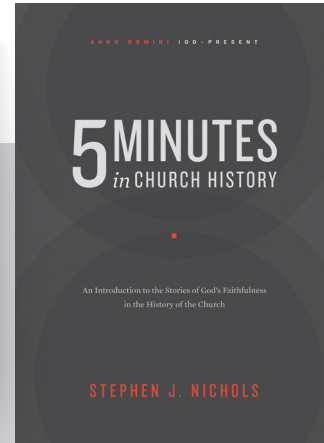
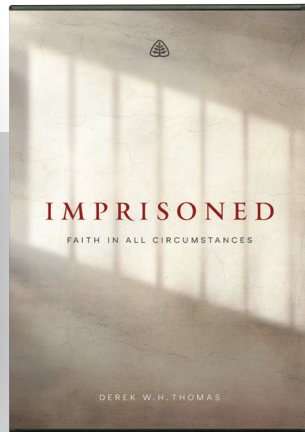
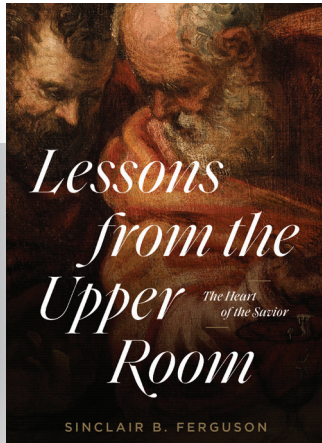
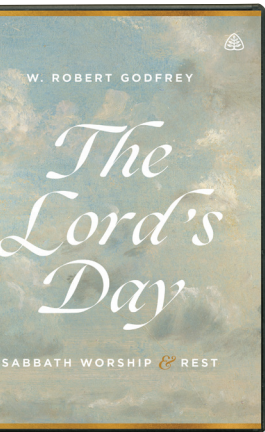
## DISCUSSION

1. Is it important for Christians to have some understanding of the events that transpired in the four hundred years before Jesus was born? Is it necessary? Why might it be helpful to the interpretation of the New Testament?
2. The apocryphal books were formally declared to be part of the canon by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1546. The Westminster Confession of Faith, on the contrary, states that these books “are no part of the canon of the scripture” and that they are to be used no differently “than other human writings” (I:3). The Belgic Confession says regarding the Apocrypha: “All which the church may read and take instruction from, so far as they agree with the canonical books . . .” (Art. VI). Is it appropriate to publish these apocryphal books with the biblical books as was done, for example, in the Geneva Bible and the 1611 King James Bible, even if they are published in a separate section apart from the Old and New Testament books? Why or why not?
3. The Reformers rejected granting the apocryphal books a canonical authority they did not and do not have, but they did not disapprove of the reading of these books. Many Protestants, however, seem to have gone beyond rightly rejecting their canonical status and have ignored these books completely. How may Christians use books, such as those in the Apocrypha, rightly today?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

de Silva, David A. *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance*  
Hayes, John H. and Sara Mandell. *The Jewish People in Classical Antiquity*  
Helger, Larry R. *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period*

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