* 1. **Introduction to the Inter-Testamentary Period**

The inter-testamentary period (the roughly 400 years between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament) is one that is relatively unknown to most people – including Christians – for whom the Bible is supposed to be their guide. Before we get to this particular topic, we need to step back and set up how this time period fits into the broader story of the Bible.

God’s Mission:

The Bible is the story of God’s mission to restore the world from its fallen state – when humanity (beginning with Adam) chose to sin. God’s good creation was tainted by our sin. Because of this, a path was created to fix this rupture: God sets out to restore creation to what he intended from the beginning. How?

Israel’s Mission:

God’s mission (to restore creation) is carried out through a people. There are two texts found in the Old Testament which explain this:

i) **Genesis 12: 1-3**: The Lord had said to Abram, “*Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*.”

ii) **Exodus 19: 3-6**: Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord calledto him from the mountain and said, “*This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt,and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant,then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priestsand a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites*.”

After mankind chose to sin (beginning with Adam and Eve), God chooses Abraham to be a light – the vehicle by which restoration can occur. He promises two things:

In the book of Exodus, God forms Israel into a nation to fulfill these promises. He frees the Israelites from bondage in Egypt and he brings them to Mount Sinai. Here he calls them to be a Holy Nation. He actually calls them to be priests. Why?

Israel is to be an example of an alternative way to relate to the one God – as opposed to the multiple “gods” of Egypt, for example. The rest of what we call the Old Testament is a commentary on how Israel lives up to this command. Sometimes Israel fails badly, and they sin. When they do this, God judges them. Then God gives them a law – a system of making sacrifices, priests, a temple, kings and prophets. But it all ends in disaster for them. Israel gets banished from their land. The prophets then enter the story and proclaim that Israel is being judged for her sin. However, there will be a time when their sin will be paid for.

**Isaiah 40: 1, 2** – “*Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed,that her sin has been paid for,that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins*.”

In the Old Testament, the Israelites are promised that their kingdom will find its ultimate restoration through an anointed king – from the line of David and by the power of God’s spirit. However, before this can occur, Israel lives for 4 centuries (the 400 years of the inter-testamentary period) in fervent hope that the time will come when God will gather and restore them to their calling so he can complete his work.