

## Week 37, Lecture 117.<sup>1</sup> The Death of Antiochus, Version 1. 1 Macc 6:1-17

### Placement of Death in 1 Maccabees

1 Maccabees places the death of Antiochus in chapter 6 **after** the cleansing of the Temple in chapter 4.  
2 Maccabees places the death of Antiochus in chapter 9 **before** the cleansing of the Temple in chapter 10.  
The commentators think the order of 2 Maccabees is more historical in this case.

**Structural Analysis of 1 Macc 6:1-17.** For the most part, I am following Duran.<sup>2</sup>

Unsuccessful Raid on Elymais	6:1-4
Bad News from Judea	6:5-7
Antiochus' Reaction to the Bad News	6:8-13
Final Acts, Death, Aftermath	6:14-17

### Unsuccessful Raid on Elymais

**6:1-4.** About that time king Antiochus travelling through the high countries heard say, that Elymais in the country of Persia was a city greatly renowned for riches, silver, and gold; <sup>2</sup> And that there was in it a very rich temple, wherein were coverings of gold, and breastplates, and shields, which Alexander, son of Philip, the Macedonian king, who reigned first among the Grecians, had **left there**. <sup>3</sup> So he came and sought to take the city, and to spoil it; but he was not able, because the plan became known to the people of the city, <sup>4</sup> and they rose up against him in battle: so he fled, and departed from there with great sorrow, and returned to Babylon. <sup>3</sup>

### V. 2. Left there = dedicated to the goddess.

In contrast to Antiochus, Alexander the Great is portrayed as treating the temple of the goddess with piety. The author will present Antiochus as impious even by pagan standards.

### Bad News from Judea

**6:5-7.** Moreover there came one who brought him tidings into Persia, that the armies, which went against the land of Judea, were put to flight: <sup>6</sup> And that Lysias, who went forth first with a powerful force was driven away by them; and that they were made strong by the armor, and power, and store of spoils, which they had gotten from the armies, whom they had destroyed: <sup>7</sup> Also that they **had pulled down the abomination**, which he had set up upon the altar in Jerusalem, and that they had surrounded the sanctuary with high walls, as before, and **his city Beth-Zur**.

### V. 7. Had pulled down the “Abomination” (cf. Dan 9:27; 11:31; Mark 13:14 “abomination of desolation,” Douay)

Calling it an “abomination” is the editor’s language. The report to Antiochus would not have been so phrased!

Recall that this passage in 1 Maccabees comes **after** the purification of the Jerusalem Temple.

In 2 Maccabees, and probably historically, Antiochus dies **before** the Temple is purified.

What we have here is “dramatic effect” more than “sober history.”

**Beth-Zur.** This city, formerly held by Antiochus, is now a Jewish fortification. (1 Macc 4:61).

### Antiochus' Reaction to the Bad News

**6:8-13.** Now when the king heard these words, he was astonished and greatly shaken, so that he laid down on his bed, and fell sick for grief, because it had not befallen him as he had been expecting. <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lectures are numbered consecutively. Although this is this week's first lecture, its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Doran, “The First Book of Maccabees,” in *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 84-85. The paragraphing is often reflected in contemporary translations, e.g., RSV, NRSV, NAB, NABRE.

<sup>3</sup> The English is based on Brenton's 19<sup>th</sup> century version, accessed via *BibleWorks*. At times I modify it considerably to make it more literal and more contemporary. I have also Americanized (honour > honor) and updated (followeth > follows) the spelling.

And there he continued many days: for his grief was ever more and more, and he realized that he was would die. <sup>10</sup> So he called for all his Friends, and said unto them, "Sleep has gone from my eyes, and my heart fails from worry. <sup>11</sup> And I thought to myself, Into what tribulation am I come, and how great a flood of misery is it, wherein now I am! for I was **bountiful and beloved** in my power. <sup>12</sup> But now I remember **the evils that I did at Jerusalem**, and that I took all the vessels of gold and silver that were there, and sent to destroy the inhabitants of Judea without cause. <sup>13</sup> I perceive therefore that **for this cause** these troubles are come upon me, and, behold, I perish through great grief in a strange land.

#### V. 11, I was "bountiful and beloved" !!

These words would sound ironic to Jews. However, in other parts of his empire, he was regarded as a benefactor.

#### V. 12-13, Evils at Jerusalem . . . for this cause

Remember, this speech is composed for Antiochus by our editor. It reflects the **editor's** viewpoint.

It is a pious fantasy, but rather restrained -- we will see -- when compared to the pious fancies of 2 Maccabees.

#### Final Acts, Death, Aftermath

**6:14-17.** Then called he for **Philip**, one of his Friends, **whom he made ruler over all his realm**, <sup>15</sup> And gave him the crown, and his robe, and his signet, to the end he should **bring up his son** Antiochus, and nourish him up for the kingdom. <sup>16</sup> So king Antiochus died there in the **hundred forty and ninth year**. <sup>17</sup> Now when Lysias knew that the king was dead, he set up **Antiochus** his son, whom he had brought up being young, to reign in his stead, and his name he called **Eupator**.

#### V. 14. Philip. "whom he made ruler over all his realm!" "and bring up his son"

What about Lysias? He had been second in command, and given charge of the son of Antiochus!

Doran notes there was chaos at his death; our author puts the blame for the chaos on Antiochus' contradictory orders.

#### V. 16, 149<sup>th</sup> Year (of the Greeks).

There appears to be two different ways of calculating this year. The note to the NAB / NABRE is as follows:

The one hundred and forty-ninth year: September 22, 164, to October 9, 163 B.C. **A Babylonian list of the Seleucid kings indicates that Antiochus died in November or early December of 164**, about the same time as the rededication of the Temple.<sup>4</sup> [I.e., just before what would become the feast of Hanukkah.]

#### V. 17, Antiochus V, Eupator. The epithet "Eupator" means "born of a noble sire."

He was about 9 years old. Lysias governed in his name.

Both were put to death two years later, when Demetrius, brother of Antiochus IV, arrived to claim the kingship; cf. 7:1-3.<sup>5</sup>

### Week 37, Lecture 118. The Death of Antiochus, Version 2. 2 Macc 9:1-29

**Structural Analysis.** I am following Doran.<sup>6</sup>

Antiochus Hears of Nicanor's Defeat	9:1-4
The Punishment of Antiochus	9:5-12
The Repentance of Antiochus	9:13-27
The Death of Antiochus	9:28-29

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<sup>4</sup> NAB / NABRE note to 1 Macc 6:16.

<sup>5</sup> NAB / NABRE note to 1 Macc 6:17.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Doran, "The Second Book of Maccabees," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 253-255. The paragraphing is often reflected in contemporary translations, e.g., RSV, NRSV, NAB, NABRE.

### Antiochus Hears of Nicanor's Defeat.

**9:1-4.** About that time Antiochus came with dishonor out of the country of Persia <sup>2</sup> For he had entered the city called **Persepolis**, and went about to rob the temple, and to hold the city; whereupon the multitude running to defend themselves with their weapons put them to flight; and so it happened, that Antiochus being put to flight by the inhabitants returned with shame. <sup>3</sup> Now when he came to Ecbatana, news was brought him what had happened unto Nicanor and Timothy. <sup>4</sup> Then swelling with anger he thought to avenge upon the Jews the disgrace done unto him by those that made him flee. Therefore he commanded his charioteer to drive without stopping to complete the journey, but the judgment of God was now upon him. For he had spoken proudly thus: That he would come to Jerusalem and make it a common burying place of the Jews.

**V. 4. Persepolis.** 1 Maccabees 6 gives the city as Elymais. Theme: pride comes before a fall!

### The Punishment of Antiochus

**9:5-12.** But the All-Seeing Lord, the God of Israel, smote him with an incurable and invisible plague: for as soon as he had spoken these words, a pain of the bowels that was remediless came upon him, and sore torments of the inner parts; <sup>6</sup> And that most justly: for he had tormented other men's bowels with many and strange torments. <sup>7</sup> However he in no way ceased from his bragging, but still was filled with pride, breathing out fire in his rage against the Jews, and commanding to hasten the journey: but it came to pass that he fell down from his chariot, "with a whoosh"; so that having a sore fall, all the members of his body were much pained. <sup>8</sup> And thus he who a little while before thought he might command the waves of the sea, (so proud was he beyond the condition of man) and weigh the high mountains in a balance, was now cast on the ground, and carried on a litter, showing forth to all the manifest power of God. <sup>9</sup> So that **worms** rose up out of the body of this wicked man, and as he lived in sorrow and pain, his flesh fell away, and the filthiness of his **smell** was noisome to all his army. <sup>10</sup> And the man, who thought a little before he could reach to the stars of heaven, no man could endure to carry because of his intolerable **stench**. <sup>11</sup> Here therefore, being plagued, he began to leave off his great pride, and to come to the knowledge of himself by the scourge of God, his pain increasing every moment. <sup>12</sup> And when he himself could not abide his own smell, he said these words, It is meet to be subject to God, and that a man that is mortal should not proudly think of himself if he were God.

**Think of himself as God.** His epithet, Epiphanes, means "A Manifestation (of God)"

**Lengthy Graphic Description.** I thought of summarizing this.

But like the sufferings of the martyrs, the literary effect comes from the piling up of words.

**V. 5. All-Seeing Lord.** Brenton's translation is "Almighty" Lord.

I expected the Greek to say *panto-krator*. However it is **pan-ep-optēs** literally "**looking** upon **all**." RSV, NRSV, NAB, NABRE, NJB all render this as "all-seeing."

**Vv. 9-10, Worms and Stench.** These are a typical literary topoi for the death of a wicked person.

In the NT Herod (Acts 12) one of the Herods suffers a similar fate.

Christian legend will apply the same worms and stench to Judas. We find this in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century author Papias.

**Papias.** Judas walked about in this world a sad example of impiety; for his body having swollen to such an extent that he could not pass where a chariot could pass easily, he was crushed by the chariot, so that his bowels gushed out. . . . Judas's eyes were so swollen that they could not be seen, even by the optical instruments of physicians; and that the rest of his body was covered with runnings and worms. He further states, that he died in a solitary spot, which was left desolate until this time; and no one could pass the place without stopping up his nose with his hands.<sup>7</sup>

### The Repentance of Antiochus.

**9:13-27.** This wicked person vowed also unto the Lord, **who now no more would have mercy** upon him, saying thus, <sup>14</sup> That the holy city (to the which he was going in haste to lay it even with the ground, and to make it a common burying place,) he would set at liberty: <sup>15</sup> And concerning the Jews,

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<sup>7</sup> Papias, "Fragments of Papias," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 153. Accessed via *Logos*.

whom he had judged not worthy so much as to be buried, but to be cast out with their children to be devoured by the fowls and wild beasts, he would make them all equals to the **citizens of Athens**:<sup>16</sup> And the **holy temple**, which before he had robbed, he would **garnish with goodly gifts**, and restore all the holy vessels with many more, and out of his own revenue defray the charges belonging to the sacrifices:<sup>17</sup> Yea, and that also **he would become a Jew himself**, and go through all the world that was inhabited, and declare the power of God.<sup>18</sup> But for all this his pains would not cease: for the just judgment of God was come upon him: therefore despairing of his health, he wrote unto the Jews the letter underwritten, containing the form of a supplication, after this manner:

**The Promises of Antiochus.** Being “equals to citizens of Athens” is obscure. Athens was not part of his empire. Gifts for the Temple is plausible. This was the earlier Seleucid policy under Antiochus III.

**V. 17, He would become become a Jew!!!** This is totally implausible.

Collins calls it “wish fulfillment,” and compares it to the (legendary) conversion of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. He has some additional interesting observations:

The story reflects the widespread fantasy of Jews . . . that their rulers would convert . . . This fantasy is nationalistic in a sense, but it is not separatist. It envisages the conversion of the Gentiles, not their destruction. The ability to fantasize the conversion even of Antiochus Epiphanes testifies to a stubbornly optimistic attitude toward the gentile world, despite all that had transpired.<sup>8</sup>

**V. 13. No more mercy.** The narrator takes delight in the fact that the Lord has no mercy on Antiochus.

**A Letter.**<sup>19</sup>To the esteemed Jewish citizens: much joy, health, and prosperity [from] Antiochus, king and governor.<sup>20</sup> If you and your children are doing well, and your affairs are as you wish, I give very great thanks to God, having my hope in heaven.<sup>21</sup> As for me, I was weak, or else I would have remembered kindly your honor and good will as I was returning out of Persia, and being taken with a grievous disease, I thought it necessary to care for the common safety of all:<sup>22</sup> Not distrusting my health, but having great hope to escape this sickness,<sup>23</sup> But considering that even my father, at the time he led an army into the high countries, appointed a successor,<sup>24</sup> so that, if anything unexpected came up, or if there was any bad news, the people throughout the land, knowing to whom the state was left, might not be troubled:<sup>25</sup> In addition to this, considering that the princes on the borders who are neighbors to my kingdom are watching for opportunities, and awaiting what will come to pass, I have appointed my son Antiochus king. I often committed and commended him to many of you when I went up into the high provinces; so I am writing to you as follows:<sup>26</sup> Therefore I pray and request you to remember the benefits that I have done unto you publicly and privately, and that every man will maintain good will toward me and my son.<sup>27</sup> For I am persuaded that, understanding my mind, he will considerably yield to your desires philanthropically.

**Unusual beginning.** Most ancient letters begin with the name of the **sender**. This one begins with the **recipients!** Scholars debate whether or not the letter is genuine.

It is possible that a genuine letter from another context has been inserted into 2 Maccabees at this point. It’s main purpose is to assure that he 9-year old son, also named Antiochus, will reign after him.

### Comments from Collins

The letter . . . makes no mention of his proposed conversion to Judaism and can scarcely be described as a supplication [see v. 18, PJM]. . . . Antiochus repeatedly refers to his benevolent policy toward the Jews . . . From a Jewish point of view this attitude is highly ironic, and the letter can scarcely have been composed for its present context. . . . [I]t is a least plausible from the king’s point of view. It involves no apology for his conduct toward the Jews, and seems to suppose that he has acted in their best interests.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees*, Old Testament Message, vol. 15 (Michael Glazier, 1981), p. 323-324.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

**Comments on the Letter.** This letter was certainly not addressed to the Maccabees and their allies! Perhaps he was aware / was hoping that a substantial portion the population -- or the elite? -- disagreed with them.

### The Death of Antiochus

**9:28-29.** Thus the murderer and blasphemer having suffered most grievously, as he treated others, so he died a miserable death in a strange country in the mountains. <sup>29</sup> And Philip, who had been brought up with him, carried away his body, and since he also feared the son of Antiochus, he went into Egypt to Ptolemy Philometor.

After the extensive treatment of his torments and futile repentance, finally his death itself is briefly narrated.

## Week 37, Lecture 119. The Death of Antiochus, Version 3. 2 Macc 1:10-17

**Context: 2 letters prefixed to 2 Maccabees.** <sup>10</sup> Both are addressed to Jews of Alexandria, Egypt 2 Macc 1:1-9, The “First” Letter. This letter appears first in the text, but it was written later than the second letter.

It’s date puts it at 124 B.C. We will deal with it later in the course.

2 Macc 1:10-2:18, The “Second” Letter. This letter contains a description of the death of Antiochus.

It appears to be from the lifetime of Judas (between 164 and 160).

The letters appear to be added to the “epitome” sometime after 124 B.C.

“Epitome:” Recall that 2 Maccabees is a *Reader’- Digest* version of a 6 volume work by Jason of Cyrene.

### Overview of the “Second” Letter. (second in the text; not second chronologically)

Scholars debate the authenticity of this letter. After discussing the problems, Doran summarizes:

The most likely solution is that this letter was not written by Judas and his followers, but is an attempt by some later writer to show that two well-known Jewish contemporaries, Judas Maccabeus and Aristobulus, had dealings with each other. <sup>11</sup>

### Analogy: Letters of Paul & Seneca

Christianity became accepted in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Christians then wondered why there was no reference to them in first-century Roman writers.

A 4<sup>th</sup> century forgery purports to be correspondence between Paul & one of the greatest Roman philosophers.

The purpose of the forgery was to give Christianity more “intellectual respectability.”

The letter to Aristobulus is increase the prestige of Judas Maccabeus.

### Structure of the “Second” Letter

1:10-17, The Letter to Aristobulus – This lecture will focus on these verses

1:10-12, Introductory Matters

1:13-16, Death of Antiochus

1:17 Editorial Comment

1:18-2:18, The Holiness of the Jerusalem Temple. I will deal with these verses in a later lecture.

**Introductory Matters, 1:10-12.** ~~In the one hundred eighty eighth year,~~ The people in Jerusalem and those in Judea, and the council, and Judas, to Aristobulus, King Ptolemy’s teacher, who is of the stock of the anointed priests, and to the Jews in Egypt: Greetings and health! <sup>11</sup> Insomuch as God has delivered us from great perils, we thank him highly, as having been in battle against a king. <sup>12</sup> For he cast them out that fought within **the holy city**.

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Doran, “The Second Book of Maccabees,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 253-255.

<sup>11</sup> Doran, “ Second Maccabees,” *NI B*, 4, 191.

### V. 10, 188<sup>th</sup> year = 124 B.C.

There is a problem with the verse division of the Greek. Many Bibles put the 188<sup>th</sup> year with verse 9. Even those translations that put it with verse ten agree that it dates the **previous** letter, not this one.

**V. 11, The Holy City.** This is a summary statement about God's protection of Jerusalem.

**Death of Antiochus, 1:13-16.** For when the leader was come into Persia, and the army with him that seemed invincible, they were slain in the temple of Nanea by the deception of Nanea's priests. <sup>14</sup> For Antiochus, as though he would marry her, came into the place, and his friends that were with him, to receive money in name of a dowry. <sup>15</sup> Which when the priests of Nanea had set forth, and he was entered with a small company into the compass of the temple, they shut the temple as soon as Antiochus was come in: <sup>16</sup> And opening a privy door of the roof, they threw stones like thunderbolts, and struck down the captain, hewed them in pieces, smote off their heads and cast them to those that were outside.

**Divine Marriage.** According to Doran, the marriage of king to a goddess was an ancient ritual.<sup>12</sup>

### Historical Remarks.

In fact, Antiochus IV did not die inside a Temple according to pagan sources, or 1 Maccabees 6 or 2 Maccabees 9. This passage cannot be from the same author who wrote the rest of the book.

### Confusion with Antiochus III.

Diodorus Siculus reports that Antiochus III died shortly after raiding a temple at Elymais. Justin, however reports that he died with his entourage inside the temple.<sup>13</sup>

**Final Editorial Comment, 1:17.** Blessed be our God in all things, who hath delivered up the ungodly.

**Daniel 11:40-45.** An unfulfilled prophecy.

This passage predicts war between the king of the north (Antiochus) and the king of the south (Ptolemy of Egypt). Antiochus will pass through "the glorious land" (Israel, v. 41), and many fall before him. After his victory in Egypt, on his way home he will camp near "the glorious mountain" (mount Zion, v. 45a). He will die there "with no one to help him" (45 b).

### Remarks from Collins

Since Daniel supposedly lived before all these events, he can provide a very accurate "prediction" after the fact. The reader can verify that all these things [in the first part of Daniel 11] happened in sequence, down to the career of Antiochus Epiphanes. The assumption is built up that the rest will happen too, and will happen soon. This device is undoubtedly a pious fraud . . . The prophecy must be judged by the kind of action it supported rather than by its authenticity. We may note, incidentally that because of the accurate prophecy after the fact, we can tell at what point the book of Daniel was written, since beyond a certain point the "predictions" are no longer fulfilled (from 11:40 on).<sup>14</sup>

**Final Remarks. Sometimes** I long for the days of my youth when my approach was more naïve.

As a college seminarian I often took many scriptural (and theological) statements "at face value."

Things are more complicated than I had suspected!

I am convinced that ultimately the most important thing is the search for truth, where ever it leads!

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<sup>12</sup> Doran, "Second Maccabees," 193.

<sup>13</sup> Doran (ibid.) gives the references as: Diodorus Siculus 29.15; Justin, *Epitome*, 32.2.1-2. I have not checked them.

<sup>14</sup> Collins, *Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees*, 05.