The 400 Years Of Silence &
The Apocrypha

Introduction: What happened during the approximately 400 years between Malachi and Matthew? From God there was silence! But some believe otherwise...

I) The Apocrypha (the 14 additional books of the Catholic Bible)

Originally, when applied to writings, the term denoted that their content was either not to be made available to the general public or else was obscure and difficult to understand. The term "apocrypha" subsequently came to be used in various ways in the church. In its early usage, it was apparently a rather neutral term. II ESDRAS 14:44-46 speaks of ninety-four books whose content was reproduced by Ezra. Twenty-four of these (the Hebrew CANON) were to be made available for all, but seventy were to be given only "to the wise among your people." Although the term "apocrypha" is not used in this text, the seventy books were to be "hidden" or "kept secret" from the general public. No list is given of these seventy esoteric books for the wise. The 14 OT books of the apocrypha are: I and II ESDRAS, TOBIT, JUDITH, the ADDITIONS TO THE BOOK OF ESTHER, the WISDOM OF SOLOMON, ECCLESIASTICUS (or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach), BARUCH, the LETTER OF JEREMIAH, the PRAYER OF AZARIAH and the SONG OF THE THREE YOUNG MEN, SUSANNA, BEL AND THE DRAGON, the PRAYER OF MANASSEH, and I and II MACCABEES. Some of these writings are actually additions to existing books (Esther and Daniel) rather than separate works. (from Abingdon Bible Dictionary)

* Written: 200 B.C. - 100 A.D.
* Pseuepigrapha - ascribing names, e.g. Abraham, Enoch and Moses, to writings obviously not by them.
* Some do deal with things transpiring during the “silent” years.
II) Are These 14 Books Inspired By God? Answer: NO!

1. Not ever recognized by Jews in the Hebrew Bible
2. Not recognized or referenced by Jesus and N.T. writers
3. Early secular testimony against - Jerome’s Latin Vulgate
4. Qualities of inspiration missing - unlike the rest
5. Only late “official” acceptance - 16th century canon

III) What Was Going On During The 400 Years? (the period between the testaments)

* Greek empire replaced Persian - Alexander the Great (300’s B.C.)
* Jews scattered all over the world - synagogues develop, congregations, place of prayer, Bible study, but no sacrifices
* Samaritans - intermarrying with non-Jews after Assyrian destruction - outcasts
* Greek empire divided after Alexander by generals - Ptolomies rule Palestine first; Jewish life and religion is tolerated
* 198 B.C. - Syrian general’s descendants (Seleucids) conquer - promote Greek culture
* Septuagint Greek translation of the O.T. in Alexandria, Egypt. LXX stands for 72 days or 72 writers?
* First played Jews against each other. High Priesthood given to largest tribute offerer.
* Some in Palestine are for Greek assimilation; others are orthodox
* Eventually Greek culture and idolatry forced, so as to provide a buffer state with Egypt.
* Antiochus Epiphanes (“the Illustrious”) became powerful. The Jews gave him the nickname of “Epimanes” (“madman”)
* All kinds of abominable practices in the Temple
* Maccabean Revolt Results
* Matthias, son of Judas Maccabee (“the hammer”) uses guerrilla war tactics against sympathetic Jews and Syrians
* Hanukkah (“Festival of lights”) begun to celebrate liberation of the temple after 3 years of desecration
* Ended about 135 B.C.
* Next came the Hasmoneans and Hasidim - the early stages of Sadducees and Pharisees
* Sadducees were liberal, Greek sympathizers, temple oriented
* Pharisees were conservative, orthodox, synagogue
* Many traditions arise - corban, phylacteries, ceremonial washings, tassels, robes, etc.
* Civil strife between Pharisees and Sadducees breaks out
* Roman general, Pompey intervenes
* Herod gains control, begins rebuilding of temple, dies soon after Jesus born.

**Conclusion:** And then one day we hear an angel announcing to Elizabeth and Mary that 2 sons are to be born to them. The silence has been broken!