

# ANTI-CHRIST

## THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

**T**he dedication of the second temple in Jerusalem (c. 515 B.C.) is the final major event in ancient Israel's history that was recorded in the writings of the prophets. With the closing of the writing of the prophet Nehemiah sometime between 446-430 B.C. there came a period of silence from YHWH to Israel and Judah. Most of Israel remained in Diaspora after the Assyrian captivity, but Judah and a remnant of Israel came back to the Land with the end of the Babylonian captivity. The last writings of the prophets record the building of the second temple, and end with future prophecies of Israel's restored glory. Fittingly, Malachi (placed as the last book in order, though not the last written) ends with the prophecy of the Messiah's coming:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of YHWH, and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. (Malachi 4:5-6)

These two verses address the Lord Jesus' first coming after John the Baptist who came in the spirit of Elijah (Matthew 11:14), and His second coming (Acts 2:19-20). During the approximately 470-500 year interim between the writings of the prophets and the writings of the apostles, God gave no other written Scriptures. There were Hebrew writings that were accepted as "canon" by Roman Catholicism, but they were never part of the Hebrew Scriptures, and have been rejected by most non-Catholic Christians. These are the apocryphal books, generally recognized as historical if not scriptural. We will have a say about these later.

This is not to say there were no prophets during that time, but evidently what God had spoken through the written Word up till then was all He had to say to His people at large until the Holy Spirit inspired Jesus' apostles to write their testimonies of His life and ministry, as well as His instructions to His assemblies.

This time of prophetic silence is called the "Intertestamental Period." It is also called the "Second Temple Period" because it covers the time from the building of the second temple to the coming of Messiah into the second temple around A.D. 30.

In addressing this period we turn primarily to history for an understanding of anti-Christ's designs upon the earth.

Until Messiah came and the faith of Abraham was offered to the nations through the proclaiming of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (the Gospel of the Kingdom), anti-Christ's most concerted efforts were directed toward attempts to destroy Israel and Judah. If any one tribe of Israel could be destroyed completely—particularly Judah—then God's promise of a Redeemer for the world could not be fulfilled. And the promise of God's New Covenant with the house of Judah and the house of Israel, given through Jeremiah the prophet (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:8), would not be enacted. All of Abraham's seed through Isaac and Jacob have been Satan's target for physical destruction and spiritual corruption.

The rest of the world was already in Satan's camp, having given itself over to idolatry. Except for the few Gentiles who became proselytes to the Law of Moses, there was little if any influence of God's Word among the nations.

With the closing of the written Word given by YHWH, the books that comprised the Law and the Prophets (the Jewish Tanakh, or Christian "Old Testament") were the sum total of His Scriptures for His people as a whole.

The Intertestamental Period began around 430 B.C., and ended with the writings of the apostles following Jesus' ministry on earth.

During this period the Jews (the name applied to the restored tribe of Judah as well as the remnant of other Israelite tribes that went back to the Land with them) endured many hardships at the hands of several nations that ruled over Jerusalem. Anti-Christ's continued efforts to destroy them were evident.

Because Cyrus did not restore the monarchy to Judah, the priests became the dominant authority over the people, and the temple became the center of political, social and religious authority. Whatever prophets remained during this time were afforded little if any consideration. Instead there arose over the course of time four major religious sects that claimed God's authority: the Sadducees; the Pharisees; the Essenes; and the

Zealots. The Essenes adhered to asceticism and a monastic type of life, eschewing the physical world as evil by nature. The Zealots were revolutionaries who arose late in the Intertestamental Period during the Roman occupation, and sought to establish independence for the nation of Judah. The Sadducees were an offshoot of the Hasidim, an anti-Hellenistic sect that arose during the time of Antiochus Ephiphanes. They were the priests among the people. The Pharisees were a group of scribes and sages who evolved into the major teachers of the Torah (the writings of Moses) and were addressed as "rabbi" (teacher). Thus, they gained the greater strength among the people even though in direct opposition to the Sadducees. Although the Pharisees are best known as the major detractors of Jesus, they would equate to today's Fundamentalist Christians. The major doctrine that separated them from the priestly caste of the Sadducees was their belief in the resurrection. They could well serve as a warning for today's neo-Evangelicals who, though holding much sound doctrine, are straying from the purity of the Faith.

Anti-Christ's efforts to corrupt the nation continued through these religious elements within Judah that turned the people away from the pure faith of YHWH.

The Pharisees ultimately evolved in later years as the leaders of Rabbinic Judaism which began as the oral traditions took precedence over the written Scriptures. It wasn't until the Jewish Diaspora after the destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70, however, that Rabbinic Judaism began to codify its traditions in the Talmud. But already around 536 B.C. the Mishnah had begun to develop, not in written form, but in oral form.

The Mishnah (Hebrew, "repetition," or "to study and review") was the first major written compilation of the Jewish oral traditions which trace back to the beginning of Pharisaic times. Today's rabbis state that the Oral Law traces to Moses who passed it on to Joshua, and that it has continued unabated since that time. But the truth is that the Oral Law added much to Moses' Law, and certainly the later additions to it were in direct opposition to the truth of Jesus being the Messiah.

Because of the persecution of the Jews following the destruction of the second temple it was decided that the Oral Law needed to be preserved in written form lest it be forgotten as the Jews migrated throughout the world. This was done around A.D. 200 by Rabbi Judah haNasi and is considered the first major work of Rabbinic Judaism.

But the written Mishnah is a study for a later installment in this series. It is mentioned in passing to set the scene for how the Jews began to rely more and more upon the teachings of the rabbis than upon the written Word of God. This would set the stage for conflict between the religious leaders—especially the Pharisees—and the Messiah when He first came to earth.

It wasn't long after returning from Babylonia that the Jews began to backslide. The Jewish historian Josephus records how the Jews, including the priests, married foreign women. He relates how the elders of Jerusalem had become upset that Manasseh was serving with his brother Jaddua the high priest after marrying a foreign woman, Sanballat's daughter Nicaso. (This same Sanballat was a major hindrance to Nehemiah's building of the wall and temple at Jerusalem [Nehemiah 2:10-6:14]).

The elders felt that Manasseh's conduct would set an example for the Jews, and would result in many marriages to foreign women. So they, along with Jaddua, commanded Manasseh to either divorce his wife or not approach the altar. Manasseh went to Sanballat and told him that, although he loved Nicaso, he was not willing to be deprived of his priesthood on her account.

Sanballat promised Manasseh that if he would keep Nicaso as his wife, Sanballat would confer upon him the high priesthood and make him governor of all the places Sanballat then ruled. He also promised to build him a temple upon Mount Gerizzini, the highest mountain in Samaria.

Manasseh agreed, whereupon Sanballat then seduced the priests and Levites to join with Manasseh by giving them money, land and houses.

Thus anti-Christ was able to subvert the religious leaders of Jerusalem and cause them to break the Law which forbade the Levites from having an inheritance of land and real property. There is no record of any prophet being sent by God to correct these sins, and this was a further departure from God's written Word in favor of the Oral Law that formed the basis of Rabbinic Judaism.

Under Persian rule Judah managed to maintain peace even though it began almost immediately to again fall away from YHWH's Law. But Persian rule was on its last legs.

God's prophecies must be fulfilled through the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great who was born in 356 B.C.

As we address the work of anti-Christ against God's people during the Intertestamental Period we will consider the prophecy given to Daniel by God. In doing so we must understand that all biblical prophecy centers on the Holy Land, most particularly Jerusalem. It does not center on the United States of America; it does not center on Europe; it does not center on Asia. It does not center on any of these except where their actions touch the Holy Land/Jerusalem.

God's plan of salvation and Satan's activities to thwart that plan revolve around Jerusalem primarily because of the spiritual implications of God's plan of salvation. Thus every major kingdom addressed in Scripture has eyed the Holy Land as a prized possession. To them, occupation of Jerusalem had pragmatic benefits. As the capital of Judah, Jerusalem has held the key to control of the land bridge between three continents—Asia, Africa and Europe. There is good reason why that area of interest to those kingdoms is called "the Mediterranean." It is Latin for "Middle of the land," or "Middle of the earth." Satan's principalities and powers in the heavens have used the kingdoms of this world in attempts to further their master's goal of thwarting God's plan of redemption. Israel, therefore, is the key to God's plan of salvation, and its history was told through prophecy recorded in the Book of Daniel.

There were portions of Daniel's vision that foretold of the Intertestamental Period and the worldly powers Satan would use to gain control of Jerusalem. As we consider these prophecies, keep in mind, again, that all scriptural prophecies are pertinent to Israel. All directions of the compass relate to Jerusalem. The kings of the north were those of Assyria and Syria over the time span. The kings of the south were the kings of Egypt. Where possible I will intersperse the names of the human principals involved.

Daniel 10:12-12:13, relates the vision given by God to Daniel while he was residing by the river Euphrates at Hiddekel. Daniel tells of a man who appeared to him, and whose description is identical to that of the risen Christ in Revelation 1:13-16. This man began to speak to Daniel:

**Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days. But look, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what shall befall your people [Israel/Judah] in latter days, for the vision is still for many days."**

Daniel received this vision during the Babylonian captivity in the third year of Cyrus's rule over the Persian Empire. The vision told of the demise of the Persian Empire and the rise of Greece, which would be the major world power during much of the Intertestamental Period.

**Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I will return to fight with the prince of Persia, and when I have gone forth, look, the prince of Greece shall come. But I will show you that which is noted in the Scripture of truth, and there is no one who stands with me in these things but Michael your prince. Also I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him."**

**"And now I will show you the truth. Look, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than they all, and by his strength through his riches he will stir up all against the realm of Greece."**

The prince of Persia spoken of in this prophecy is not the human prince of the empire, but the spiritual principality over it. All of the principalities over the nations are anti-Christ, but it appears as if they are in conflict with one another. Thus the constant warfare between nations for power. The human leaders of the nations don't understand this, and are ignorant pawns in anti-Christ's game. Satan's ultimate goal is the unification of mankind under a world ruler. This has been his goal since God scattered mankind over all the earth lest they become too powerful too soon:

**And YHWH came down to see the city and the tower that the children of men built. And YHWH said, "Look the people are united, and they all have one language, and they begin to do this. And now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do."**

**"Come. Let us go down and confound their language there so that they will not understand one another's speech."**

**So YHWH scattered them abroad from there upon the face of all the earth, and they stopped building the city. (Genesis 11:5-8)**

It has taken man thousands of years to come near to the place of global unity, and we are mere steps away. Since the time of the Industrial Revolution man has made tremendous strides toward that unity thanks to the increased speed of transportation. In just 80 years man went from riding the horse as his fastest means of transportation to landing on the moon. Now he is working to land on Mars and planets beyond. In order to do so he is rebuilding the Tower of Babel through the "Global Village," where all nations are becoming interdependent. (The question has been asked why the U.S. hasn't returned to the moon. The answer is that we are not allowed to explore space independently; all efforts toward space exploration must be international. This is why the space station is called "The International Space Station." The U.S. has surrendered its sovereignty in every practical sense; it remains only a formality for this to be recognized openly.)

To accomplish global unity it has been necessary that constant warfare create conditions for acceptance of the world ruler. In the case of Persia vs. Greece, the spiritual power over Persia withstood the Lord who would make way for the spiritual power of Greece. This reveals that the final authority over all earthly power is God (Daniel 4:17), and Satan is allowed to reign over the principalities and powers of the air for a time in order to bring about God's plan of redemption.

The three kings who would arise in Persia before that empire would give way to the Grecian Empire were those who came after Cyrus. His decree to rebuild Jerusalem began Daniel's prophecy, and the three kings who followed were Cambyses, Darius I, and Xerxes. Xerxes gave the decree to obey Cyrus's command, which had been forgotten over time due to anti-Christ's opposition.

**"And a mighty king [Alexander the Great of Greece] shall stand up, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of the heavens, and not to his offspring, nor according to his dominion which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those."**

Alexander was about twenty years of age when he succeeded his father, Philip of Macedon. This was around 336 B.C. In 334 B.C. he first defeated the Persians under Darius III in Anatolia (Asia Minor), and again one year later at the Battle of Issus. During the latter campaign he destroyed the city of Tyre. He completed his conquest in 331 B.C., bringing an end to the Persian Empire.

The greatest achievement that historians grant to Alexander was not his military conquest, but his influence in bringing Greek culture to the lands he conquered. By defeating Persia he gained dominion over the Holy Land, and although his treatment of the Jews was benign, the resulting Hellenization of their land resulted in significant changes to Jewish tradition and religious practice.

Anti-Christ knows that attempts to destroy God's people physically would never ultimately succeed. In addition to physical annihilation, he must destroy as much of the Jews' spiritual

foundation as possible. This he sought to do through Hellenizing their culture.

It is no less his design upon God's people today. By bringing worldly influences to bear over so-called "Christendom," he has effectively nullified any major resistance to his plans for world conquest through his last-days representative whom we expect to be revealed before much longer.

Alexander's reign was short-lived. He died at Babylon in 323 B.C., only eight years after his conquest of Persia. But the influence of Greek culture he brought to the world has remained to this day, and that culture was even adopted by the Romans when they became the next great world power.

The cause of Alexander's death is lost to historians. It has been speculated that he was poisoned or that he died from any of several diseases including malaria, typhoid fever, acute pancreatitis, or even West Nile virus.

Daniel's prophecy revealed that Alexander's kingdom would be parceled out to four kings who came up in his place. These were Ptolemy in Egypt to the south; Antigonus in Asia to the north; Seleucus over both Syria and Babylon to the east; and Cassander in Macedonia to the west.

With the death of Alexander there arose a dispute over whom between Ptolemy and Seleucus should control the Holy Land.

**And the king of the south [Ptolemy Lagidae of Egypt] and one of his princes [Seleucus I of Syria] will be strong. And he [Ptolemy] will be strong above him [Seleucus], and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.**

Seleucus deferred to Ptolemy's greater strength and did not continue to challenge him for Jerusalem.

Ptolemy's conquest of Jerusalem was accomplished through deception when he came to the city in 320 B.C., feigning a desire to make a sacrifice on a Sabbath, knowing that the Jews would not fight on that day. He is said to have taken many captives to Egypt from Jerusalem and other parts of Judea and Samaria. Josephus records that, knowing how the Jews considered their oaths sacred Ptolemy used them as garrisons for important strongholds. Many Jews went voluntarily to Egypt, partly because of the excellence of the land and partly because of the kind treatment by Ptolemy and his successors.

Josephus praises the kindness of the Ptolemies toward the Jews, but he viewed this through natural eyes. Throughout God's Word Egypt is regarded as an enemy of YHWH, and Israel is chastised for its looking toward Egypt for succor. The Jews may have prospered somewhat under the Ptolemies, but there is no doubt that they suffered spiritually, removing themselves from the Land God had granted them. From ancient times spiri-

tual leadership challenged God's prophets, co-mingling their traditions and the Egyptian mysteries carried from the Exodus and the new Egyptian conquest into a hybrid Judaism called Qabbalah.<sup>1</sup> With the closing of God's written revelation came the transfer of spiritual authority from His prophets to the priests and rabbis. During the Intertestamental Period the mystical traditions of Qabbalah gained tremendous power over the nation through the Oral Law. Anti-Christ was preparing the nation to reject God's Messiah when he would come. What he did not know is that it was God's plan for Messiah to be rejected in order that His greater plan of redemption would be accomplished. This mystery of God was hidden even from His angels since the foundation of the world:

Nevertheless, we speak wisdom among those who are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world, or of the princes of this world, that come to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom that God ordained to our glory before the world, which none of the princes of this world knew. Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him."

But God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things—yes the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:6-10)

The princes of this world are the spiritual anti-Christ minions of Satan in the heavenly realm. We could also say it refers to the human agencies used by Satan to accomplish his purposes.

In the King James Version of the Bible Daniel's prophecy seems to jump forward to "the end of years" (Daniel 11:6). But the Hebrew *kates* literally means "after" or "afterward."

**Afterward, they will join themselves together, for the king's daughter of the south [Berenice Syra, Ptolemy II's daughter] shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement [Berenice married Antiochus of Syria]. But she shall not retain firm power; neither shall he stand, nor his power, but she and those who brought her shall be given up, and he who fathered her, and he who strengthened her in these times.**

After the death of her father, Ptolemy II, Berenice was abandoned by Antiochus who went back to his first wife Laodice. Berenice and her son, whom she sought to place in power as Regent over Syria, were both poisoned by Laodice. Berenice's brother, Egyptian King Ptolemy III Euergetes, avenged Berenice by invading Syria and having Laodice killed.

1 "Hebrew theology was divided into three distinct parts. The first was the *law*, the second was *the soul of the law*, and the third was *the soul of the soul of the law*. The law was taught to all the children of Israel; the *Mishna*, or the soul of the law, was revealed to the Rabbins and teachers; but the *Qabbalah*, the soul of the soul of the law, was cunningly concealed, and only the highest initiates among the Jews were instructed in its secret principles." Manly Palmer Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* (Los Angeles: Theosophical Research Society, 1962), p. CXIII.

But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate [Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III], who will come with an army and will enter into the fortress of the king of the north [Seleucus II], and will deal against them, and shall prevail, and shall also carry captives into Egypt—their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold—and he shall continue more years than the king of the north.

So the king of the south [Ptolemy III of Egypt] shall come into his [Seleucus II's] kingdom, and shall return into his own land.

These events transpired during the years 261-246 B.C. As this intrigue played out, Jerusalem served as a focal point among the struggles for power and was invaded several times, disrupting the peace of the Jews. The conflict between Ptolemy's house in Egypt and Seleucus's house in Syria continued unabated, leading to the appearance of one of the greatest anti-Christ's in history.

But his [Seleucus II's] sons [Ceraunus and Antiochus III ("the Great")] shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces. And one [Antiochus the Great] shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through. Then he will return and be stirred up, even to his fortress.

Antiochus III, under the influence of Hermeias, who had been the chief minister over the Seleucid Empire under Antiochus's father Seleucus II, ordered an attack against Judea in an attempt to put down the rebels among the Jews there. This first campaign was a significant failure.

After learning of Hermeias's plot to have Antiochus assassinated so he could control the empire through oversight of Antiochus's infant son Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), Antiochus III had Hermeias put to death. Unable to wage a successful campaign against Achaeus, who had revolted and ruled Syria, Antiochus launched a new attack against Judea. This resulted in his ability to challenge Ptolemy IV for Egypt. But in 217 B.C., Ptolemy IV defeated Antiochus III at the Battle of Raphia, causing him to retreat to Lebanon.

And the king of the south [Ptolemy IV] shall be moved with anger, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north, and he shall set forth a great multitude, but the multitude shall be given into his hand.

And when he has taken away the multitude his heart will be lifted up and he will cast down many ten thousands, but he will not be strengthened by it.

Where Antiochus III failed against Egypt, his son Antiochus IV would prove more formidable. His attack against Jerusalem would be one of the anti-Christ's most significant attempts to once-and-for-all destroy God's people and their temple.

For the king of the north [Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)] will return, and will set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with many riches.

And in those times many will stand up against the king of the south. Also, the robbers of your people [traitorous Jews who joined Ptolemy, but rebelled and then joined Syria] will exalt themselves to establish the vision [to liberate Judea], but they shall fall.

So the king of the north shall come and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities, and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand.

But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him, and he shall stand in the glorious land [Judea], which by his hand shall be consumed.

He shall also set his face to enter [into Egypt] with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him [Ptolemy III through a peace treaty] the daughter of women [Cleopatra], corrupting her [Antiochus hoped Cleopatra would betray Ptolemy]. But she will not stand on his [her father's] side, neither be for him.

After this he will turn his face to the isles, and will take many, but a prince for his own behalf [the Roman Consul] shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he will cause it to turn upon him. [Antiochus' plans to defeat Rome were turned on him and he was defeated.]

Then he [Antiochus] shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land [Syria]: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

Then will stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom [Seleucus IV], but within few days he will be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle. [He was poisoned for political reasons.]

And in his estate a vile person will stand up [Antiochus IV "Epiphanes"], to whom they will not give the honor of the kingdom, but he will come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

And with the arms of a flood they will be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yes, also the prince of the covenant [Onias, the high priest in Jerusalem].

And after the covenant made with him he will work deceitfully, for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.

He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter the prey, and spoil, and riches among them. Yes, and he shall fabricate his devices against the strongholds, even for a time.

And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army, and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army. But he shall not stand, for they shall fabricate devices against him.

Yes, they who feed of the portion of his food shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow, and many shall fall down slain.

And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table, but it shall not prosper, for the end shall still be at the time appointed.

Then he shall return into his land with great riches, and his heart shall be against the holy covenant [Antiochus persecuted the Jews, perceiving them to be against him]; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.

At the time appointed he shall return and come toward the south, but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. For the ships of Chittim [Roman Cyprus] shall come against him. Therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant [Antiochus desecrated the temple and stole the holy implements, slaying 80,000 Jews in the process]. So he shall do: he shall even return, and have an understanding with those who forsake the holy covenant.

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice.

[Antiochus polluted the altar with broth made of swine's blood and dedicated the temple to the god Jupiter], and they shall place the abomination that makes desolate [he later slew a pig on the altar].

And he shall corrupt by flatteries such as do wickedly against the covenant, but the people who truly know their God shall be strong, and do exploits [thus began the war of the Maccabees].

Antiochus IV Epiphanes is considered the arch-enemy of the Jews during the Intertestamental Period. Anti-Christ would use him to accomplish the greatest desecration of the temple in the history of Israel. This abomination began with a false rumor that Antiochus IV had been killed in his war against Egypt. The deposed high priest Jason gathered a force of 1,000 men and attacked Jerusalem, causing Menelaus, the high priest appointed by Antiochus, to flee for his life.

Angered by his defeat by Egypt in 167 B.C., Antiochus counterattacked Jerusalem and reinstated Menelaus as high priest. He then executed many of the Jews. The apocryphal Second Book of Maccabees records the history of this event:

Now when this that was done came to the king's ear, he thought that Judea had revolted. Whereupon removing out of Egypt in a furious mind, he took the city by force of arms, and commanded his men of war not to spare such as they met, and to slay such as went up upon the houses.

Thus there was killing of young and old, making away of men, women, and children, slaying of virgins and infants. And there were destroyed within the space of three whole days eighty thousand, of which forty thousand were slain in the conflict, and no fewer sold than slain. (2 Maccabees 5:11-14)

So enraged was Antiochus that such a shedding of blood did not requite his fury. After such a great slaughter he turned his wrath against the temple of God. Again, we turn to 2 Maccabees for the historical account:

Yet he was not content with this, but presumed to go into the most holy temple of all the world, Menelaus, that traitor to the Law, and to his own country, being his guide. And taking the holy vessels with polluted hands, and with profane hands pulling down the things that were dedicated by other kings to the augmentation and glory and honor of the place, he gave them away.

And so haughty in mind was Antiochus that he did not consider that the Lord was angry for awhile for the sins of those who lived in the city, and therefore his eye was not upon the place. For had they not been formerly wrapped in many sins, this man, as soon as he had come, would have been quickly scourged and put back from his presumption, as Heliodorus was, whom Seleucus the king sent to view the treasury.

Nevertheless, God did not choose the people for the place's sake, but the place for the people's sake. And therefore the place itself, that was partaker with them of the adversity that happened to the nation, did afterward partake of the benefits sent from the Lord, and as it was forsaken in the wrath of the Almighty, so again, the great Lord being reconciled, it was set up with all glory.

So when Antiochus had carried out of the temple a thousand and eight hundred talents, he left in all haste to Antiochia, thinking in his pride to make the land navigable, and the sea passable by foot, such was the haughtiness of his mind.

And he left governors to vex the nation: at Jerusalem, Philip, for his country a Phrygian, and for manners more barbarous than he who set him there; and at Garizim, Andronicus; and besides, Menelaus, who worse than all the rest bore a heavy hand over the citizens, having a malicious mind against his countrymen the Jews.

He also sent that detestable ringleader Apollonius with an army of twenty-two thousand, commanding him to slay all those who were in their best age, and to sell the women and the younger sort, who coming to Jerusalem and pretending peace, did forbear till the holy day of the Sabbath, when taking the Jews keeping holy day, he commanded his men to arm themselves.

And so he slew all those who had gone to the celebrating of the Sabbath, and running through the city with weapons slew great multitudes.

But Judas Maccabeus with nine others, or thereabout, withdrew himself into the wilderness with his company, who continually fed on herbs lest they should be partakers of the pollution, and lived in the mountains after the manner of animals. (2 Maccabees 5:15-27).

The second temple would see two instances of this abomination that causes desolation, which refers to the desecration of God's temple. The first occurred when Antiochus offered a swine on the altar and sprinkled the broth and the blood

thereon. He broke into the holy of holies and ransacked the temple of the vessels made of precious metals. This polluted the temple and made it a profane place, unable to be used for service to YHWH.

The second abomination of desolation would occur later in A.D. 70 when Roman troops under the command of Titus would utterly destroy it after making sacrifices to their gods on the altar. That, too, is for a later installment in this series.

The Book of 2 Maccabees tells how anti-Christ, through Antiochus Epiphanes furthered his atrocities by outlawing Judaism and forcing Hellenization upon the people, thus hoping to destroy their culture and religion:

Not long after this the king sent an old man of Athens to compel the Jews to depart from the laws of their fathers and not to live after the Laws of God, and also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Jupiter Olympius, and that in Garizim [Samaria], of Jupiter the Defender of strangers, as those who lived in that place desired.

The coming in of this mischief was sore and grievous to the people, for the temple was filled with riot and reveling by the Gentiles who dallied with harlots, and had to do with women within the circuit of the holy places, and besides that brought in things that were not lawful. The altar also was filled with profane things, which the Law forbids.

Neither was it lawful for a man to keep Sabbath days or ancient feasts, or to profess himself at all to be a Jew. And on the day of the king's birth every month they were brought by bitter constraint to eat of the sacrifices, and when the feast of Bacchus was kept, the Jews were compelled to go in procession to Bacchus, carrying ivy.

Moreover, by the suggestion of Ptolemy there went out to the neighboring cities of the heathen a decree against the Jews that they should observe the same fashions and be partakers of their sacrifices. And whoever would not conform themselves to the manners of the Gentiles would be put to death.

Then might a man have seen the present misery, for there were two women brought, who had circumcised their children, whom when they had openly led around the city, the babes hanging at their breasts, they [the Gentiles] cast them down headlong from the wall.

And others that had run together into nearby caves to keep the Sabbath day secretly, being discovered by Philip,<sup>2</sup> were all burnt together because they made a conscience to help themselves for the honor of the most sacred day.

Now I beseech those who read this book, that they not be discouraged by these calamities, but that they judge those punishments not to be for destruction, but for a

chastening of our nation. For it is a token of His [God's] great goodness when evildoers are not tolerated for any long time, but are soon punished. For not as with other nations, whom the Lord patiently forbears to punish till they have come to the fullness of their sins, so He deals with us, lest that, having come to the height of sin, afterwards He should take vengeance on us.

And therefore He never withdraws his mercy from us. And though He punish with adversity, yet He never forsakes His people. (2 Maccabees 6:1-16)

The writer of 2 Maccabees spoke truth when he said this calamity was for the chastisement of God's people. They had consistently turned from God's Word and were largely given to the practices of the heathen voluntarily. Now those practices would be forced upon them in such an unpleasant manner that they would choke on them. This was just how God dealt with their forebears in the desert when they complained about wanting quail instead of the manna. He sent so many quail that they choked on them and couldn't move about.

It was during these atrocities that the Maccabeans staged a revolt and courageously campaigned against Antiochus's army at Jerusalem:

**And they who understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.**

**Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help, but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.**

The Maccabeans were of little help, and were ultimately defeated. However, they were able to retake Jerusalem for a time. They cleansed and rededicated the temple some three years after it had been desecrated.

**And some of them of understanding [believers] shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.**

The history of Israel and of believers in Christ has been one of persecutions, trials and tribulations to purify us and make us white. ❖

2 On his deathbed Antiochus Epiphanes appointed this Philip, a personal friend, as ruler over all his realm (1 Maccabees 6:14).