

Between the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, and the first book of the New Testament, Matthew, a period of 400 years passed. Many important events took place during these 400 years. In fact, there are several things in the New Testament that came about during these 400 years. They are not mentioned in the Old Testament. A good way to remember these events that came about between the testaments is to remember “*Seven S’s*”.

Silence – The 400 years between Malachi and Matthew was a time of God’s silence. No books of the Bible were written during this period of time. We are not told of any prophets during this time. Bible history does not tell us what happened during this time. This is not to say that God was not active in the lives of people – nothing was recorded during this time. This was not the only time in which God was quiet. During Eli’s time we read, “*And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent*” (1 Sam. 3:1).

Septuagint Written – the Septuagint was a translation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek by a group of 70 Jewish scholars. This marked the first known translation of the Bible. Jesus and the apostles often quoted from this when they quoted Old Testament passages. Because of the conquests of Alexander the Great, the Greek language became the language of the world. Having the Old Testament in this language meant universal reading and teaching of God’s law.

Sects of Jews Developed – In the New Testament we read about Pharisees and Sadducees. These were different branches or sects within the Jewish faith. The Pharisees were the largest of these groups. They were considered the most scholarly of the groups. Nicodemus, Saul of Tarsus and Joseph of Arimathea were Pharisees. The Pharisees believed the oral teachings about the law, or traditions, were just as important as the law itself. They often argued with the Lord concerning finer points of law-keeping (Mt. 19:3). See also Mt. 15:1-9; 6:2,5,16; 23).

The **Sadducees** were made up mostly of wealthy and powerful Jews. They controlled the temple functions and the Jewish court system. They accepted only the first 5 books of the Old Testament as Law. They denied the existence of angels. They also did not believe in a resurrection (Mt 22:23-33; Acts 23:8).

Other Jewish groups developed during this time were the **Essenes**. These were the people who wrote the Dead Sea scrolls. They held to communal property and refrained from marriage. The Essenes numbered about 4,000 during the days of Jesus.

The **Herodians**, another Jewish sect, were a political group that supported Herod’s dynasty.

The **Zealots**, were Jewish revolutionaries who tried to overthrow Roman rule (Acts 21:38- *assassins*).

Synagogues Established – Many prominent cities in the New Testament had synagogues. These were gathering places for Jews to read and discuss the Old Testament. Jesus and the apostle Paul often taught in synagogues. Unlike the one temple in Jerusalem, there were many synagogues. In the temple the priests offered sacrifices. This did not happen in the synagogues. The synagogues had chief seats (Mt. 23:6) and rulers (Mk. 5:22; Acts 18:17). The synagogues became a place of religious activity for the Jews.

Sanhedrin – The Sanhedrin was the Jewish supreme court. Sometimes it was called “council”. It was made up mostly of Sadducees. There were 71 members of the Sanhedrin (the high priest, plus 70 who were appointed). Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin before he was sent to Pilate to be crucified (Mk 15:1).

Samaritans – The Samaritans are a prominent part of Jesus’ teaching (*good Samaritan* – Lk. 10:30-37; *thankful leper who was healed* – Lk 17:12-19; *woman at the well* – Jn 4:7-9). The Samaritans had a Jewish heritage. They were Jews who had married into other nations. By the time of the New Testament, the relationship between the Samaritans and the Jews was so bad the Jews would have nothing to do with the Samaritans (Jn. 4:9). Many of the Samaritans became Christians (Acts 8:12).

Secular Writings – A group of Jews wrote a series of books between the Old Testament and the New Testament. They are called, “the apocrypha books.” There are 14 books such as “I & II Maccabees”, and “Baruch.” Some Bibles will include these books between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Catholic council of Trent (1545) made these books a part of the Bible. Some consider these books inspired. They are never quoted by Jesus or the apostles. They make no claims of inspiration. The early church rejected them. They contain errors of history and are inconsistent with other Bible passages. For these reasons they are not considered a part of God’s word.

These “7 S’s” came about between the Testaments.