



Part 16: Big Macc Attack

Word ALIVE



A "Non-Prophet" Organization



Background Notes -

PURPOSE: To present the last piece of history in the Old Testament in the books of Maccabees, and the book of Daniel, a name which means "my judge is God"; also to present the conflict between the religion of the Jews and the paganism of their rulers.

AUTHOR: A Jewish historian in Alexandria wrote the Maccabees; Daniel was written mostly in Hebrew with additions by a Greek speaking Jew (like the stories of Susana and Bel and the Dragon).

DATE: In 331 BC Alexander the Great conquers the Persians. He then divides his empire between his four generals, who take turns governing Palestine (Ptolemies in the 3rd century BC, Seleucids in the 2nd), held somewhat at bay by the Maccabean resistance.

STYLE: While the books of Maccabees are historical (told, as all biblical history, from a religious point of view), the book of Daniel combines history, prophecy, and parable. Like Zechariah, Daniel also contains strong apocalyptic writings, using past events in a symbolic way to prophesy the future, the Messiah, and a time of judgment found again in the book of Revelation.



Opening Quotes -

“It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends. They come to destroy us and our wives and children, and to despoil us, but we fight for our lives and our laws.” 1Mac 3:18

“A terrible oppression began in Israel; there had been nothing like it since the disappearance of prophecy among them.” 1Mac 9:27

“Anyone with zeal for the Law (of Moses) follow me!” 1Mac 2:27

“Seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king under torture... ‘We are ready to die rather than transgress the law of our ancestors.’” 2Mac 6:1

“It was not I who gave you life and breath. The Creator will in his mercy give life and breath back to you since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.” 2Mac 7:23

“If he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore, he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.” 2Mac 12:44

“[The Prophet] Jeremiah stretched out his right hand and gave Judas a golden sword.” 2Mac 15:15

“You are commanded to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.” Dan 3:5

“Of those who are sleeping in the Land of the Dust, many will awaken.” Dan 12:2

the BIG PICTURE		→ : LAW, History, Writings, Prophets		→ : key covenants in our Father's plan	
12 Periods ▼	Plot ▼	Other books related to period ▼		stories in each period ▼	
BC	🌐 THE BEGINNINGS	GN 1-11	Ps 8, 104	Creation, Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah's ark, Tower of Babel	
1850	👤 THE PATRIARCHS	GN 12-50		Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Melchizedek	
1250	⚠️ EXODUS FROM EGYPT	EX		Moses, the burning bush, the plagues, passover, exodus	
1200	♣️ JOURNEY TO CANAAN	NM, Jos	LV, DT	Sinai desert, 10 commandments, Levites, Law, Joshua	
1100	👤 THE JUDGE CYCLE	Jg	Ruth	12 tribes, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel	
1030	👤 KINGS & PROPHETS	1 & 2 S	1 Ch, Ps, Prov	Saul, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, the Temple	
1000	👤 THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	1 Kg	2 Ch, Prov,	Israel (N), Judah (S), Elijah & Elisha, Isaiah, Assyrian exile	
721 587	👤 BABYLONIAN EXILE	2 Kg	2 Ch, Tob, Hos, Am, Hab, Is, Jer, Lam, Jl, Mic, Zp, Jon, Nah, Ob, Ez, Dan, Bar	Babylonians, "major" prophets, Isaiah (to Israel), Jeremiah (to Jerusalem), Ezekiel (to the Exiles)	
538	👤 THE RESTORATION	Ezr, Neh	Est, Judith, Hag, Zech, Mal, Job, Ecc, Songs	Cyrus, 2nd temple, 2nd Law, "minor" prophets, new writings	
163 63	👤 THE REPURIFICATION	1 Mac	Dn, 2Mac, Sirach, Wisdom	Greeks, Maccabean revolt, Hasmonean Dynasty, Romans, Jewish sects (Pharisees, Saducees, Zealots, Essenes)	
AD	👤 JESUS CHRIST	LK	MT, MK, JN	Incarnation, Good News, New Law, Cross & Resurrection	
33 70	👤 APOSTOLIC CHURCH	Acts	Rm, 1&2Co, Ga, Ep, Phil, Col, 1&2Th, 1&2 Tm, Ti, Phm, Hb, Ja, 1P, 2P, 1,2&3J, Jd, Rv	Pentecost, council, journeys, epistles, Body/Bride of Christ	



The Story of Part 16: The Big Macc Attack



We left the Israelites at the point where there were three Jewish populations: one in Egypt, one in Babylon, and now one in Judah, where the deuteronomic reforms took place. It was a momentary time of Jewish peace, until the arrival of Alexander the Great! His defeat of King Darius marked the end of the Persian empire and the beginning of the Greek Empire.

One positive outcome was the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek (the Septuagint). But a negative outcome was that some Jews openly accepted hellenization, the new Greek culture, and abandoned the holy covenant, submitting themselves to gentile rule, while others remained faithful to Yahweh (and were executed for it). This brought great shame to Israel.

One day when a Jew publicly sacrificed to the Greek idols, Mattathias, a descendant of the high priests of Jerusalem, killed the Jew and the king's commissioner. The Maccabean revolt began. The Greeks were formidable enemies, using elephants, battering-rams, catapults, and crossbows. Nevertheless, the Maccabees won many of their battles even though outnumbered. They purified the temple and rededicated it to Yahweh on December 25, 164 BC, exactly three years after the altar was profaned by worship to Zeus. They took down the stones of the altar hoping that some day a prophet would appear and guide them.

Judas Maccabeus, son of Mattathias, had heard of how the distant Roman Empire had once held some Greek kings hostage, so he journeyed to Rome and made a treaty between the Jews and the Romans (an unthinkable alliance a couple of centuries later which no doubt contributed to the Jews' decision to reject the Greek Scriptures in favor of the Hebrew). After Maccabeus returned, however, the Greek King Demetrius launched an attack which took many casualties, including the great Judas Maccabeus himself.

What ensued was a constant struggle between the Jews and the Greeks. The Maccabean sons, Jonathan, Simon, John Hyrcanus, and the rest of the Jews, found themselves sandwiched between the Greek factions fighting for control: the Ptolemies to their west in Egypt, and the Seleucids to their east in Syria. Peace came and went as control alternated between the Ptolemies, the Seleucids and the Maccabees. After years of resistance, the Greeks were finally out of Jerusalem, and the Jews became the Hasmonean Dynasty, a political nation which would grow almost as large as Israel was in the times of the great King David.

The enigmatic Book of Daniel begins with Daniel as a young Hebrew brought to King Nebuchadnezzar during the days of Babylonian rule. Like Joseph in Genesis, soothsayers and magicians were unable to interpret the king's dream. In this dream a statue of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay was smashed into dust by an "untouched rock" which in turn became a mountain.

Daniel interpreted the four metals to mean the kingdoms that would rule the land, and the untouched rock as the kingdom of God which would ultimately reign forever, a messianic kingdom built upon this rock which the builders themselves would reject.

In the next episode, Daniel and his friends, faithful to Yahweh, refused to obey the king's order to worship his golden idol. They were thrown into a fire, but an angel brought a cool breeze which blew the fire onto their captors, sparing the brave Hebrews who were ready to die before betraying Yahweh.

The next part of the story deals with Daniel's exploits under Belshazzar, allegorical son of King Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar was holding a banquet using gold and silver vessels stolen from the Temple in Jerusalem. A hand appeared and began writing on the wall. Only Daniel could interpret the writing: Nebuchadnezzar was given his power by God, not by his own doing, and lost his kingdom, and Belshazzar, unwilling to humble his heart, would meet the same fate at the hands of the Medes and the Persians.

In the next episode Daniel was dealing with King Darius the Mede who issued a decree that no one could worship any one other than the king. When the Medes caught Daniel praying to Yahweh, they had him thrown to the lions. Yahweh was with Daniel and sealed the lions' mouths shut.

Daniel then had this dream: four beasts came out of the sea, with thrones being set up for judges, and a book opened up. The beasts were the kingdoms which would rule the Jews. After judgment was passed, the beasts were deprived of their kingdoms, and rule was handed over to the "Son of Man" who would establish a kingdom that would never pass away.

Daniel then envisioned a ram (Persian King Cyrus) butting everyone around in the land until a he-goat (Alexander the Great) struck the ram, breaking its horn into four horns (the Greek factions). The Angel Gabriel interpreted Daniel's vision to mean a day of retribution for the largest of the horns (Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Greek King whose imposition of hellenization incited the Maccabean revolt). Gabriel then explained that the time had come to rebuild Jerusalem and wait for the Anointed Prince.

His next vision was the end times, in which there would arise a great Defender of the people. Many would arise from the "land of dust", some to shame and disgrace, others to a heavenly grace. The angel then explained that all this was to be kept secret in the sealed book until the time of the end, a time when wickedness would increase and many would have to be purified.

The Greek translation of Daniel adds the stories of Susanna and Bel and the Dragon, two stories where evil is again exposed and defeated in the end. 📖



Defending the Faith: Indulgences and Purgatory

"Forgiveness cannot be sold or earned through indulgences. Christ's death was enough to atone for all our sins. We cannot add anything to his sufferings. Purgatory and indulges are not scriptural."

Contrary to what most articles say, Purgatory and indulgences have nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins. Before defining what these really are, we need to differentiate between guilt and temporal punishment.

Sin is an offense to God, which is why the sinner has guilt. His relationship with God is broken. But sin also has side effects: the need to make amends and the tendency to sin again. I can say I'm sorry for stealing, but I still must return what I stole. I can apologize for lying, but I still must tell the truth. Sometimes satisfactory temporal punishment is not obvious. How do you return the life of a murder victim, or undo an act of adultery? We are also familiar with the desire to repeat a sin after committing it that first time. Notice, then, the difference between the guilt of a sin and its temporal punishment. (See 2 Sam 12:14)

But didn't Christ's death atone for all of our sins? For the guilt, yes, but not for the temporal punishment. But because of his death, we can now join our suffering to his, for the sake of building up his kingdom (Col 1:24). This is the key to understanding penance, which not only helps make amends, but also helps us avoid future sins (See 1 Cor 9:27). What about indulgences? First a little more on penance.

When Christ gave his apostles the power to forgive sins, he also gave them the power of "binding and loosing." In 2 Corinthians 2:5-10, Paul orders an incestuous man to be excluded from the company of the faithful. Judging that the man has truly repented, he says "this rebuke is sufficient," and tells the Church in Corinth, "To whom you have pardoned anything, I also. For what I have pardoned, if anything, I have done for your sakes in the person of Christ." Notice that the apostle binds and looses the man from temporal punishment, and then forgives his sin. By the authority of Christ in Paul, the sinner is reconciled (no more

guilt), and the penance is loosed (no more temporal punishment). Here we already have the essentials of an indulgence. Now a bit of history.

Over the centuries, confession became less public and more private, and absolution (forgiveness) began being given *before* the penance was finished. This is what happens today in Confession. A penitent walks out of the confessional free of guilt, before doing any penance. The penance is only there to help make amends and to help avoid the sin again. If for some reason the person cannot make amends, or if the tendency to sin still remains, *the sin is still forgiven!*

So what happens if a person dies free of guilt (reconciled), but without having made amends, or still attached to sin? In other words, what if a person dies with unsatisfied temporal punishment? That's where Purgatory and indulgences come in.

A soul cannot enter heaven until it is perfected (Heb 12:23). As much as we would like to think that this is automatic and painless when we die, Paul tells us that on the day of judgment each man's work will be tested, and that some will be saved as through fire (1 Cor 3:15). This is obviously not hell, for the soul is saved. It is a temporary *purging* (hence "Purgatory").

Indulgences, now properly understood as "the remission of temporal punishment of sins *already forgiven*," are gained by good works, and not just for ourselves, but also on behalf of the faithfully departed. A biblical precedent to this is found in 2 Maccabees 12:46, where alms were offered on behalf of the dead. It is a tragic fact that indulgences were a source of scandal which led to the Reformation. But the abuse does not take away the proper use. Christ left us a merciful means to make the road to heaven (secured by forgiveness!) less painful for ourselves and our loved ones through our prayer and sacrifice.



Expressing the Faith: Writings on the Wall

Eli uses Daniel's prophecies which warn Nebuchadnezzar (and us) against putting anything above God.

*This is not a rebel song but I am bleeding.
He said "I crawled on hands and knees
Pushed my way through brush and tree"
But a deaf man sees what he wants to see
While he is reading.*

*Six o'clock and all is well tonight
I saw a horseman – he was bloodied from the fight
He read from pages as he tried to warn us all
He gave up and left the writings on the wall.*

*So we gathered round the square, multitudes of empty stares
Well we couldn't admit that we were scared of his revelation
So we came in from the cold ignoring what we had been told
Reaping what we shouldn't have sown, like devastation.
(Chorus)*

*So upon us comes the siege, so much smoke it's hard to see
Well someone call the cavalry – it's too late, we're choking.
Well it comes as no surprise, that horseman wasn't telling lies
But we all chose to criticize. Well, he wasn't joking.
(Chorus)*

↗ **Next time: "The Fullness of Time"** ↖