

The Life of Jesus Christ, Part 9

Setting the Stage, Part 8

The Maccabees, Part 2

The Response to Antiochus

Meet a priest named Mattathias with 5 sons, who loved the law and hated to see what the pagans and especially the unfaithful Jews were doing

1 Maccabees 2:15-29

¹⁵The king's officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the town of Modein [MOH deen, a small village NW of Jerusalem] to make them offer sacrifice.

¹⁶Many from Israel came to them; and Mattathias and his sons were assembled.

¹⁷Then the king's officers spoke to Mattathias as follows: "You are a leader, honored and great in this town, and supported by sons and brothers.

¹⁸Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the people of Judah and those that are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the Friends of the king, and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many gifts."

¹⁹But Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice: "Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to obey his commandments, everyone of them abandoning the religion of their ancestors,

²⁰I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the covenant of our ancestors.

²¹Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances.

²²We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left."

²³When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king's command.

²⁴When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar.

²⁵At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar.

²⁶Thus he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu.

²⁷Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: "Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!"

²⁸Then he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the town.

²⁹At that time many who were seeking righteousness and justice went down to the wilderness to live there...

This revolt happened in 167 BC. They became a sort of guerilla opposition, tearing down pagan altars, forcibly circumcising Jewish boys

166 BC: Mattathias died

166-160 BC: Judas Maccabeus (Aramaic for "the Hammer") led revolt

1 Maccabees 3:1-5

¹Then his son Judas, who was called Maccabeus, took command in his place.

²All his brothers and all who had joined his father helped him; they gladly fought for Israel.

³He extended the glory of his people. Like a giant he put on his breastplate; he bound on his armor of war and waged battles, protecting the camp by his sword.

⁴He was like a lion in his deeds, like a lion's cub roaring for prey.

⁵He searched out and pursued those who broke the law; he burned those who troubled his people.

Sounds like his namesake in Genesis 49:9: "Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?"

Judas won a number of battles against the Seleucids

December, 164 BC, cleansed the temple:

1 Maccabees 4:36-51

³⁶Then Judas and his brothers said, "See, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it."

³⁷So all the army assembled and went up to Mount Zion.

³⁸There they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, and the gates burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as on one of the mountains. They saw also the chambers of the priests in ruins.

³⁹Then they tore their clothes and mourned with great lamentation; they sprinkled themselves with ashes

⁴⁰and fell face down on the ground. And when the signal was given with the trumpets, they cried out to Heaven.

⁴¹Then Judas detailed men to fight against those in the citadel until he had cleansed the sanctuary. ⁴²He chose blameless priests devoted to the law,

⁴³and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place.

⁴⁴They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned.

⁴⁵And they thought it best to tear it down, so that it would not be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar,

⁴⁶and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them.

⁴⁷Then they took unhewn stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like the former one.

⁴⁸They also rebuilt the sanctuary and the interior of the temple, and consecrated the courts.

⁴⁹They made new holy vessels, and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple.

⁵⁰Then they offered incense on the altar and lit the lamps on the lampstand, and these gave light in the temple.

⁵¹They placed the bread on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken.

So, because of the boldness of Judas and those with him, the regular temple sacrifices were reestablished.

Hanukkah: only had oil for one night, but according to tradition it lasted 8 nights; John 10:22: Feast of the Dedication

Oratorio by Handel called *Judas Maccabaeus* ("Thine Is the Glory" tune)

- 160 BC: Judas died in battle; his brother Jonathan succeeded him
- 152 BC: Jonathan became high priest
- 143 BC: Jonathan murdered by Seleucid general; succeeded by brother Simon
- 142 BC: Seleucids granted freedom to Jewish state; Seleucid troops removed from Jerusalem

Doesn't mean they were left in peace, but they were independent until 63 BC, when the Romans began to rule the Jews

Hasmonean Dynasty

- "Hasmonean": From Asamoneus or Asmoneus, apparently an ancestor of Mattathias
- c. 140 BC: Hasmonean Dynasty established by Simon, the last surviving son of Mattathias

- The Hasmoneans extended the borders of the Jewish kingdom

Won't go into detailed history, but note a few important points:

- These rulers were sometimes high priests, so civil and religious authority
- 135-104 BC: John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, increasingly Hellenized Judea and acted like a Greek monarch; caused conflict with traditionalists; undoing much of what the Maccabees had done
- 104-103 BC: Aristobulus, eldest son of John Hyrcanus; imprisoned his mother and brothers to hold onto power, mother died in prison
- 103-76 BC: Alexander Jannaeus, son of John Hyrcanus, brother of Aristobulus: during his reign came a 6-year civil war against the Pharisees, leading to 50,000 deaths; Alexander Jannaeus captured 800 rebels, killed their wives and children before their eyes, then crucified the rebels
- 76-67 BC: Salome Alexandra: Wife of Alexander and widow of Aristobulus; made her son Hyrcanus II high priest; favored Pharisees
- 67-63 BC: Hyrcanus II (high priest) and Aristobulus II (military leader): sons of Alexander Jannaeus, fought for control; Hyrcanus supported by Pharisees; Aristobulus by Sadducees
- 63 BC: Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem and established Hyrcanus as high priest (preferred the weaker person), who remained high priest until 40 BC; Judea under Roman power