



The Great Menorah in Jerusalem

BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

A Protestant looks at the Apocrypha

by

James T. Reuteler, Ph.D.
Covenant Bible Studies
Aurora, Colorado

APOCRYPHA TIME LINE

Christian Scriptures

Revelation

95 C.E.

2 Esdras

Fall of Jerusalem
Jesus' Death
and Resurrection

70 C.E.

33 C.E.

3 and 4 Maccabees
2 Maccabees
1 Maccabees
Final form
of Greek Esther

After 100 B.C.E.
114 -100 B.C.E.

Daniel

165-150 B.C.E.

Judith

196-185 B.C.E.
220-200 B.C.E.

Sirach
Wisdom of Solomon

Chronicles

Ecclesiastes

350-200 B.C.E.

3rd Century B.C.E.

Tobit

300-200 B.C.E.

Baruch

Hebrew Esther
350-125 B.C.E.

320-306 B.C.E.

Letter of Jeremiah

Return from Exile

538/539 B.C.E.

Fall of Jerusalem

586/587 B.C.E.

Hebrew Scriptures

Apocrypha

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STUDY SCHEDULE

THE APOCRYPHA

An In-Depth Course on the Apocrypha

TOBIT

1. Tobit I (1:1—6:17)
2. Tobit II (7:1—14:15)

JUDITH

3. Judith I (1:1—7:32)
4. Judith II (8:1—16:25)

ESTHER

5. Esther (8 Chapters)

WISDOM OF SOLOMON

6. Wisdom of Solomon I (1:1—9:18)
7. Wisdom of Solomon II (10:1—19:22)

SIRACH (ECCLESIASTICUS)

8. Sirach I (1:1—10:5)
9. Sirach II (10:6—23:27)
10. Sirach III (24:1—36:22)
11. Sirach IV (36:22—42:14)
12. Sirach V (42:15—51:30)

BARUCH AND THE LETTER OF JEREMIAH

13. Baruch (1:1—5:9); Letter of Jeremiah (6:1-73)

AZARIAH, SUSANNA, BEL AND THE DRAGON, AND MANASSEH

14. Azariah, Susanna, Bel & the Dragon, Manasseh

1 AND 2 MACCABEES

15. 1 Maccabees I (1:1—8:32)
16. 1 Maccabees II (9:1—12:53)
17. 1 Maccabees III (13:1—16:24)

18. 2 Maccabees I (1:1—7:42)
19. 2 Maccabees II (8:1—15:39)

1 ESDRA

20. 1 Esdras (1:1—9:55)

3 MACCABEES

21. 3 Maccabees (1:1—7:23)

2 ESDRAS

22. 2 Esdras I (1:1—6:34)
23. 2 Esdras II (6:35—16:78)

4 MACCABEES

24. 4 Maccabees (1:1—7:23)
25. 4 Maccabees (8:1—14:10)
26. 4 Maccabees (14:11—18:24) and Psalm 151

COVENANT BIBLE STUDY

Background

Having majored in the Humanities in College (which had a good dose of Religion and Bible Courses), Systematic Theology and New Testament in Seminary, and Social Ethics and Missiology in Graduate School, I expected to emerge Biblically literate. I was wrong.

One day in my office, I came to the realization that I was Biblically illiterate, after I had earned a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Divinity, and a Ph.D. The first step to becoming Biblically literate is to confess that you are Biblically illiterate. That is precisely what I did in the summer of 1979. My first step out of illiteracy was to read the Bible for an hour each morning before I began my workday, but I found that lonely and unsatisfying.

This led me to a second step that changed me, and my ministry forever. It also enabled me to see how little the Church knows about the Book it claims as its source for faith and morality. The tragic thing is that most people do not recognize that they are Biblically illiterate, and so they go on quoting Scripture as though they know what they are talking about. In my second step I invited members of my congregation to join me in the study of Scripture on Sunday evenings. I was not sure what I was going to do, but I knew that I had to do something. About a dozen parishioners were willing to confess that they were also Biblically illiterate, and so we entered into a Covenant to study the Bible every Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m. It took us six years to study from Genesis through Revelation, taking a major section each year. Below is a list of the way in which we proceeded:

- The Books of Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy)
- The Books of History (Joshua through Esther)
- The Books of Wisdom (Job through the Song of Solomon)
- The Books of Prophecy (Isaiah through Malachi)
- The Gospels and Acts
- The Letters and Revelation
- The Apocrypha

The most difficult part was not working through all those laws, but through one hundred and fifty Psalms. By the time we finished there were two groups meeting with me. The second group met on Thursday mornings at 9:30 a.m. As both groups reflected on our ordeal through the Psalms, we decided not to do that again. There had to be a better way.

Not yet realizing what that better way might be, I moved to another congregation, where I started four groups, the two new ones meeting on Sunday night at 7:30 p.m., following the 6:00 p.m. group, and another one on Wednesday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. As we began our journey through the Bible, some of the participants suggested studying the Apocrypha as well. That gave me an idea. I included the Apocrypha with the Wisdom Books, and began using a Psalm as a meditation prior to beginning each session. Occasionally, I

selected a Psalm to fit what we were studying; but at other times, I just used the Psalm for the week.

In spite of our difficulty with the Psalms, I still believe in studying the Bible just the way it is written. After we have done that, we may begin to explore its themes and topics, but not before. We must first do our homework. This holds for youth as well as for adults. The following reason was given in the October, 1985 issue of *The Christian Herald*:

For teens, studies of Bible books are preferable to studies of topics. Teenagers accustomed to only thematic Bible Studies may find themselves and their friends in a vulnerable and dangerous spot when they get to college. Cults that focus on reaching college students use topical-style Bible studies that select verses throughout the Bible to “prove” their false doctrines. A solid foundation in Bible-book studies will help young people not to be taken in by cultic teachings. Studies on topics are helpful after a group has done a number of Bible-book studies.

The difficulty with Bible Study in the manner that I am proposing is the tendency to get bogged down, or to spend too much time on a few passages. I would like to suggest that you keep moving. That is why I have broken each book into a number of lessons. You should move on, even if you have not finished your discussion. All this assumes, of course, that you are studying with other people, which I believe to be an absolute necessity. Very few people continue studying the Bible on a regular basis without the discipline of meeting with others. This is necessary because others contribute to your understanding and they keep you honest about your conclusions.

Methodology

At first I called what I was doing *In-depth Bible Study*, but after proceeding through the Bible three times, I decided to change the name to *Covenant Bible Study*. My goal had been to take six to twelve chapters in an hour or hour and one-half session. I liked the longer sessions better, but I am aware of the contemporary expectation to finish everything within an hour. Covering that much material in such a short time can hardly be called dealing with it in depth. My goal was however to get the stories or passages on the table, answer questions about them, and apply them to modern life. This required a Covenant between pastor and people. We covered each major section in nine months, meeting around thirty times in the course of that time. I am not worried that we did not spend enough time on a section, for I have found many themes coming up again and again. Our purpose was to study the whole Bible in Covenant together, trying to understand how the various components relate to one another.

One thing I insisted upon from the beginning—everyone has a right to their own opinion without having to fear criticism from anyone in the group. I have also advertised what we were doing in the newspaper, and have managed to pick up people from all kinds of traditions. Their contributions have greatly enriched the Bible Study Groups, keeping us honest about their traditions. Without their presence, we would not have treated their traditions fairly. One tradition that was never represented, although I wish it were, was

modern Judaism. Covenant Bible Study is best done in an Ecumenical context, but that of course, raises some other questions. Does it mean that we are trying to win or convert people of other traditions to our own? My answer has always been, “No!” Their traditions need to be treated with respect, and they are encouraged to stay within their own traditions. The purpose of Covenant Bible Study is to expand our understanding of the whole Bible, and the only way we can do this is to include people of other traditions, without trying to convert them.

Dr. Harrell Beck, from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University suggested some principles I have used. He was addressing a group of pastors at a School for Christian Ministry, and he stressed how important it was to teach the Old Testament to children, believing that it could be done. His methodology was very simple, tell them a story, give them an opportunity to ask questions about the story, and work together on the practical application of that story. This gave me the idea for working with adults.

Summarizing the Material

In a typical session, I make assignments to those who will accept them. Not everyone is willing to accept an assignment, and that is okay. I try to encourage those who are too shy to take on an assignment, that it is okay just to sit there. I keep assignments to one or two chapters. The breakdown of assignments is listed right below the title to every session, and I generally pass a sheet of paper with the breakdown around the table, asking those who would take an assignment to simply write their name down next to the assignment they would like to choose. Their task is to read those one or two chapters more carefully than the rest of the assigned material for a session. When we begin our session, I ask those who have accepted assignments to simply summarize their chapters to the group. They may refer to a few scriptures now and then, but they are not to read everything in class. They are to highlight the story, or if there is no story, the essence of what they have read. They are to recognize that someone else might handle it differently, but that is okay. Their assignment is to get the story or the essence of the material on the table.

There are always some people who, though they are unwilling to take an assignment, are willing to read in class. In the assignments I handle myself, I try to find a verse or two in each section, which summarizes things. I then ask persons, who do not take assignments, to read those verses. In the charts that accompany the Bible Studies, you will *sometimes* find these brief references, which point to the essence of things. These are the portions I ask people to read in class. The first third of our session is dedicated to the above task. We may run over, but our intention is to get the content on the table for further discussion.

Questions and Answers

In the second third, our purpose is to ask questions. This does not mean that I answer all the questions. Sometimes, while I am thinking, someone else answers the question, having discovered it in a Study Bible, or commentary. While I do not encourage everyone to use commentaries, I do encourage the use of a good Study Bible. I have also written

my own commentary, which I pass out in advance to all participants. I did not do this the first year, but I found people wanting to know where I was getting some of my information, and so I decided to pass the material out. Those who accepted assignments seemed to feel more comfortable when they knew what I knew ahead of time. Some people had a tendency to read only my commentary, but I have always told them, “If you do not have enough time to prepare, read the Bible rather than my commentary.” Most people have done that.

Practical Application

The final third of the session has to do with making a practical application of the material that we have studied together. To help people along, I prepare two things: a one page chart of all the material so that they can see it in its entirety, and no more than two pages of my own thoughts on the practical application of what we have studied. These two things seem to be enough to get the discussion moving. All of my materials are made available prior to our meeting. Everyone has them while they are doing their own studying. It is difficult to give enough attention to this final third when you meet for only one hour. This is why I prefer an hour and one-half. As the discussion moves along, it is difficult to stop and there is a tendency to move beyond the allotted time. The group should stop on time. There will always be some people with other commitments. The issues will come up again, and so they should not force you to extend the time of a session.

Leadership

I have found the above method of studying the Bible with groups very rewarding. This method does not need a clergy person. The problem lies in the willingness of other laity to accept a layperson as their leader. Many of the participants in my Bible Studies were competent people, fully able to lead sessions. You do not need an expert to lead you. All you need is a good Study Bible, a couple of good commentaries, and four or five other people willing to enter into a Covenant to study the Bible. It will be helpful to set up some questions for discussion. *The Serendipity Study Bible*, which contains 20,000 questions, will help you; but even without it, you can assign different persons to think up questions on chapters or sections to be studied. You do not have to aim at becoming Bible Scholars. The purpose of Bible Study is not knowledge, but reverence for God and discipleship. Do not be too worried if you cannot remember everything. “Its authors,” wrote Frederick Herzog, “never expected to provide literalistic guidelines for the 20th century. But they did want to communicate the power of God (cf. I Cor. 4:20).”

Among some groups I have found resistance to taking assignments. When I have felt this resistance, I have used a different approach. Instead of asking people to summarize chapters, I have asked them to mark their Bibles in a certain way. The following scheme has been used, and it always inspires much more discussion than time permits:



Mark those verses with a heart that offer special insight into religious experience.



Mark those verses with a lamp or light bulb, which offer special insight or illumination.



Mark those verses with a star, which might be used to give guidance or application to daily living.



Mark those verses with a cross, which are difficult to follow or obey.



Mark those verses with a check, which are important to you, but do not fall under any other categories.



Mark those verses with a question mark that you do not fully understand.

When I ask people to mark their Bibles as discussed above, I begin each session with an introduction and a brief video segment. We then attempt to answer questions, share insights, talk about applications, and discuss how to deal with the difficult passages.

Final Comments

The Use of Videos and DVDs

Two final comments need to be made. The first has to do with the use of video, which can add much to a Bible Study session. I have found a number of videos helpful, but I always limit the amount of video that I might use to less than fifteen minutes. This requires previewing video sources, which is very time consuming; but I think that it is very important to limit the use of video to illustrating relevant points. I am reluctant to list the most helpful videos because new ones are being introduced all the time.

The Need for Balance

My second comment has to do with balance. John Wesley called for that balance when he said, “Let us now unite the two so long divided, knowledge and vital piety.” This is my purpose in Covenant Bible Study. Some will think that I give too much attention to the academic side of things, while others will say that I do not give it enough attention. The attempt to apply what we learn is aimed at vital piety. I think that the two must be held together, but I do not view the Bible as a book of rules. For me, “The Bible,” to quote Luther, “is the manger in which we find Christ, the swaddling clothes in which he is wrapped.” Covenant Bible Study helps us sort through all that straw in the manger to discover the Christ, who reveals God and his Will to us. For those who only want to use the Bible devotionally, I say, “You must first study it, hear what its characters are really saying, and then learn the lessons of history, in which God really is present.” These are the tasks of Covenant Bible Study.

The Purpose of Bible Study

One participant, overwhelmed by the pessimism of the prophets, asked, “Is there anything that we can do to break the vicious cycle of the rise and fall of nations (and individuals)?” I firmly believe that there is something we can do. Our first obligation is to study the Scriptures to find out what they are really saying. We have spent enough time manipulating them to say what we want them to say, New and Old Testaments alike; it is now time to enter into Covenant with one another to study them completely, allowing them to speak to us. That is a task that will take us the rest of our lives, but we can begin the journey now. The second step in this journey is to begin applying the truths we learn from our study. Jesus, in Matthew 7:24-25, told us that we should be building our houses (nations and lives) on solid rock, on foundations that will stand. Not to do this, says Psalm 73:18, would be to set our feet “in slippery places.” The purpose of Covenant Bible Study is to help us find our way back to the God of the Bible and build our lives and nation on the solid rock. In the Scriptures we can discover the steppingstones of history, which will enable us to walk on the waters of faith.

Discovering the Main Points

As I wrote my commentary on the Bible, I wrote a short article, which can be found at the end of each lesson. My purpose in doing this was to focus on what I thought was the main point in each of the lessons. Obviously, there is more than one point; but I thought it might be helpful for someone to look for a theme. That is what I have attempted to do.

Studying the Bible is like looking at the many sides of a diamond. Light comes from unexpected places. I would recommend that everyone in a Bible Study Group look for that which sparkles most and attempt to describe what they see. That is what I am attempting to do here. It is only one person’s opinion, but it is worth doing, even if only for that one person.

Not everyone will feel capable of doing what I have done, but everyone should be able to raise a couple of questions about the section to be studied. If that is all you can do, go with it. You will be surprised at how much you will learn, even by asking questions. Remember how, according to Luke 2:46-47, Mary and Joseph found Jesus, “...sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” As you grow in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, people will be amazed at your questions and answers as well.

My only advice is that my commentary and these articles are not to be studied in place of the Bible. Your textbook should be *the Bible*. If this commentary and these articles can help you understand and apply what you read there, then they will have contributed to their purpose. Just keep in mind that they do not represent the last word on the subject. They are but descriptions of the light shining from the diamond, which is God’s Word as it has been communicated through human authors.

A Covenant for Studying Together

Entering into Covenant to Study the Bible together is one of the most important decisions we can make in our lives, and it requires a special Covenant, which will not be easy to follow. Of all the Covenants I have read concerning studying together, I like the one proposed by Augustine:

Let us, you and I lay aside all arrogance.
Let neither of us pretend to have found the truth.
Let us seek it as something unknown to both of us.
Then we may seek it with love and sincerity
 when neither of us has the rashness nor
 presumption to believe that he (she) already
 possesses it.
And if I am asking too much of you,
 allow me to listen to you at least,
 to talk with you as I do with beings whom,
 for my part,
I do not pretend to understand.

WHAT IS THE APOCRYPHA?

There are 14 or 15 books in the Apocrypha, depending upon how they are counted. All of these books appear in the Latin Vulgate and are accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. These same books appear in the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. I am including four other books, which do not appear in the Latin Vulgate. They are Psalm 151, 3 Maccabees, 2 Esdras, and 4 Maccabees.

The names of the Apocryphal Books are as follows:

1. Tobit (14 Chapters)
2. Judith (16 Chapters)
3. The Additions to the Book of Esther (8 Chapters)
4. The Wisdom of Solomon (19 Chapters)
5. The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus (51 Chapters)
6. Baruch (5 Chapters)
7. The Letter of Jeremiah (Sometimes included in Baruch) (1 Chapter)
8. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men (1 Chapter)
9. Susanna (1 Chapter)
10. Bel and the Dragon (1 Chapter)
11. The First Book of Maccabees (16 Chapters)
12. The Second Book of Maccabees (15 Chapters)
13. The First Book of Esdras (Not declared Scripture) (9 Chapters)
14. The Prayer of Manasseh (Not declared Scripture) (1 Chapter)
15. Psalm 51 (1 Chapter) (Not declared Scripture)
16. The Third Book of Maccabees (Not declared Scripture) (7 Chapters)
17. The Second Book of Esdras (Not declared Scripture) (16 Chapters)
18. The Fourth Book Maccabees (Not declared Scripture) (18 Chapters)

The word *Apocrypha* means “things that are hidden.” This can have a positive or negative connotation. The positive meaning would be that these books were “hidden” from common use because they contained mysterious or esoteric lore, too profound to be communicated to any except the initiated. The negative connotation came from those who rejected them as “spurious or heretical.”

There are other writings from the period, dealing with Jewish and Christian concerns, which are not accepted by Judaism, Roman Catholics, or Protestants. These writings are known as the *Pseudepigrapha*. What Protestants call the *Apocrypha* Roman Catholics call *Deuterocanonical*, which means a “second canon.”

When Were The Apocryphal Books Written?

All of the Apocryphal Books were written some time between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. This is not to say that they all deal with this time period, but they were written within these four centuries, and many of them cover events within this time frame.

The Apocrypha has been called a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. These books introduce us to the Pharisees and Sadducees, the belief in demons and angels, and the affirmation of the future life. None of these things were highly developed in the Old Testament, but we do meet them all in the New Testament. A study of the Apocrypha increases our knowledge of history and culture and provides us with valuable background information on the New Testament.

Is The Apocrypha Scripture?

Although there are some allusions to these books in the New Testament, there are no direct quotations. There are, however, many direct quotations from the other Old Testament Books.

The Greek and Latin Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Cyprian (none of whom knew Hebrew), quoted from the Apocrypha as if it were “Scripture.”

Jerome, who died in 420 B.C.E., translated the Bible into Latin. He noted that some books included in the Greek version of the Old Testament were not written in Hebrew. He suggested that they be read for edification, but not “for confirming the authority of Church dogmas.” While not accepting them as canonical, he did not reject them as heretical.

Because of their inclusion in the Latin Vulgate (Jerome’s Translation of the Bible), the Roman Catholic Church accepted them as Scripture, unaware of their rejection among the Jews at the Council of Jamnia. As time moved on, scholars seemed to forget about Jerome’s notations, and by the Middle Ages most readers of the famous Latin Bible made no distinction between the two classes of books. Many scholars, who were aware of Jerome’s notes, did raise questions and doubts about the disputed books. Some of these were Gregory the Great, Walafriid Strabo, Hugh of St. Victor, Hugh of St. Cher, and Nicholas of Lyra.

The first extensive discussion of the canon from the Protestant point of view came from Wittenberg in 1520, and was written by Andreas Bodenstein, commonly known as Carlstadt, the name of his birthplace. He not only distinguished the Apocryphal books from the Hebrew books, but he also classified the former into two divisions. One group contained Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Judith, Tobit and 1 and 2 Maccabees. Although these are Apocryphal (outside the Hebrew canon), they are holy writings. He suggested: “...before all things the best books must be read, that is, those which are canonical beyond all controversy....” Afterwards, if one has time, these books can be read. The second

group of books, namely 1 and 2 Esdras, Baruch, Prayer of Manasseh, and the Additions to Daniel, Carlstadt declared to be filled with ridiculous puerilities worthy of the censor's ban. They should be rejected.

Protestant theologians began to seriously question the use of the Apocrypha in the establishment of doctrine. Disputes arose especially over the doctrines of Purgatory and the efficacy of prayers and Masses for the dead.

The first Bible to segregate the Apocryphal books from the others was the Dutch Bible published by Jacob van Liesveldt in 1526 at Antwerp. He placed them after Malachi with the following note: "The books which are not in the canon, that is to say, which one does not find among the Jews in the Hebrew."

In Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible in 1534, they were placed between the Old and New Testaments, and given their present title: "Apocrypha, that is, books which are not held equal to the sacred Scriptures, and nevertheless are useful and good to be read."

In reaction to Protestant criticism of the disputed books, on April 8, 1546, the Council of Trent gave them, what is regarded by Roman Catholics, as the first infallible and effectually promulgated declaration on the canon of the Holy Scriptures. The decree pronounces as anathema upon any one who "does not accept as sacred and canonical the aforesaid books in their entirety and with all their parts, as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate Edition." The Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras, though included in some manuscripts of the Vulgate, were denied canonical status by the Council. In the official edition of the Vulgate, published in 1592, these three are printed in an appendix following the New Testament, "lest they should perish altogether." The Vatican Council of 1870 confirmed the Council of Trent Decision.

Along the way some distinctions were made, but most of the theologians in the Eastern Orthodox Church considered these books Scripture. At the Synod of Jerusalem in 1672 C.E., the books of Wisdom, Judith, Tobit, Bel and the Dragon, Susanna, Maccabees, and Ecclesiasticus were designated as canonical.

When John Wyclif produced the first English Bible, he included the disputed books, with the exception of 2 Esdras. In the Prologue to the Old Testament, he made a distinction between the Hebrew books and the others, which he said, "shal be set among apocrifas."

Protestantism has not been united in what to do with the Apocrypha. In the Church of England, the lectionary contained lessons from the Apocrypha. The Puritans, on the other hand, felt uneasy about including within the covers of the Bible anything whose authority was doubted.

George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been one of the translators of the King James Bible, directed in 1615 that no Bibles were to be bound and sold without the

Apocrypha on pain of one year's imprisonment. In spite of that severe penalty, quite a number of printings excluded the Apocrypha. These might have been the work of publishers trying to satisfy a growing demand for a less bulky and less expensive edition of the Bible. Soon it was difficult to obtain an edition of the King James Bible, which contained the Apocrypha.

John Calvin totally rejected the Apocrypha, and the Westminster Confession of 1647 echoes that rejection in the following statement: "The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the canon of Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be in any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings."

Are the Apocryphal books to be considered Scripture? The Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church have accepted them as Scripture. Protestants have not. The Anglican Church has accepted their value for instruction and edification without accepting them as Scripture.

The Value Of The Apocrypha

The Apocrypha has had a tremendous influence in Western culture and literature. Shakespeare, for example, named two of his daughters after two of the chief heroines of the Apocrypha, Susanna and Judith. About 80 passages from 11 books of the Apocrypha have been identified in Shakespeare's plays.

The Christmas Hymn "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" is traceable to the Apocrypha. Nothing is said in the New Testament about the exact time of Jesus' birth. The identification of the hour of his birth as midnight is due to the influence of a passage in the Wisdom of Solomon. (Wisdom 18:14-15) More than one Church father was caught by the vivid reference to the time when God's "all-powerful word [the Logos] leaped from heaven, from the royal throne," namely when "night in its swift course was now half gone."

Christopher Columbus calculated on the basis of the words of 2 Esdras 6:42 that it was possible to cross the Atlantic Ocean. The passage concerns God's work of creation, and says: "On the third day you commanded the waters to be gathered together in a seventh part of the earth; six parts you dried up and kept so that some of them might be planted and cultivated and be of service before you." Columbus reasoned that if only one-seventh of the earth was covered with water, the ocean between the west coast of Europe and the east coast of Asia could be crossed in a few days with a fair wind. He quoted this verse to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, who believed the Bible to be authoritative. This helped him to get them to finance his voyage.

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, there has been a renewed interest in these books, even if they will never be given the status of Scripture within most Protestant traditions. These books do have something to contribute. In trying to present a readable Bible within the Protestant community, E.J. Goodspeed said in his preface:

It has been truly said that no one can have the complete Bible, as a source book for the cultural study of art, literature, history, and religion, without the Apocrypha. From the earliest Christian times down to the age of the King James Version, they belonged to the Bible; and, while modern critical judgments and religious attitudes deny them a position of equality with the Old and New Testament scriptures, historically and culturally they are still an integral part of the Bible.

The Chronology of the Apocrypha

For the most part, I will follow the chronology of the Apocrypha as it appears in the third Edition of The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, with two exceptions. I will place The Prayer of Manasseh after Bel and the Dragon. My purpose in doing so is to deal with The Prayer of Manasseh with Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, The Story of Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon together in one session. Since Psalm 151 was the last to be found, I'm placing it last. In teaching the last session of 4 Maccabees, I would include Psalm 151.

1. KEEPING THE FAITH

Tobit 1:1—6:17

ASSIGNMENTS		
The Piety of Tobit 1:1—2:10	A Quarrel and a Divine Solution 2:11—3:17	Tobias' Journey to Media 4:1—6:17

INTRODUCTION TO TOBIT

The Name

Tobit is the hero of the story. There are variants to the name, but the word “good” is connected to its meaning. One of the variants is defined as “Yahweh is Good,” but since Tobit is his faithful disciple, he too is described as being “good.”

The Author

The author is unknown as is the place of writing. Guesses have been made for an unknown person writing from Jerusalem, Antioch, or Alexandria, but no guesses have been made as to who this person was. We have to conclude that he cannot be identified at the present time.

The Date

The oldest complete copies of *Tobit* are in Greek and they represent three different forms—long form, short form, and mixed form. These copies are from the Fourth and Fifth Centuries C.E. Four fragments of Tobit dating from the first century B.C.E. were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran, three of which were written in Aramaic and one in Hebrew. These fragments affirm the accuracy of the long form and suggest that the original was probably written in Aramaic. The most probable date of writing would be sometime in the Second Century B.C.E.

The Context

The story is set in the time following the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.E., when according to the Annals of Sargon II, 27,290 Israelites were Exiled to Assyria. This story is

described in 2 Kings 17:1-6, but the number of exiles is not given there. We are dependent upon Assyrian records for that.

The Purpose

The purpose of this book is to describe the difficulty of living out the Jewish faith and morality in a pagan land. We learn much about Jewish family life, religious teaching, and morality, even if many of the historical facts are confused. There are too many historical problems to state briefly. Because of these historical problems, many scholars believe this story is fiction.

The Outline

- A. The Genealogy (1:1-2)
- B. Tobit's Account (1:3—3:6)
- C. Sarah's Prayer (3:7-15)
- D. The Sending of Raphael (3:16-17)
- E. Tobias' Journey to Media (4:1—6:17)
- F. The Wedding of Tobias and Sarah (7:1—9:6)
- G. The Return to Nineveh (10:1—12:22)
- H. The Epilogue (13:1—14:15)

THE GENEALOGY (1:1-2)

Tobit's genealogy tells us that he is a member of the tribe of Naphtali, which was located in the northern part of Israel. This is where the context of the story is set. It begins following the Exile of many Israelites into Assyria. Tobit's family came from Thisbe in Naphtali. According to 1:9, Tobit married a woman named Anna and they bore a son whom they named Tobias.

TOBIT'S ACCOUNT (1:3—3:6)

The Piety of Tobit (1:3-27)

The story begins with Tobit's account of how he continued to follow the religion of Jerusalem when Jeroboam I (not named here) moved the northern tribes to worship in Bethel and Dan, where golden calves were placed on altars. Tobit alone continued to follow the faith and traveled frequently to Jerusalem to make his offerings and pay his tithes.

When Tobit arrived in Nineveh, he somehow found favor among the Assyrians and was given the position of "buyer of provisions." This must have been a very responsible position, for it enabled him to handle large sums of money. He once took a trip to Rages in Media and left ten talents of silver (\$10,000), an enormous sum, in trust with Gabael, the brother of Gabrias (1:13-14). The ruins of Rages can be viewed today and are located

about five miles southeast of Teheran, Iran. Media makes up the northern part of modern Iran.

Even in pagan Assyria, Tobit continued to follow Jewish dietary laws (1:10-12), feed the hungry (1:17), give clothing to the naked (1:17), and bury dead Israelites (1:17). Since Jewish Religious practices forbid leaving a dead body for more than a day, burying that body was a virtue to be ranked along side of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. It was dangerous for Tobit to do this openly, so he had to do it in secret. When the bodies were sought by the king and not found, he got into trouble. His property was confiscated and he had to go into hiding. In the Middle Ages Tobit became the patron saint of gravediggers.

A short time passed, described in terms of 40 days, and Sennacherib's sons killed him. This brought on Esarhaddon, his successor, who appointed Ahikar to be second in command. Ahikar was a popular wise man and would have been known by the readers of this story. With Ahikar's intercession Tobit was allowed to return to Nineveh. Ahikar is also named as Tobit's nephew, being the son of his brother Anael.

Tobit Buries Another Body (2:1-7)

Just as Tobit was preparing to eat, he told his son to invite a poor man to join him. When his son went out to find a poor man, he found a man who had been strangled. This means that he had been executed by the government and left exposed as an example to others. Tobit sheltered the body and then, after washing himself, he returned to eat his dinner. After the Sun went down, he dug a grave and buried the body, which would have been a defiant act.

The Law considered anyone who had touched a dead body unclean so, according to Numbers 19:11-13, such a person was to go through ritual washing on the third and seventh days. Touching the dead body of an animal was different and according to Leviticus 11:39-40, only required one washing. Tobit seems to follow the Law for touching a dead animal.

Tobit's Blindness (2:8-10)

Because Tobit had defiled himself by touching the dead body, he slept outside by the wall of the courtyard; since his face was uncovered, a sparrow's droppings fell into his open eyes, creating white films on his eyes. This blinded him and no physician could help him. His nephew Ahikar took care of him until he was transferred to Elymais. Elymais is the Greek form of Elam, which is located east of Babylonia.

A Family Quarrel (2:11-14)

Tobit's wife Anna continued to earn money at "women's work," which might have been "weaving." In addition to her wages, she was once given a "kid." Tobit suspected her of

stealing the kid and a quarrel pursued. She accused him of thinking that he knew everything.

Tobit's Prayer (3:1-6)

In his depression Tobit prayed, recognizing God's justice and mercy and confessing his own sin, including that of his fathers before him. The point of his prayer was to ask God to take his life. In his blindness, he no longer had any reason for living. This ends Tobit's first person account of his virtuous, but unhappy life.

SARAH'S PRAYER (3:7-15)

In Ecbatana, the capital of Median, which is modern Hamadan, located at the foot of Mount Elvend in western Iran Sarah offers a similar prayer to that of Tobit. She has been possessed by, *Asmodeus* which is a Greek representation of a Hebrew word meaning "DESTROYER." Sarah was to wed seven different men, all of whom were killed by *Asmodeus*. Her father's maids accused her of killing her husbands-to-be. Sarah at first contemplates suicide, but since that would be disgraceful, she prays that God would take her tortured life.

THE SENDING OF RAPHAEL (3:16-17)

God heard both Tobit's and Sarah's prayers and decided to answer them both through his archangel, Raphael, whose name means, "God heals." Tobit is to receive his sight and Sarah is to be married to Tobit's son, Tobias.

TOBIAS' JOURNEY TO MEDIA (4:1—6:17)

Fatherly Advice for Tobias (4:1-21)

Thinking that God was going to answer his prayer to end his life, Tobit remembered the money he had left in trust with Gabael at Rages in Media. According to 4:20, it amounted to ten talents of silver. One talent would equal 62.5 pounds, so Tobit is talking about 625 pounds of silver. His son Tobias is about to become a rich man.

Tobit knows that all this silver will not make his son happy, so he proceeds to give him some fatherly advice. Much of what he has to say has been gleaned from the Wisdom Literature and follows the traditional idea that "morality guarantees prosperity." See Psalm 1:1-3 and Proverbs 10:27-30.

Tobit's fatherly advice includes an appeal to his son to honor his parents with a proper burial (4:3-4), to remember the Lord and obey his commandments (4:5), to give alms (4:7), to take a wife from among his own descendants (4:12), to pay a fair wage on time (4:14), and not to drink wine in excess (4:15b). The reason why it was necessary to take a wife from his own descendants is because all other women would have been pagans. The emphasis is on a common faith, not a common race. We would do well to marry within a common faith. This of course can cross all racial lines.

The negative version of the Golden Rule is mentioned in 4:15a. This version had been offered by Confucius in China and Aristotle in Greece. Rabbi Hillel popularized it in the time of King Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.E.), Jesus transformed it into the positive version we all know today. See Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31.

Knowing that his son would become rich, Tobit tried to prepare him by telling him that his greatest wealth would consist in fearing God and refraining from every sin (4:21). This advice is as relevant today as it was in the time of Tobit and Tobias.

The Employment of Raphael (5:1-15)

The ten talents had been deposited some 20 years earlier. If Jeremiah 32:9-14 is any indication of how such contracts were made, Tobit and Gabael made out two contracts and tore one of them in two. One half was kept with the money, and Tobit had the other half. Tobit's copy would be required for proper identification. Since Tobias knew neither the trustee of the ten talents nor the way to Media, Tobit suggested that he find someone to guide him. God's angel, Raphael conveniently turns up, since he is familiar with what needs to be done, Tobias asks him to be his guide. Tobit wants assurance that he can be trusted; when Raphael tells him that he is Azarias the son of Ananias, one of his relatives, that is enough. Ananias was a good man, so Tobit trusts Raphael. The name Azarias is a Greek form of the Hebrew *Azariah*, which means "Yahweh helps." Ananias is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Hananiah*, which means "Yahweh favors." The wage agreed upon for serving as Tobias' guide was one drachma, which was the standard monetary unit for a day's labor. In Jesus' time the monetary unit for the same thing was the Roman denarius. Such things as monetary units help us to date stories such as this one.

The Departure (5:16-21)

The two of them set out taking along with them Tobias' dog. While taking a domestic animal such as a dog might not appear unusual, it was not commonly done among Jews. According to Leviticus 11:1-8 and Deuteronomy 14:3-8, the dog is considered unclean for eating, but this of course does not rule out making a dog into a pet. What is more important in their departure is Anna's fear of losing her only son, but Tobit assures her that a "good angel" will go with him and he will return safe and sound. Tobit does not know however that Azarias is that "good angel."

The Magic Fish (6:1-18)

Along the Tigris River en route to Ecbatana, where Sarah lived with her father Raguel, Tobias went to the bank of the river to wash himself and a fish leaped up at him. This was probably a man-eating fish of some size. The angel told him to catch the fish and to cut out its heart, liver and gall. These three organs were to be used later, so they were put away for the time being. The rest of the fish was eaten. The angel then suggested that they stay with Raguel in Ecbatana and suggested marriage between Tobias and Sarah. Having heard of Sarah's seven attempts at marriage, Tobias was somewhat hesitant. The angel

assured him that according to the Law of Moses, he was the only eligible kinsman (7:11-12). Just what law is being referred to is unknown. The only two laws that come to mind are the ruling made in regard to the daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 36:6-9 and the law on levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Neither of these two laws have the death penalty. The former law seems more likely, but then there might be another law about which we know nothing.

Tobias is not too eager to marry Sarah, so the angel encourages him by telling him to burn the heart and liver of the fish and use the smoke to exorcise the jealous demon lover of Sarah. The gall of the fish is to be saved to heal his father's blindness. Usually the liver was related to blindness, but Tobit's blindness might not be total. It is described in terms of a white film. This might be more like having cataracts. All this seems like magic, but prayer is to be included as well; so we must understand it in terms of exorcism and prayer. With this encouragement Tobias fell in love with Sarah and deeply yearned for her. The stage was set for a wedding

RESISTING PAGAN PRESSURE

Among our youth, we call it peer pressure; among adults, we refer to it as social pressure. Both kinds of pressures for Christians are really against the pagan environment in which we find ourselves. The pressure is frighteningly powerful; without the resources of God and a religious community, one is overwhelmed by it. When those resources become weak, so does the religious community.

While none of us has been ripped out of our own cultural context and taken in Exile to a foreign country where pagan pressures have been placed upon us, these same pagan pressures have a way of sneaking up on us. They are more difficult to discern in Christian societies than in pagan societies. That makes them more dangerous than ever.

Tobit resisted the pressures in burial practices. That is precisely where such pressures affect us most, but they are not limited to rituals that surround death. We find them in rituals surrounding the important events in our lives, such as weddings and holidays. Christmas and Easter are filled with them. As we try to resist them, we may be criticized for spoiling the fun.

These pressures are not easy to combat. There are no rules and regulations, which apply, especially to Christian Faith. As Christians we are set free of rules and regulations, for we aim not at the letter of the Law, but at its Spirit. This does mean that we take the Law less seriously than do Jews, but precisely the opposite—we take it even more seriously. Taking the Law seriously may not be happening in our churches, but that is not the fault of Christian faith. It is only another example of our giving in to the pagan pressures that surround us. If we were to aim at the spirit of the Law, then we would find God casting out demons and healing the blind.

God's angels are messengers, who come to help us resist these pressures. The Devil's angels—yes the Devil has angels (demons) too—come to tempt us to give in to these

pressures. What does all this talk about good and evil spiritual, or non-spiritual beings, have to do with us? This is our way of describing what is happening to us. Do these beings exist apart from us? Some would say “yes” and others would say “no.” Some would prefer to call them principalities and powers, while others would prefer to personalize them. Whatever is the case, they have no need to roam about where human beings do not exist, but they do have every reason to be where we do exist. They either help us with messages from God or they tempt us with messages from the Evil One. Whether we talk about them in abstract or in personalized language, we must conclude that they do exist. We have plenty of examples in history of persons possessed by demons—the demonic—or supported by angels. Angels supported Jesus when the full wrath of the pagan world, led by Satan, tempted him to take up pagan ways to achieve his goals.

This means that we live in a battle zone, where evil powers are trying to conquer good ones. When we fight against these evil, pagan powers, we get into trouble with Kings and Nations. That is precisely why Jesus was crucified. He was a threat to the pagan powers of his time and to every time. That is why he warned every disciple to expect to bear a cross, if they dared to follow him. Angels may support us, but evil powers will also attack. The attack will be fiercest for those who, like the Saints, follow Jesus. The battle taking place is for the destiny of individuals and nations. Nations can also be possessed by demons. We have seen that take place in our world many times.

Paul spoke of the battle in personalized and in abstract terms. In both cases, he predicted victory for those who resist the pagan pressures around them. He knew how powerful these pressures could be and warned the churches about them. This was not done in any legalistic way, for Paul understood the freedom of the Gospel. Paul also described that freedom in terms of slavery to Christ. He knew that nothing can separate us from him. In Romans 8:38-39, he concluded: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

1. KEEPING THE FAITH (Tobit 1:1—6:17)		
THE CONTEXT		
Tobias	Sarah	Assyrian Exile (722 B.C.)
Home: Thisbe, Naphtali Father: Tobit Mother: Anna (1:9)	Home: Ecbatana, Media Father: Raguel (6:10) Mother: Edna (7:2)	(27,290 Exiles) 1. Shalmaneser 2. Sennacherib (2 Sons) 3. Esarhaddon (Ahikar 1:21b-22) Tobit's Nephew
TOBIT'S ACCOUNT (1:3—3:6)		
Faithful to Jerusalem (1:5-6)	Buyer of Provisions (1:14)	Good Deeds
	10 Talents of Silver In Trust with Gabael in Rages	Kept Dietary Laws (1:10-12) Fed the Hungry (1:17) Gave clothes to Naked (1:17) Buried the dead (1:17)
THE FEAST OF PENTECOST (2:1-14)		
Invitation to the Poor (2:2) The Strangled Man (2:3)	Tobit's Blindness (2:10) The Family Quarrel (2:12-13)	
THE PRAYERS (3:1-17)		
Tobit's Prayer in Nineveh (3:2-3 and 6)	Sarah's Prayer in Ecbatana (3:11-13)	The Sending of Raphael (3:16-17)
A FATHER'S CONCERN (4:1—4:21)		
A Father's Gift (4:1)	A Father's Advice	A Father's Wisdom (4:21)
Go to Gabael at Rages 625 pounds of Silver	A Good Burial (4:3-4) Obey the Law (4:5) Give Alms (4:7-11) Take a Wife (4:12) Pay Wages (4:14) Golden Rule (4:15a) Watch out for Wine (4:15b)	Flee from sin and aim at the good and become wealthy
THE TRIP TO MEDIA (5:1—6:17)		
Employing Raphael/Azarias (5:1-3, 12, 14-15)	The Departure with a Dog (5:16, 17, 20-21) Or (6:1-2)	The Magic Fish (6:7-8) (Heart/Liver and Gall) Marriage? (6:10-11,13,16-17)

2. GOING HOME

Tobit 7:1—14:15

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Wedding of Tobias and Sarah 7:1—9:6	The Return to Nineveh 10:1—11:19	Raphael's Revelation and Departure 12:1-22	Tobit's Psalm of Praise 13:1-17	Tobit's Deathbed Advice 14:1-15

THE WEDDING OF TOBIAS AND SARAH (7:1—9:6)

The Wedding (7:1-18)

As in many other love stories, Sarah was the first one to lay her eyes on Tobias. This was also true for Rebekah and Isaac, Rachel and Jacob, and Zipporah and Moses. As soon as Raguel saw Tobit, he saw his cousin in his features and upon inquiring of his health, experienced deep grief upon hearing that he was blind. Tobias was anxious to get on with it, so he reminded Raphael of what they had discussed on the way—marriage. Raguel was agreeable, but he wanted Tobias to properly understand that seven other men also wanted to marry Sarah, each one dying on their wedding night. The plan was to discuss the problem while they ate together, but Tobias would eat nothing until an agreement was reached.

The wedding, following the pattern of traditional Jewish ceremonies, took place in two parts. In ancient Judaism the parents played an important role. Since Tobias' father was not present, Raphael acted on his behalf. In the first step, Raguel, the bride's father, took Sarah by the hand and gave her to Tobias with his blessing. We still do something like this in traditional wedding ceremonies when the father gives the bride away. The second part of the wedding consisted in the sealing of the contract, which contained an explanation of the rights of the husband and wife and property arrangements. The two fathers normally signed or sealed the contract; here Raphael acted on behalf of Tobit.

Raguel and his wife Edna then prepared a room for the new couple, but are not too confident that this wedding will be celebrated with joy. They anticipate what has happened seven times before; as they took Sarah into the room, she began to weep. Her mother comforted her.

The Wedding Night (8:1-21)

When Tobias entered into the room, he placed the heart and liver of the fish on the live ashes of incense creating a smoke, which drove the demon to the remotest parts of Egypt. With the demon gone, Tobias invited Sarah to pray with him (8:4-9). Then, they went to bed.

Meanwhile, Raguel went to dig a grave, expecting to have to bury his new son-in-law. But to his surprise the grave was not needed. He offered a beautiful prayer of thanks to God (8:15-17) and ordered his servants to fill in the grave. He then proposed a fourteen-day feast, which was double the length of the average wedding feast.

The Money in Rages (9:1-6)

The length of the wedding feast created a problem for Tobias. His father was expecting him home at a certain time, so he asked Raphael to go to Rages and collect his money from Gabael. Raphael went in one day, stayed over night, and returned the next day. Such a swift trip between Ecbatana and Rages reveals that the author did not know the terrain or the distance. The ancient historian Arian said that it took Alexander and his army ten to eleven days to make this trip; that it could only be made so quickly by means of forced marches. At any rate, Raphael and Gabael both returned to participate in the wedding feast and Gabael blessed Tobias and his new wife.

THE RETURN TO NINEVEH (10:1—12:22)

The Waiting Parents (10:1-7b)

Tobias' parents, Anna and Tobit, anxiously await their son's return. When he does not return as expected, they begin to fear the worst. What detained him? Did Gabael die? Was there no one to give him the money? Anna even fears his death, but Tobit tells her to stop worrying. Anna continues, however, to worry; every day, she goes down by the road and waits for her son to come home.

The Departure from Ecbatana (10:7c-13)

Although Tobias is ready to return home, Raguel, his father-in-law, suggests that messengers be sent to let his father know that everything is going well. Raguel is reluctant to lose his daughter too soon, but Tobias insists and Raguel sends them off with half of his property in slaves, cattle and money. As they leave, he blesses them and encourages his daughter to honor her new father-in-law and mother-in-law, as they are now her parents. Raguel seems to have an awareness of the Ten Commandments and simply quotes Exodus 20:12, the one that applies. After a beautiful exchange, they all bless one another in God's name; then, Sarah and Tobias leave Ecbatana.

The Arrival in Nineveh and the Healing of Tobit (11:1c-19)

As they approach Nineveh, Raphael suggested to Tobias that they run on ahead of Sarah and heal Tobit. Tobias was to take the gall of the fish (6:8) with him, to rub in his father's eyes. Anna was the first to see him and described the scene to her husband. The author describes the dog, which they had taken with them (6:8), as running along behind them (11:4). The first thing that Tobias does is to rub the gall in his father's eyes. As the eyes "smart," his father rubbed them and the white film came off, enabling him to see his son and Sarah, his new daughter-in-law. His acceptance of her was important, since he was not present at the wedding. They all rejoiced with the normal seven-day wedding feast, which included Ahikar and his nephew Nadab. The wedding feast was a symbol of their acceptance of Sarah into the family.

Raphael's Revelation and Departure (12:1-22)

Since Tobit had agreed to pay Raphael a drachma a day, a normal day's wage for an artisan, plus an unspecified bonus upon returning safely with his son and the money (5:14-15), he suggests that Tobias take care of paying him. Because of all that Raphael has done, mainly to cure his wife, obtain the money itself, and to heal his father, Tobias recommends that the bonus consist of half of all that he has brought back. Tobit agrees that the sum is well deserved. At this time Raphael gives an exhortation on the value of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and general righteousness and then proceeds to reveal to Tobit and Tobias just who he is. He is Raphael, one of the seven holy angels (12:15). The other angels are (1) Uriel [2 Esdras 4:1], (2) Raguel [Jude 9], (3) Michael [Daniel 10:13 and Revelation 12:7], (4) Sarakael [Daniel 8:16], (5) Gabriel (Daniel 9:21 and Luke 1:19-26), and (6) Remiel [2 Esdras 4:36].

Angeology developed at a time when the transcendence (otherness) of God was emphasized, but it also has many Persian roots. If one could not approach God directly, then some kind of intercessor was needed. *Angels* were called "messengers of God." Their purpose was to deliver God's messages to people, but they were also to take human prayers into the presence of God (12:15).

As Raphael ascended back into the presence of God, his final message was for all to thank God and to "Write down all these things that have happened to you." (12:20b) This became a tendency among the Jews, to write everything down. This tendency led to the recording of the revelation of God's will as the written word. Out of such an emphasis developed the idea of Sacred Scripture.

THE EPILOGUE (13:1—14:15)

Tobit's Psalm of Praise (13:1-17)

Many believe that Tobit's Psalm is an addition to give more detail to the confession of the wonderful works of God (12:22). The Psalm is a Hymn praising God for his justice in afflicting those who disobey him and for his mercy towards those who turn to him (13:5).

In addition to Jews turning to God, there will be a great turning from many other nations as well (13:11); in the end, the Temple (13:10) and Jerusalem (13:16-18) will be restored.

Tobit's Deathbed Advice (14:1-15)

In this closing chapter a number of details are given, some of which are historically inaccurate. This is one of the reasons why many scholars consider the story a beautiful fable. We are told that Tobit was 62 when he lost his sight. As he faced death in his old age, he advised Tobias to take his wife and return to Media. Nineveh, according to Nahum, would be destroyed.¹

Nabopolassar the Babylonian and Cyaxares, the Mede destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C. Some manuscripts suggest that Nebuchadnezzar had a part in destroying Nineveh, but that is not true. It was Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar, not Nebuchadnezzar, who captured Nineveh. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 587 or 586 B.C.E. The Temple alluded to in 14:4b-5 was rebuilt in 515 B.C. but nothing is said about the details. The common belief of post-exilic times that the Gentiles would turn to Judaism's God is expressed in 14:6. This was also the message of Zechariah 8:20-23.

Having advised his son to take his wife and family to Media, he asked for a decent burial for himself and his wife Anna. Tobit died at the ripe old age of 112 and was given a magnificent burial. Anna died later and was buried with Tobit. Tobias then returned with his family to Ecbatana, Sarah's original home. When Sarah's parents died, they too were given magnificent funerals. Finally, Tobias died at the age of 117, but not before hearing of the destruction of Nineveh.

In requesting a decent burial, Tobit made a vague reference to the way in which Nadab (Nadin or Nasbas) treated Ahikar, who had adopted him. Nadab had Ahikar banished from the Kingdom and did not show proper respect towards Ahikar. In telling this story, Tobit is simply advising Tobias to live a good moral life. The consequence of not doing so is disaster. Righteousness and almsgiving are worth doing. Those who do not do these things dig their own graves. This story has the purpose of encouraging Jewish piety. God is acting in history and those who obey him will survive.

THE LIGHT OF THE LAW

The Book of Tobit is a nice story about nice people, but like the Books of Ruth and Jonah, it has a powerful message. The message is found in the Epilogue, which gives a theological interpretation of the story. Two verses lead the way:

¹ Jonah predicted the destruction of Nineveh, but according to his book, it did not happen. The Codex Sinaiticus corrects other manuscripts by putting in Nahum for Jonah. This would be more consistent with what Nahum believed about the inevitable destruction of Nineveh.

A bright light will shine to all the ends of the earth; many nations will come to you from far away, the inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth to your holy name, bearing gifts in their hands for the King of heaven. —Tobit 13:11

Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted and worship God in truth. They will all abandon their idols, which deceitfully have led them into their error. —Tobit 14:6

What will cause this turning of the nations and Gentiles to the Lord God? There can be only one answer: “people, like Tobit and Anna, Tobias and Sarah, who live faithfully to the Law of God.” Examples of this are not only Tobit’s insistence upon burying his dead Jews according to the Law, but signs that accompany such faithful living. God’s people may get depressed even to the point that they wished they were dead. They may even contemplate suicide, but they always turn to God in prayer. They live by faith, even in tough times; their prayers are answered, even when they do not know it. Signs that God is with them become evident and they are set free of the demonic in their lives and given new eyes with which to see. Evil and blindness are what keep the Gentiles away from God. If they can be liberated from evil and be given new eyes, they will turn to the God of Heaven.

This is precisely what the Law is designed to do—to set us free from the power of evil and to give us spiritual vision. This does not mean that the Law is not misused; whenever it is, it always enslaves. In such times we think that we will become free by forsaking the Law. It never happens. We do not break the Law of God, but we break ourselves on the Law of God. Obeying the Law, both the Letter and the Spirit of the Law, sets us free. Violating it can only enslave us.

We need to see examples of people who are living out the Law of God faithfully, even when they endure great suffering. This does not mean that they will be spared the effects of that suffering: anguish, despair, and even thoughts of wishing they were dead. If ever there were an excellent example, it was Jesus in Gethsemane and on the cross. He summarized the Law into *loving God and loving your neighbor as you love yourself*. This is what sets us free and this is what will attract others to the same freedom.

We, like Tobit and his family, still live in an alien and hostile environment. We have a choice. We can either adapt to the environment and die or obey the Law and live. This does not mean that it will be easy. It is always more difficult to live in freedom than to live in slavery. The Law is a tool, when rightly used, which enables us to live in freedom. It is not contrary to faith, nor does faith make the Law unnecessary. Faith enables us to see the Law written into our very being. E. Stanley Jones once said: “I find ten laws written into our beings, and as we study them, they turn out to be the very laws of the Kingdom of God. They are these:”¹

1. The universe is a universe of moral consequence.
2. The morally and spiritually fit survive.

¹ E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), p. 81.

3. The Christian way is written in the structure of the universe.
4. Humility and obedience are the secret of knowledge and power.
5. An organism expends as much as it receives and no more; therefore receptivity is the first law of life.
6. The second law of life is that you must lose your life to find it again.
7. Greatness comes through service.
8. Love is the fundamental law of human relationships.
9. Life is an eternal growth.
10. All life is lifted by self-sacrifice, by a cross.

Obviously, E. Stanley Jones wrote these laws down from his Christian perspective, but he was trying to discern within himself something that is universal. He knew that there was a Law written into his very being which would set him free, and if disobeyed, it would enslave him.

To all who discover this Law there is freedom. The author of the Book of Tobit believes that eventually even the Gentiles will realize this and find their way to the Lord God. In order for this to happen, there will have to be people out there living out the Law that they find written into their very being. It was written there before it was written in stone. The destiny of all who discover the Law of Freedom will be the New Jerusalem, which will be the home for all who have been liberated from evil and have been given new eyes with which to see.

For Jerusalem will be built as his house for all ages. How happy I will be if a remnant of my descendants should survive to see your glory and acknowledge the King of heaven. The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald, and all your walls with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir. The gates of Jerusalem will sing hymns of joy, and all her houses will cry, "Hallelujah! Blessed be the God of Israel!" and the blessed will bless the holy name forever and ever. —Tobit 13:16-17

**2. GOING HOME
(TOBIT 7:1 – 14:15)**

THE WEDDING (7:1 – 9:6)

The Wedding (7:1-18)	The Wedding Night (8:1-21)	The Money in Rages (9:1-6)
The Meeting (7:1b-2) The Marriage (7:13-14)	The Exorcism (8:2-3) The Prayer (8:4b) The Grave (8:9b-10) The 14 Day Feast (8:19)	The Trip (9:2) The Blessing (9:6)

THE RETURN TO NINEVEH (10:1 – 12:22)

The Return (10:1-13)	The Arrival (11:1-19)	The Revelation (12:1-22)
Waiting Parents (10:1-7b) Tobit (10:2) Anna (10:3) The Departure (10:7c-13) Property (10:10) Parents (10:12)	The Arrival (11:2-4) The Healing (11:8-13) The 7 Day Feast (11:18-19)	The Payoff (12:2-3) The Advice (12:8) The Revelation (12:15) The Command (12:20)

THE EPILOGUE (13:1 – 14:15)

Tobit's Psalm (13:1-17)	Tobit's Advice	Tobit's Death at 112 (158)
The Gentiles (13:11)	Go to Media (14:4)	Blindness: 62 (58) (14:2) Healing: 70 (66) (14:2) Death: 112 (158) (14:2, 11)
	Tobit's Prophecy	
Jerusalem (13:16-17)	Nineveh (14:4a)	Tobias' Death at 117 (127) (14:14)
	Jerusalem (14:4b) The Gentiles (14:6)	

3. THE THIRST FOR POWER

Judith 1:1—7:32

ASSIGNMENTS				
Holofernes’ Conquest of the West 1:1—3:8	Judean Defense Preparations 3:9—4:15	Achior’s Counsel 5:1-24	Achior’s Punishment 6:1-21	The Siege of Bethulia 7:1-32

INTRODUCTION TO JUDITH

The Name

The Book is named after its heroine, who following her seduction of the villain, General Holofernes, decapitates him. Judith has been compared to Esther, but she is far more aggressive than Esther.

The Author

The author cannot be named, but he is a marvelous short story writer; he clearly moves the reader away from the past into the present. Any reader familiar with the historical situation would know that the author was not even trying to be historical. The point was to encourage Jews to stand up against the Greek domination and Hellenization of Palestine. The author does this with great skill.

It has been suggested that the author might have been a member of the Party of Hasideans, which was a group that zealously supported the Law of Moses and the rebellion of Judas Maccabeus against the Greeks. The Hasideans were the forerunners to the Essenes and Pharisees, but they did not retreat into the Wilderness, as did the Essenes and they were not pacifists like some of the Pharisees. Their purpose was to deliver Palestine from its enemies in any way that could be accomplished.

The Date

Dates have been suggested ranging from the Seventh Century B.C.E. to the Second Century B.C.E. One of the best guesses would be approximately 150 B.C.E., which would be in the midst of the Jewish struggle for religious and political freedom. This story is described in 1 Maccabees.

The Context

Since the distortions of geography and history are so great, we cannot place it in any geographical or historical context. The real context was probably the time in history when Antiochus Epiphanes and his nephew Demetrius I was trying to Hellenize Palestine.

The Purpose

The purpose of the author is to encourage Jews to stand fast against the Greek onslaught of religion and culture. This end justified any means. Judith used deceit, seduction, and lust to accomplish her goal, praying all the time for God to bless her actions.

The Outline

- A. Holofernes Conquest of the Western Nations (1:1—3:8)
- B. The Attack on the Jews (3:9—7:32)
- C. Judith's Preparation (8:1—10:10)
- D. Judith meets Holofernes (10:10—11:23)
- E. Holofernes' Banquet (12:1—13:10a)
- F. Victory for the Jews (10:b—15:13)
- G. Judith's Song of Thanksgiving (16:1-17)
- H. The Epilogue (16:18-25)

HOLOFERNES CONQUEST OF THE WESTERN NATIONS (1:1—3:8)

The War on Arphaxad (1:1-6)

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Assyria, with his capital in Nineveh, set out to conquer Arphaxad, who ruled over the Medes from Ecbatana. While these places can be found on a map, Nebuchadnezzar was historically King of Babylonia, ruling from Babylon. Nineveh was one of those places he conquered. Nothing is known of Arphaxad. This is such an obvious mistake that most scholars believe it to be intentional. Everyone would recognize the name of the enemy who destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and his capital, Nineveh, had been a former enemy, which destroyed Samaria in 721 B.C.E. The author is using imagery of Israel's past enemies to remind them of what their present enemy is attempting to do. The present enemy would be the Greeks, who were conquering the whole region, both politically and culturally.

The Call for an Alliance (1:7-11)

In his effort to call for an alliance against Arphaxad, Nebuchadnezzar called upon Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt to fight with him; but all who lived in these regions disregarded his call for an alliance. None of them were afraid and simply looked upon him as one man.

Victory over Arphaxad (1:12-16)

Angered and shamed over the rejection of so many nations, Nebuchadnezzar took revenge by promising to conquer the whole area, going as far as the coasts of the two seas, meaning the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. He began by defeating the most powerful king, who would have been Arphaxad, King of the Medes. Arphaxad was captured in the mountains of Ragau, struck down with hunting spears and utterly destroyed. This victory was followed with a feast lasting 120 days. This is probably an exaggeration, but Oriental kings were known to celebrate for a very long time.

The Commissioning of Holofernes (2:1-20)

Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Assyrians called together all of his officers and nobles to mobilize a great army to attack those western nations, who had not obeyed his command. Holofernes was commissioned as the chief general, of the army, which was to number 120,000 foot soldiers and 12,000 cavalry, which meant archers on horseback. Accompanying this army would be camels, donkeys and mules for transport and sheep, oxen and goats for provisions. Gold and silver would be taken along from the royal palace and a mixed crowd would follow. So large was the crowd that it could not even be numbered.

Since history does not say anything about a general named Holofernes in any of the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, Orophernes may have suggested him. Orophernes was a general sent by Artaxerxes III against the West around 350 B.C.E. His army penetrated into Egypt.

The Surrender of the Western Nations (2:21—3:8)

According to this book, it took Holofernes' huge army only three days to march from Nineveh to the plain of Bectileth, which has been estimated to be about 300 miles. Even though Bectileth cannot be identified, the general area is clear. The author alludes to Old Testament places in a way that his original readers would have understood. The attack was swift and no one could possibly resist. That is why they sent messengers to plead for peace and offered to lie prostrate before Nebuchadnezzar, the Great King. All their shrines were to be demolished and all these nations were to worship Nebuchadnezzar (3:8). This is an allusion to the religious persecution and claim to divinity by Antiochus Epiphanes.

THE ATTACK ON THE JEWS (3:9—7:32)

Judean Defense Preparations (3:9—4:15)

As Holofernes led his army to the edge of Esdraelon, he camped for a whole month. This enabled Judea to prepare for the impending attack. The edge of Esdraelon would have included territory outside of Judea's normal boundary. Included in this northern boundary would be Samaria, which had not been ruled by Jerusalem since the time of Solomon. We

must remember that historical accuracy is not important to the author. He is alluding to contemporary events with images from the past.

The most far-fetched historical inaccuracy can be found in Judith 4:3, where a reference is made to a recent return from captivity. It was Nebuchadnezzar who took them into captivity in the first place, so this too must be some kind of allusion to a contemporary event. It is probably a reference to the re-consecration of the temple under Judas Maccabeus three years after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes IV. The people are being encouraged to resist any future attack against Jerusalem.

Joakim (or Eliachim), the high priest in Jerusalem, ordered the people of Bethulia and Betomesthaim, which face Esdraelon, to seize the passes in the hills. They would have been easy to defend, since they were so narrow that only two men could pass through them at a time. Bethulia is the center of this developing story's action and is probably an allusion to Shechem. The people however did not depend upon controlling the passes in the hills, but surrounded the altar in Jerusalem and prayed earnestly to the God of Israel. The Lord heard their prayers.

Achior's Counsel (5:1-24)

Achior was an Ammonite and the Ammonites along with the Moabites aided Nebuchadnezzar by attacking the Jews from the southeast (2 Kings 24:2). Because of the confusion between the Hebrew "d" and "r" Achior's name might be Ahivd, which means "brother or friend" of Judah. While he may not have been a friend of Judah, he certainly did understand the meaning of their history. Beginning with Abraham's migration from Ur to escape polytheism, he tells of Abraham and his people's descent into Egypt, their deliverance under Moses and entrance into Canaan, of their sin which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and their captivity, and finally of their repentance and return from exile.

The underlying theological interpretation and conclusion of Achior is that they could not be defeated as long as they had not offended their God; but if they had offended their God, then they could be easily defeated. Holofernes' officers and other advisers rejected Achior's counsel to oppose any invasion of the Jews and advised an immediate attack on them. Perhaps they are right in their interpretation, but actually, Achior was only suggesting that an attack be properly timed with Israel's moral condition.

Achior's Punishment (6:1-21)

Holofernes was so angry with Achior that he had him delivered to Bethulia (Shechem), where he believed that he would die with the Israelites in the ensuing battle. When the Israelites found him, they took him to their magistrates, who in that time were Uziah, the chief magistrate, Chabris, and Charmis. After they heard Achior's story, they praised and feasted him; then they spent the night in prayer asking for divine help.

The Siege of Bethulia (7:1-32)

Suddenly the number of soldiers is 170,000 plus the 12,000 cavalry. In Judith 2:5 and 15 the number is only 120,000. Perhaps they are including their allies from Moab, Ammon, and the coastland, which would have had to number 50,000. No explanation is given. There is a concern to win the battle without losing any men. The plan outlined by the chieftains of the people of Esau (Idumeans or Edomites) in 7:8-15 is the way most battles were fought in those days, and so the plan can hardly be considered unique. Samaria was taken in this manner in 722 B.C.E.

The whole Assyrian army surrounded Bethulia for 34 days, cutting the city off from its source of water. As water ran out, there was great pressure on Uzziah to make peace with the Assyrian Army. The people thought it would be better to be enslaved by the Assyrians than to die (7:27), which was an unusual response on the part of Israel. One of the reasons why there was a mass suicide at Masada was the Jews hated the idea of being enslaved by anyone, especially their Roman enemies. They preferred death by their own hand to slavery. Uzziah bought himself another five days by asking people to pray to God for deliverance. If it did not come within five days, then he would surrender.

A NATION'S ACHILLE'S HEEL

In the Trojan War of Greek mythology, Achilles was the mightiest warrior on the Greek side. Thetis, in an attempt to make him invulnerable, dipped him in the River Styx, but she did not wet the heel by which she held him; so if anyone intended to kill him, it would have to be by means of a wound in the heel. Achilles seemed invulnerable as he killed many men at Troy. He was finally mortally wounded when an arrow, shot by Paris and guided by Apollo, struck him in the heel. We now talk about a person's Achille's heel as his weak point. Nations also have a weak point; in wartime, we can expect our enemy to look for ours.

In the Book of Judith, Nebuchadnezzar intends to dominate both the East and the West, Achior tries to help him by telling him about the Achille's heel of the Jews. His advice can be found in Judith 5:20-21:

So now, my master and lord, if there is any oversight in this people and they sin against their God and we find out their offense, then we can go up and defeat them. But if they are not a guilty nation, then let my lord pass them by; for their Lord and God will defend them, and we shall become the laughingstock of the whole world.

Immorality was their Achille's heel. Nebuchadnezzar should have listened to Achior, but he did not. Immorality is the weakness of every nation. Its counterpart, morality, is the foundation, which makes a nation powerful. What determines the immorality or morality of a nation is the obedience of its citizens to the Ten Commandments. While obeying the letter of the Law is important, more important is obeying the intention, or the spirit, of the

Law. Sometimes a nation may appear to be obeying the Law, when in reality it is not. This is what had happened in the days of Jesus.

Immorality is not a nation's only Achille's heel, but it is the most important one. Every nation that disobeys the Will of God, as expressed in the Commandments, takes a course that leads to inevitable disaster. It will not take much of an army to defeat such a nation; that, is why Achior's advice is so right. The nation, in choosing the course of immorality, collapses from within; all an enemy has to do is to push it over.

While Achior's advice is good so far as it goes, more needs to be said. We cannot just go around conquering nations whose morals have declined, thinking that our morals are intact. That will quickly lead us to moral arrogance, which will destroy us as well. A nation does have the responsibility, maybe even the obligation, to stop immoral nations, which through their arrogance become aggressive, but we have to look at more than their immorality. We need a clear sense of whom or what guides us. In talking about the need to stop Hitler in World War II, E. Stanley Jones described the issue at stake:

It is largely your beginning place that determines your conclusion. If you begin with the Way and then look at war, you will probably come out to one conclusion. If you begin with war and then look at the Way, you will probably come out to an entirely different conclusion. Your starting point will determine your ending point. Some theological students asked a prominent Christian why he abandoned his former position against war for one of moral approval. In reply he unfolded a map of Europe, pointed to it and said, "That map is my reason." He got his morals from his map, instead of from his Master. He looked at the Nazis instead of the Nazarene. And that is essentially the wrong starting point. The Christian begins at Christ and works from Him out to problems.¹

The Achille's heel of a nation—or an individual—is not only its immorality, but also its failure to take Jesus Christ seriously. If the Christian claim is true, then rejecting Jesus Christ, becomes one's Achille's heel. Accepting him would also be part of fulfilling the first commandment, which calls us to relate only to God. When we cast our lot with Jesus, we cannot lose the war, although we can certainly lose a few battles.

It may look as though we have shifted the Achille's heel from immorality to bad theology; and, in a sense, we have done just that. Our immorality flows from bad theology, just as morality flows from good theology. Our bad concepts of God result in immorality and our good concepts of God result in morality. Nebuchadnezzar was doomed to lose, not because the Jews were moral, but because he himself was not submitting to God. His purpose, according to Judith 3:8, was to get all the other nations to "worship Nebuchadnezzar alone, and that all their dialects and tribes should call upon him as a god." This was his Achille's heel and it made him far weaker than Israel's immorality.

¹ E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984) p. 341.

Nations, and individuals, have two Achille's heels; they are bad theology and immorality, either of which can destroy us from within. They also make it easier for other nations to defeat us in war.

3. THE THIRST FOR POWER (Judith 1:1 – 7:32)

THE CONQUEST OF WESTERN NATIONS (1:1 – 3:8)

The Kings (1:1-6) (12th Year) (1:1)	Victory over Arphaxad (1:12-16) (17th Year)
<p>Nebuchadnezzar of Nineveh, ASSYRIA</p> <p>Arphaxad of Ecbatana, MEDIA</p> <p>The Potential Alliance (1:7-11) (1:11)</p> <p>Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt</p>	<p>Fall of Ecbatana (1:13-14)</p> <p>Killing of Arphaxad near Ragae (1:15)</p> <p>The 120 Day Victory Feast (1:16)</p>
The Chief General (2:1-20) (18th Year)	Victory over the West (2:21 – 3:8)
<p>Holofernes (2:4) [Orophernes]</p> <p>120,000 Soldiers & 12,000 Cavalry (2:5)</p> <p>Transport: Camels, Donkeys, Mules (2:17)</p> <p>Provisions: Sheep, Oxen, Goats</p> <p>Food and Gold (2:18)</p>	<p>3 Days to the Plain of Bectileth (2:21)</p> <p>Worship of Nebuchadnezzar (3:1 & 8) [Antiochus Epiphanes]</p>

ATTACK ON THE JEWS (3:9 – 7:32)

Judean Defenses (3:9 – 4:15)	Achior's Counsel (5:1-24)
<p>Holofernes attacks Esdraelon/Samaria (3:9)</p> <p>Joakim ordered Bethulia/Betomesthaim... ...to take the passes in the Hills (4:6-7), but ...they also surrounded the Altar (4:12-13)</p>	<p>Achior (Ammonite) "Brother or Friend" "Time the attack with Israel's moral condition" (5:3, 5, 17-18, 20-21)</p> <p>Officers: Attack Immediately (5:23-24)</p>
Achior's Punishment (6:1-21)	Siege of Bethulia (7:1-32)
<p>Delivered to Bethulia (Schechem) (6:2-3, 7-8 & 10)</p> <p>Taken to Uzziah, Chabris, Charmis (6:14-15)</p>	<p>170,000 Soldiers and 12,000 Cavalry (7:2)</p> <p>Cut off the Water Supply (7:12 and 17)</p> <p>Assyrians surround them 34 Days (7:20-21)</p> <p>People desired to Surrender (7:26-27)</p> <p>Uzziah asked for a 5 day delay (7:30-31)</p>

4. THE SEDUCTION OF POWER

Judith 8:1—16:25

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Preparation of Judith 8:1—10:10	Judith meets Holofernes 10:10—11:23	The Banquet of Holofernes 12:1—13:10a	Victory for the Jews 13:10b—15:13	Judith's Song and Reward 16:1-25

JUDITH'S PREPARATION (8:1—10:10)

The Introduction of Judith (8:1-8)

Judith is described as the daughter of Merari and wife of Manasseh, who had recently died of sunstroke. Her name is highly symbolic, even though it has only been mentioned in Genesis 26:34, where it belongs to a foreigner. It is the feminine form of Judah or Judas and it may be suggesting a feminine counterpart to the hero, Judas Maccabeus, but its literal meaning, “Jewess” personifies the nation as a whole.

Manasseh was the largest tribe in the northern Kingdom. The destruction of the northern Kingdom left Judah alone, like a widow. Judith has been left alone and she, like Judah, was pious. Her piety can be seen in the way she mourns and observes the Sabbath. Like most heroines of the day she was beautiful and wealthy; above all, she feared God with great devotion.

The Rebuke of the Elders (8:9-36)

When Judith heard how Uzziah and the elders promised to surrender the city after five days, she called the three elders, Uzziah, Chabris and Charmis to herself and then she rebuked them for putting God to the test. It is not we who test God but God who tests us. God is never to be given ultimatums. All of Judea depends upon what happens at Bethulia; and if they fail to defend their city, the Temple itself will be desecrated.

While Uzziah respects Judith as being sincere, he defends his action on the basis that the people had compelled him to set a deadline. They were thirsty and the enemy had already cut off the water supply. What else was he to do? His suggestion to Judith is to pray for rain. Judith's response was that safety comes through loyalty. It is never dependent upon the size or threat of an army.

Judith's Prayer (9:1-14)

Prayer is Judith's first response and she prays in typical fashion. Beginning with God's famous acts of deliverance, she then extols his great virtues. Then she reminds him of what the enemy intends to do—defile God's sanctuary (9:8). This may be an allusion to Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who actually set up a pagan altar in Jerusalem. Judas Maccabeus tore it down later. Judith reminds God that he has always been the helper of the oppressed (9:11) and, as the King of all creation (9:12b), he can protect Israel (9:14b). That this is likely to happen through violence and war is not inconsistent with the way God acts in Old Testament history, even though it may be inconsistent with Jesus' methods in the New Testament.

Judith's Beautification (10:1-10)

In spite of the shortage of water, Judith bathed and anointed herself. Then she put on a tiara and adorned herself with anklets, bracelets, rings and earrings, making herself very beautiful. Her plan was to seduce Holofernes, so that she could assassinate him. Uzziah, Chabris and Charmis, the city Elders approved of her plan, and sent her off with their blessings.

JUDITH MEETS HOLOFERNES (10:11—11:23)

A Patrol Picks Judith Up (11:10-23)

Upon leaving Bethulia, which was located on top of a mountain, Judith took her maid and moved in the direction of the Assyrian Camp, which was located at the entrance of a valley leading to the mountain. Judith and her maid were quickly picked up by an Assyrian patrol, which was stunned by her beauty and believed her story; nevertheless, when they accompanied her to Holofernes, they did so with 100 men. This was probably more due to her beauty than to any need for security. When Holofernes was informed, he had been lying on his bed under a canopy woven with purple and gold and emeralds and precious stones. This was a highly decorated mosquito net.

The Scheming with Holofernes (11:1-23)

When asked what she, a Hebrew, was doing away from her people's camp, she reminded Holofernes of what Achior had said about the Hebrews (Judith 5:5-21). No nation can defeat them as long as they obey their God; but should they sin, then their God would allow them to be defeated (11:10b). Their insufficient food and water supply was about to force them to disobey divine law. Their sins would then be twofold: (1) neglecting the strict observance of Firstfruits (Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 23:15-22; and Deuteronomy 14:22-29) and (2) disobeying the law of the Tithes (Leviticus 27:30 and Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Lying to Holofernes, Judith told him that she had come over to his side because the Jews were about to disobey their God and that would make them vulnerable. Judith, however, had to remain faithful to God, who would give Holofernes the victory.

Judith told Holofernes that she would go into the valley every night to pray to God, asking him to tell her when they have actually committed the sin. She would then tell him that his armies could go in and defeat them. She would lead them not only into Bethulia, but all the way into Jerusalem itself. Holofernes was addicted to the beauty of her face and the apparent wisdom of her speech and promised her a place in the house of Nebuchadnezzar. If all this took place, he would even commit himself to her God, who of course would have given him the victory. Nothing is said about the old gods. Perhaps Holofernes would have added her God to the many that he was already serving.

HOLOFERNES' BANQUET (12:1—13:10a)

The banquet was set for the fourth day; this gave Judith and her maid three days to acquaint the guards with their practice of leaving the camp with their basket of food. Holofernes did ask her about her need to have special food, but he did not listen very well to her answer. He was too captivated by her beauty. Although he asked her where they could refresh her supply of food, she gave him a subtle clue to her real intentions when she said: "...your servant will not use up the supplies I have with me before the Lord carries out by my hand what he has determined." (12:4) Holofernes had no idea that her nightly trips for prayer and bathing were to set up an escape route as well as to cleanse herself from defilement with pagans. He never understood any of her reasons for leaving camp and that misunderstanding cost him his life.

The banquet came on the fourth day and involved only his (female) slaves. None of his officers were invited. Bagoas, one of his eunuchs, was in charge of everything, which would have been the case, considering the fact that Holofernes' slaves were women. Fascinated with Judith, Holofernes drinks more than he has ever drunk since he was born. The slaves all leave and Bagoas closes the tent from outside, shutting out every attendant from Holofernes' presence. Alone with Holofernes, Judith prayed and then struck off Holofernes' head with two blows from his own sword. She took the canopy and the head and placed them inside the food basket, then she and her maid left the tent as they had done for three consecutive nights.

The image of Judith and her maid taking the head of Holofernes in a basket became a popular subject for Medieval and Renaissance artists. Lucas Cranach, a friend of Martin Luther, painted a particularly vivid picture of this event.

VICTORY FOR THE JEWS (13:10b—15:13)

The Return to Bethulia (13:10b-20)

Judith and her maid walked right past the guard and went straight to the gates of Bethulia, where they were recognized and admitted. A crowd gathered to see her trophy, and many prayers of praise and thanksgiving were offered. She cried, "...it was my face that seduced him to his destruction, and that he committed no sin with me, to defile and shame me." (13:16) This meant that she did not have sexual intercourse with him. She managed

to pull the whole thing off without defiling herself by eating their food or submitting to fornication. Beheading an enemy commander was not considered as a personal form of defilement. It was viewed as an act of God delivering his people.

Achior's Confirmation (14:1-10)

Although there is some controversy over the sequence of events described in Judith 14:1-10, the point is clear. Judith has had Holofernes' head hung upon the parapet of the wall and Achior identified it.

According to Judith 5:5—6:21, Achior had warned Holofernes not to attack the Israelites as long as they were faithful to their God; but his warning was not accepted and he was thrown out of their midst. Holofernes told him that he would not see his face again until he had taken out his revenge against the Israelites (6:5). Holofernes did not know how much of a prophet he was, nor did he realize the conditions under which Achior would see Holofernes' face. Achior, an Ammonite (14:5), was so impressed that he converted to Judaism (14:10); even though the conversion of Ammonites was forbidden by Jewish Law (Deuteronomy 23:3). This Law included Moabites as well, and so according to this Law, Ruth too would have been unlawfully accepted into the Jewish community.

Routing the Assyrians (14:11—15:7)

At dawn every man took his weapons and the attack was on against the Assyrians. They figured that as soon as the Assyrians discovered that their leader was dead, they would turn and run. That assumption was realized as soon as Bagoas went into Holofernes' tent and discovered him beheaded and Judith missing. The Assyrian army headed for home, with men from the neighboring fortified cities of Betomasthaim, Bebai, Choba and Kola joining the men from Bethulia. None of these fortified cities can be identified today, but the escape route of the Assyrians can be. They had to go through Damascus on the way to Nineveh. Enroute they could easily have been attacked by Israelites living in Gilead and Galilee, who even chased them beyond Damascus.

The Blessing of Judith (15:8-13)

When the Battle was over, the high priest, Joakim, and the senate of the people of Israel from Jerusalem went to see and bless Judith for saving the nation. The Assyrian Camp was plundered and Holofernes' possessions were given to Judith. She loaded her mule, hitched up her carts and piled all of his possessions on them.

All of the women of Israel gathered to celebrate with dancing and the waving of ivy-wreathed wands and crowning themselves with olive wreaths (15:12-13). Ivy-wreathed wands were used in Jewish religious celebrations (Leviticus 23:40; Psalm 118:27; and 1 Maccabees 13:51). They were also used when Judas Maccabeus and his followers celebrated the rededication of the Temple (2 Maccabees 10:7) and when Jesus made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem (John 12:13). The olive wreaths are another matter.

While Greeks used them, there is no other record of their being used in Jewish celebrations. This reference is unique.

JUDITH'S SONG OF THANKSGIVING (16:1-17)

As in many of Israel's victories, there is a song of thanksgiving. While it has been attributed to Judith herself, she is mentioned in the third person. The song is a poetic account of the victory and must be older than the prose account. Songs were ways of remembering the basic facts. The prose may be a filling in of those facts later.

One thing that may contradict the poetic version as being earlier is language. We can see some Greek imagery in the use of "Titans" and "giants." (16:7) The Israelite terms would have been Nephilim, Anakim and Rephaim (Genesis 6:4; Numbers 13:33; and Deuteronomy 2:20-21). Another term introduced here is that of the Medes, which does not appear in the prose account (16:10). Were these terms added later or were they a part of the original?

An interesting theological concept also appears in this song. God's punishment on those nations who rise up against his people is eternal. This is similar to the description of eternal damnation in Daniel 12:2. The imagery of fire and worms, which will inflict pain forever, is extremely vivid. Jesus will develop this further in the New Testament.

THE EPILOGUE (16:18-25)

Returning to the prose account, we are now given a description of a three month long victory celebration (16:18-20) and a reward of long life for Judith (16:21-25). She lives to be 105 years old, even though upon the death of her husband, Manasseh, many desired to marry her. The usual divine blessing would have been marriage and many children, but Judith is blessed with a long life of respect. Even after she died, no enemy was willing to spread terror among God's people for a long time. She was a pious Jewish woman, who before her death, distributed her property according to the Law of Moses. Compare Judith 16:24 with Numbers 27:11.

CUTTING OFF THE HEAD OF EVIL

Although Judith refrained from eating unclean food and did not engage in intercourse with Holofernes, she did decapitate him; but since it was for the benefit of Israel, it was not considered a sinful act. She cut off the head of an enemy military commander, making her enemies leaderless and causing them to flee.

Assassinating the military or political leader of the enemy was thought of as the quick way to end hostilities between warring nations, but there was never any guarantee that cutting off the head of the enemy leader would solve all of the problems. It might bring an end to the war, but it does not insure the establishment of peace. In the end the Assyrians brought down the Northern Kingdom and the Babylonians destroyed the

Southern Kingdom. Decapitating one general failed to accomplish the ultimate goal. He was simply replaced by another.

This does not mean that military and political leaders do not need to be assassinated from time to time; but their death will not resolve the conflict, even though it may reduce the number of casualties. When it does appear necessary to kill a leader, can we justify it morally, or must we call it murder? David had several opportunities to kill Saul, but out of respect for the office of King, he refused to do it. On the other hand, Saul tried to eliminate David because he perceived him as a threat to his own power. When Herod heard of the birth of the Messiah, he too tried to kill him as a child, so that he could never threaten his hold on political power.

When Judith decapitated Holofernes, she clearly justified her act and even suggested that God was working through her in doing it. Judith cried out with a loud voice, “Praise God, O praise him! Praise God, who has not withdrawn his mercy from the house of Israel, but has destroyed our enemies by my hand this very night!” (Judith 13:14) This has been the claim of many, Jews, Christians, and Muslims; but we must ask seriously, “Is it true?” Does God kill military and political leaders through our hands?

Much of the Old Testament seems to suggest that God works through political and military leaders, but does he act through them or does he simply allow them to act; and furthermore, when someone like Judith assassinates a cruel General; is God enabling her to do it or is he simply allowing it to happen? The latter is more likely the case.

Roman political leaders expected their people to worship them. Christians refused to go that far, but they were willing to pray for them. This is what lies behind Paul’s call for everyone to be subject to the governing authorities. His position is concisely put in Romans 13:1-4:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; for it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.

The role of the political leader is clearly stated—to keep evil in check and to promote good. When leaders do this they are to be obeyed. While they deserve our prayers, they do not deserve our blind obedience. When they call for this kind of submission, they are to be resisted. Christians have even participated in assassination attempts on leaders who have stepped outside of their legitimate roles. The most recent example would be Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s involvement in the attempt to assassinate Adolph Hitler. Had the plot succeeded, would this have been the hand of God? If it were, then it could not have failed; therefore, we can only say that God allows assassinations to take place. He does

not orchestrate them. Sometimes good leaders are assassinated; in such cases, God does not prevent them.

In a Democracy, leaders are voted out of office; but in a Dictatorship, the only way to eliminate a bad leader is through resistance or assassination. Since assassination may result in fewer deaths, it may well be the most favored method. The image often offered to justify it is that of a drunken driver who is running over innocent victims. Someone has to stop him from continuing the destruction. To do nothing is just as grave a sin as to kill him. We do not always have a third choice. While prayer might be considered a third choice, we pray in order to receive instructions from God and hope that the instructions are clear. Clear or not, we must do the responsible thing; unfortunately, the responsible thing may not be consistent with what life will be like in the Kingdom of God. We have to deal with the world in which we live, where a war is being fought between good and evil. Unfortunately, this war will only end when, according to Revelation 19:20 and 20:10, God finally casts the leader of the evil side into the lake of fire. Any assassinations of evil political or military leaders by us in this world are only temporary solutions to the problem.

4. THE SEDUCTION OF POWER (8:1 – 16:25)	
JUDITH'S PREPARATION (8:1 – 10:10)	
Judith's Background (8:1-8)	Judith's Rebuke of the Elders (8:9-36)
Daughter of Merari (8:1) Wife of Manasseh (8:2-3) A Widow for 3 years, 4 months (8:4) Pious and Beautiful (8:7-8)	Rebuke of Uzziah, Chabris, Charmis (8:11) The Challenge of Uzziah (8:28, 30-31) The Response (8:32 & 34)
Judith's Prayer (9:1-14)	Judith's Beautification (10:1-10)
The Reason (9:7-8) The Power (9:11)	The Preparation (10:3-5) The Sendoff (10:6-8)
JUDITH MEETS HOLOFERNES (10:11 – 11:23)	
A Patrol Picks Her Up (10:11-23)	The Scheme with Holofernes (11:1-23)
The Patrol (10:11) The Excuse (10:12b-13) The 100 Men (10:17)	The Affirmation of Achior (11:9-10) The Violation of the Law (11:12-13) The Plan to Pray (11:17)
HOLOFERNES' BANQUET (12:1 – 13:10a)	
The Excuse (12:2-4)	The Drunkenness (12:20)
The Three Day Pattern (12:7)	The Prayer (13:4b-5)
The Banquet on the Fourth Day (12:10)	The Execution (13:8-10a)
VICTORY FOR THE JEWS (13:10b – 15:13)	
The Return to Bethulia (13:10b-20)	Acior's Confirmation (14:1-10)
God acted in Judith (13:14) Judith did not Sin (13:16)	The Head is Displayed (14:1) The Head is Recognized (14:5)
Routing the Assyrians (14:11 – 15:7)	The Blessing of Judith (15:8-13)
They revealed themselves (14:11) Holofernes' Body is Discovered (14:14-15) The Assyrians Flee (15:1-2)	Joakim Greets Her (15:8) Judith gets the Plunder (15:11) The Branches and Garlands (15:12-13)
JUDITH'S SONG OF THANKSGIVING (16:1-17)	
God works through Judith (16:6-7)	God judges Nations (16:17)
JUDITH'S REWARD (16:18-25)	
A Three Month Celebration (16:20)	A Long Life (105 Years) (16:23)

5. ESTHER RESCUES HER PEOPLE

**Esther in the order of the Greek version,
but with chapter and verse numbers of the King James Version.**

ASSIGNMENTS				
Mordecai's Dream 11:2—12:6	The King's Two Letters 13:1-7 16:1-24	The Prayers of Mordecai and Esther 13:8—14:19	Esther's Approach to the King 15:1-16	Mordecai's Dream Interpreted 10:4—11:1

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER

The Name

The Book is named after its heroine and is an addition to what is called the Canonical Book of Esther. The Apocryphal Book of Esther contains six sections not in the Canonical Book. These six sections first appeared in the Septuagint (Greek) Version of the Hebrew Scriptures, but they were also placed in the Old Latin Version. When Jerome created the Vulgate Bible, he removed them from the main text and placed them at the end. The New Revised Standard Version of the Apocrypha maintains the chapter and verse numbering first used in the King James Version, but many scholars refer to the various sections by letters, naming them A to F.

The Author

In the last section, Esther 11:1, the author is named as Lysimachus, an Alexandrian Jew living in Jerusalem, but not everyone believes him to be the actual author. He may have been an editor. The reasons given for doubting his writing of all six sections are the inconsistencies and stylistic differences found throughout. He probably translated everything but the two Letters found in 13:1-7 and 16:1-24.

The Date

The date referred to in Esther 11:1 would be 114/113 B.C.E. or 78/77 B.C.E., or 49/48 B.C.E., with the translation of the Septuagint beginning in the third century and completed by 132 B.C.E. Since Josephus mentions many of these sections in 90 C.E., we can narrow the date down considerably, but another problem presents itself. At least four

of the sections, which may predate the Septuagint, contain Semitic idioms that have been translated into Greek. This means that they might have been written in Hebrew and later translated into Greek. This would make them considerably older and difficult to date.

The Purpose

The purpose of these additions to Esther is twofold: (1) to add a religious dimension to the Book of Esther and (2) to supply more details to the story. In the original Canonical Book of Esther nothing is said about God or religious practices; in the Apocryphal Book, both Mordecai and Esther pray to God, but their vindictive spirit continues. Nothing is included here, which raises the spiritual level of the book.

The Outline

- A. Mordecai's Dream and Act of Intercession (11:2—12:6)
[Esther 1:1—3:13]
- B. The King's First Letter (13:1-7)
[Esther 3:14—4:17]
- C. The Prayers of Mordecai and Esther (13:8—14:19)
- D. Esther's Approach to the King (15:1-16)
[Esther 5:3—8:12]
- E. The King's Second Letter (16:1-24)
[Esther 8:13—10:3]
- F. Mordecai's Dream Interpreted (10:4—11:1)

[A] MORDECAI'S DREAM AND ACT OF INTERCESSION (11:2—12:6)

The Dream (11:2-12)

Although it is difficult to be precise on the date of the dream, we are told precisely that Mordecai was taken into captivity in 597 B.C.E. when Nebuchadnezzar took King Jeconiah and the first captives. While the dream is dated in the second year of the reign of Artaxerxes the Great, on the first day of Nisan, the problem of dating lies with Artaxerxes. In the Septuagint, Xerxes I is translated into Artaxerxes, who reigned from 486 to 465 B.C.E., and so his second year would be 485 B.C.E. The dream would have then taken place 112 years after Mordecai's captivity. To make this more complicated, some think that the author has in mind Xerxes son, Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.E.) whose second year would have been 133 years later.

The dream is typically apocalyptic in which we find conflict between good and evil. The two dragons (11:6) represent Mordecai and Haman (11:7) and the tiny spring (11:10), which becomes a river, is Esther (10:6). God will deliver the righteous nation of Israel through his chosen vessel.

The Act of Intercession (12:1-6)

Overhearing the King's Eunuchs, Gabatha and Tharra, plot to kill the King, Mordecai informs the King and is rewarded (12:5). In the Hebrew account the eunuchs are named Bigthan and Teresh and nothing at all is done for Mordecai (6:3). These are conflicts in the details of the main point of the story, which do not matter much. The point is that Mordecai interceded on behalf of the King and saved his life. This act of intercession later helps Mordecai. The execution of the two eunuchs angered Haman, who might have been in on the plot. These main points are more important than the inconsistencies of minor details.

1. *Ahasuerus dethrones his Queen (1:1-22)*
2. *Ahasuerus chooses Esther as his Queen (2:1-23)*
3. *Haman's Plot to kill the Jews (3:1-13)*

[B] THE KING'S FIRST LETTER (13:1-7)

Haman, who is second in command, influences the King to write an Edict to destroy the Jewish people on the 14th of Adar. In Esther 3:10-12, Haman does this with the King's signet ring and according to Esther 3:13; 8:12; and 9:1, 17, the date is to be the 13th of Adar. This is corrected in 16:20. Adar takes place in February or March.

4. *Mordecai asks for Help (3:14—4:17)*

[C] THE PRAYERS OF MORDECAI AND ESTHER (13:8—14:19)

The Prayer of Mordecai (13:8-18)

Mordecai's prayer follows traditional Jewish prayers, but of course, no prayer is given in the traditional Book of Esther. It is included here to give a religious dimension to what Mordecai and Esther are doing on behalf of their people. Mordecai refuses to bow down, but there is nothing in Jewish Law prohibiting a person from bowing before a ruler or superior. They are, however, not to bow down before idols.

The Prayer of Esther (14:1-19)

Humbling herself before God by taking off her royal garments, Esther prays as a simple Jewish woman. She apologizes for relating to Gentiles and carefully watches what she eats. In the Book of Esther, this does not seem to be the implication of such passages as 2:9, 18; 5:5; and 7:1. She eats freely with Gentiles and nothing is said about any special diet. This prayer, like Mordecai's, is to give the impression that Esther is a religious Jew.

[D] ESTHER'S APPROACH TO THE KING (15:1-16)

While this section follows the prayers of Mordecai and Esther, it does not appear to be written by the same person. Taking off the clothes she used in prayer, she prepares herself

to approach the King without having been summoned. This, according to Esther 4:11, was a capital offense; knowing this, Esther makes herself beautiful (15:5). This does not mean that she is without fear, for in her approach she is “frozen with fear.” This in the end saves her, for as she is questioned, she faints. God then changes the spirit of the king to gentleness (15:8) and he assures her that the law only applies to common people (15:10). Her response is very different to the content of her prayer. In her prayer she indicated that she could hardly stand to be with Gentiles (14:15), but now she looks upon the King as “an angel of God.” (15:13)

5. Esther gives a Dinner Party (5:3-14)

6. Ahasuerus honors Mordecai (6:1-14)

7. Haman is put to death (7:1-10)

8. Mordecai’s New Edict (8:1-12)

[E] THE KING’S SECOND LETTER (16:1-24)

In the Biblical Book of Esther we get the idea that the first letter could not be revoked, and that the only solution is to arm the Jews to defend themselves. In this chapter we discover that although the first letter cannot be revoked, it does not have to be carried out (16:17) and that the King recommends that it be ignored. Since Haman has already been executed, it makes no sense to obey the letter that bore the content of his wicked schemes.

In the Biblical account, Haman is described as an Agagite (3:1), which would have been an Amalikite, the traditional enemies of Israel; here, Haman is described as a Macedonian (16:10), whose scheme was to transfer the Kingdom of the Persians to the Macedonians. Could this be an allusion to Alexander the Great’s attempt to Hellenize the world? The Jews resisted every attempt at Hellenization and were defenders of the Persians, who gave them reinforcements with which to protect themselves.

9. The Jews Rejoice (8:13-17)

10. The Jews kill their enemies (9:1-19)

11. The Festival of Purim (9:20-32)

12. The Exaltation of Mordecai (10:1-3)

[F] Mordecai’s Dream Interpreted (10:4—11:1)

Two things happen in this section. Mordecai interprets his dream and information is given about the date and authorship.

Esther is described as the spring, which became a river and the two dragons are described as Haman and Mordecai. The dream has been fulfilled in the execution of Haman and in Esther’s approach to the King. The enemy described here, however, is more than Haman. He simply represents a general anti-Semitic feeling that was very widespread. As a result of God’s intercession on behalf of the Jews, they are to observe these days of deliverance throughout all their generations.

Although Esther 11:1 seems like a reference to dating the fourth year, but it is not without problems. For 300 years three Kings of Egypt were named Ptolemy and all of them married women named Cleopatra. The fourth year could have been 114/113 B.C.E., or 78/77 B.C.E., or 49-48 B.C.E.

ONLY IN GOD WE TRUST

Written on our coins and on our bills, is the motto: “In God We Trust.” Perhaps it should read: “*Only* in God We Trust.” The reason for this change is that we trust in many gods when we should *only* trust in God.

One of the most popular books, of the Old Testament, is Esther. Which, never even mentions the name of God, nor does anyone pray in this book. When the Hebrew Scriptures were being selected as Scripture, the scholars wanted to eliminate this book because it lacked a theological foundation. What kept it in the Bible was the popularity this book had among the common people. It was popular because of the simple story of a Jewish girl who saved her people from genocide, even if nothing was said about her relationship with God.

In the Apocryphal additions to Esther, both God and prayer are mentioned. Mordecai and Esther both pray to God before Esther approaches the King to get him to write a new decree, which will arm the Jews against those who would destroy them. These two prayers are very interesting. In Mordecai’s prayer, he refuses to bow down before Haman, who was second in command to the King. It was not prohibited for a Jew to bow before a political leader in respect, but Mordecai refuses for other reasons. He said in his prayer, recorded in Esther 13:14 (4:23), “But I did this so that I might not set human glory above the glory of God, and I will not bow down to anyone but you, who are my Lord; and I will not do these things in pride.” Esther also humbled herself before the Lord and in Esther 14:15 (4:42), she prayed, “You have knowledge of all things, and you know that I hate the splendor of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of any alien.” Both Mordecai and Esther refuse to trust in anyone but God. They shun both arrogance and pagans and deal with them only to accomplish their goal of saving God’s people from disaster. They trust *only* in God.

Why have these additions to Esther not been included in the Hebrew Scriptures to make up for the absence of any reference to God and prayer in the Book of Esther? A number of reasons could be given, but the best one is that they are not necessary to the truth which the original story conveys. Esther did trust *only* in God even if she does not say so and that is much better than to say so and not do so. Esther risked her life to help people whose very life was threatened. In Jesus’ Parable of the Last Judgment, Esther would be considered one of the sheep being gathered on his right side, who will ask, “And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” The answer from Jesus will be, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40) Trusting *only* in God has

more to do with what is done than what is said; that is what happens in the original Book of Esther.

In the prayer of Esther, found in the Apocrypha, she expresses her disdain for the uncircumcised or any alien. This is never expressed in the original book and that is one of the best reasons for keeping the addition to Esther out of the Bible. It adds nothing. If Esther truly trusts *only* in God, then she must do so even when no reference is made to God. The reverse side of all this is that making an appeal to God does not help when one has not truly trusted in Him. Those on Jesus' left discover that their efforts were in vain, for using God's name does not insure their acceptance in God's Kingdom.

In fact, using the name of God and then not trusting *only* in Him is a violation of the third commandment, which says in Exodus 20:7, "You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name." Perhaps it would be better not to have this inscription on our currency at all than to have it there without meaning it. Why can we not do both—leave the inscription on our coins and bills and trust *only* in God? While there is nothing wrong with this, it is not likely to happen in the entire society; moreover, we now live in a pluralistic society in which many different kinds of gods are being trusted.

While there is nothing wrong with God's people using the motto "In God We Trust," there is a problem with our using such a motto in a secular society like our own. For God's people, it becomes a goal to be sought, but for those who have no desire to trust in God, it would be better not even to use it. Let us reserve such mottos only for those who really care about them. When we interact in secular society, let us not force our mottos on others; rather, let us trust only in the Lord, even if we do not mention the name. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven," says Jesus in Matthew 7:21, "but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." Esther apparently accomplished the will of God without making any reference to Him. So can we. Using the name will not make any difference, if we do not carry through by doing his will.

5. ESTHER RESCUES HER PEOPLE (Additions to Esther)			
A. MORDECAI'S DREAM AND THE ACT OF INTERCESSION (11:2—12:6)			
What? (11:2) Dream of Mordecai	When? (11:2) 2nd Year of Artax- erxes/Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.) 1st of Nisan	Where? (11:3) Susa	Who? (11:4) Captive of Nebuchadnezzar
The Dream (11:2-12)			
Two Dragons Ready to Fight (11:6) [Mordecai and Haman 10:7]		A Tiny Spring to a great River (11:10) [Esther 10:6]	
The Intercession (12:1-6)			
The Rebellious Eunuchs (12:1) Gabatha and Tharran(G) Bighthana and Teresh (H) (6:2)	Mordecai informs on them and they are Executed (12:3)	Haman Seeks to injure Mordecai (12:6)	
<i>1. Ahasuerus dethrones his Queen (1:1-22)</i> <i>2. Ahasuerus chooses Esther as his Queen (2:1-23)</i> <i>3. Haman's Plot to kill the Jews (3:1-13)</i>			
B. THE KING'S FIRST LETTER (13:1-7) Dictated by Haman)			
The Letter to 127 Provinces (13:1)		Kill the Jews on the 14th of Adar (13:6) (13th of Adar in 3:13; 8:12; 9:1, 17)	
<i>4 Mordecai asks for Help (3:14—4:17)</i>			
C. THE PRAYERS (13:8—14:19)			
Mordecai refuses to Bow to Haman (13:12, 14)		Esther hates relating to Gentiles (14:15 & 17)	
D. ESTHER'S APPROACH TO THE KING (15:1-16)			
Esther (15:5)		The King (15:7-8)	
Radiant with Beauty & Frozen with Fear (15:5)		Fierce Anger to a Spirit of Gentleness (15:7-8)	
<i>5. Esther gives a Dinner Party (5:3-14)</i> <i>6. Ahasuerus honors Mordecai (6:1-14)</i> <i>7. Haman is put to death (7:1-10)</i> <i>8. Mordecai's New Edict (8:1-12)</i>			
E. THE KING'S SECOND LETTER (16:1-24) (Dictated by Mordecai)			
Sent to 127 Satrapies (16:1)	Stop the Hellenization (16:14b)	No Need to do It (16:17)	Post it in Public (16:19)
<i>9. The Jews Rejoice (8:13-17)</i> <i>10. The Jews kill their Enemies (9:1-19)</i>		<i>11. The Festival of Purim (9:20-32)</i> <i>12. The Exaltation of Mordecai (10:1-3)</i>	
F. MORDECAI'S DREAM INTERPRETED (10:4—11:1)			
The Spring became a River (Esther) (10:6) The Two Dragons (Haman's Execution) (10:7)		14 & 15 of Adar (10:13) 4th Year of Ptolemy & Cleopatra (114-113)	

6. GOOD ADVICE FOR POLITICAL LEADERS

Wisdom of Solomon 1:1—9:18

ASSIGNMENTS			
Righteousness and Wickedness 1:1—2:24	Judgment after Death 3:1—5:23	Wisdom and Solomon 6:1—8:1	Wisdom and Prayer 8:2—9:18

INTRODUCTION TO THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

The Name

In the Latin Vulgate the name was translated into “The Book of Wisdom.” It was originally named “The Wisdom of Solomon,” because there is a claim within it to be written by Solomon.

The Author

There are good reasons for saying that this book was not written by Solomon. It was clearly written in Greek by an unknown Hellenistic Jew in Alexandria in the First Century B.C.E. There is evidence that the author used earlier wisdom material, but everything seems to point to an editor, who brought a variety of sources together. What really differentiates this material from Solomon is the radical difference in style. Solomon wrote short pithy proverbial statements. This book consists of material, which is more like an essay on wisdom. The focus is not on preparing young men for leadership in society, but to prepare Jewish society for the onslaught of Hellenistic culture.

The Date

The tension between Judaism and Greek culture did not take place in Solomon’s time, but it was a problem in the First Century before Christ. It is difficult to date this book precisely, but 50 B.C.E. would be a good guess. This would have been shortly after the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, the so-called Septuagint.

The Purpose

The Wisdom of Solomon has been called the most important of the Old Testament Apocryphal Books. It recognizes the attraction of Greek art, literature and philosophy. In addition the relaxed morality of the time had a powerful appeal to Hellenized Jews living in Alexandria and anywhere in the Greek dominated world. The author does not simply reject everything that is Greek, but tries to make some kind of accommodation with the Greek world. He is the first to achieve such rapprochement, but is followed by Philo Judaeus and the Alexandrian Christian fathers, Clement and Origen. The Apostle Paul was another example of someone trying to live faithfully in an alien culture, without rejecting everything from that culture. He used the good parts of the culture and rejected the bad. That was the purpose of this author as well.

The book is also important for the development of some theological ideas we still find prevalent in Western Religion. The first is the immortality of the soul in contrast to the Jewish idea of the resurrection of the Body (1:15-16 and 3:1-4). The second is the blaming of death and illness on the work of the devil, who tempted the first couple in Eden (2:24). Finally, wisdom is described as God’s agent in creation (7:22—8:1). This last idea penetrates the New Testament as well, primarily in John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-17; and Hebrews 1:2-3.

1:1—5:23	6:1—9:18	10:1—12:27	13:1—15:17	15:18—19:21	19:22
Comparing Righteousness and Wickedness	In Praise of Wisdom	Examples of the Power of Wisdom	The Nature of Idolatry	Contrast between Egypt and Israel	A Final Doxology

The Outline

- A. Comparing Righteousness and Wickedness (1:1—5:23)
- B. In Praise of Wisdom (6:1—9:18)
- C. Examples of the Power of Wisdom (10:1—12:27)
- D. The Nature of Idolatry (13:1—15:17)
- E. The Contrast Between Egypt and Israel (15:18—19:21)
- F. A Final Doxology (19:22)

COMPARING RIGHTEOUSNESS AND WICKEDNESS (1:1—5:23)

Righteousness Leads to Immortality (1:1-15)

The author begins by addressing the “rulers of the earth,” whom are the wealthy and educated Jews living in Alexandria and in danger of losing their faith. They are encouraged to adopt a life of righteousness. The argument is simple. God is not the author of death, nor does he delight in it (1:13); rather, God is the author of life and righteousness is the path that leads to wisdom (1:4) and immortality (1:15). Immortality is not innate in the soul, but God’s gift to the righteous.

Wickedness Leads to Eternal Death (1:16—2:24)

The Book of Ecclesiastes might lie behind the opening argument for wickedness, which of course, is not the author’s conclusion. It belongs to the skeptic. Because life is short (2:1), birth the result of mere chance (2:2), and death the end of everything (2:5). The only solution is to eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Living in revelry is the solution to what otherwise would be a meaningless life. This is to be done even at the expense of the poor, widows, and elderly (2:10). The new law is for “might” to replace “right.” (2:11).

The conclusion of the author is that wickedness blinds us to the secret purposes of God (2:21-22) and it makes us incapable of recognizing how God’s judgment operates. The righteous will be rewarded in the future life, for God creates us in his image for immortality (2:23). Death entered our world through the devil (2:24) and ungodly people (1:16). This is the first time that the Devil is related to the Serpent in the Genesis story.

Judgment After Death (3:1—5:23)

The traditional rewards for righteousness, such as many children (Job 5:25 and Psalm 127:3-5) and long life (Job 5:26 and Proverbs 3:16), are challenged. Sometimes it is better to remain childless (Isaiah 56:3-5 and Matthew 19:12). The barren woman and eunuch are given as examples (3:13-14). Some of the greatest men of God were taken in their youth, such as was Enoch (4:10 and Genesis 5:24). Although Enoch lived to be 365 years old, that was several hundred years less than his contemporaries.

Immortality belongs to the righteous (3:4) and punishment to the wicked (3:10). The wicked are like ships that sail through the water, birds that fly through the air, and arrows shot at a target. They leave no path or mark of their existence (5:9-13). The righteous will live forever and their reward is to be with the Lord (5:15). The Lord will do battle for them and they will be equipped with the whole armor of God (5:17-23). This passage concerning the armor of God is based on Isaiah 59:17 and is further echoed in Ephesians 6:11-17. The various parts of the armor may not be described exactly the same, but the concept of the armor protecting God’s children is similar in all three passages. The righteous will be rewarded with immortality.

IN PRAISE OF WISDOM (6:1—9:18)

Wisdom and Rulers (6:1-25)

The author is speaking to kings, judges, and all who rule over others. The Lord does not stand in awe of anyone, but calls everyone to get wisdom. The beginning of wisdom is the desire for instruction and the keeping of God's laws, which leads to immortality and the Kingdom of God (6:17-20). The salvation and stability of the world depends upon rulers who are wise (6:24).

The Bible contains many passages that praise wisdom. Some of the more common are Job 28, Proverbs 1:20-33, and 8:1—9:6. In all of these God is the source of wisdom and wisdom is to fear him, obey his commandments, and shun evil.

Solomon's Testimony (7:1—8:1)

Kings begin their lives just like everyone else. They are human beings (7:4-6). Wisdom is achieved through prayer (7:7-8). This is how Solomon himself achieved it (1 Kings 3:9) and it is how everyone will have to obtain it. Once obtained, it is a treasure in itself and a way to obtain friendship with god (7:14). It is also the key to understanding everything else in life; nothing else can compare to it.

Twenty-one characteristics of wisdom are given in 7:22b-23. Such wisdom should be sought, for God loves nothing so much as a person who lives with wisdom. Such persons are his friends. That is how they obtain immortality (7:27b-28). Evil cannot prevail against wisdom (7:30b).

There seems to be an attempt to compare Greek philosophical concepts of wisdom to theological concepts. This can be further seen in such New Testament passages as John 1:1-14 and Hebrews 1:1-3.

The Desire for Wisdom (8:2-21)

Solomon loved and desired wisdom as his bride. There are many reasons for this attraction, but three stand out. First, she—that is wisdom—teaches the Greek Cardinal Virtues of self-control, prudence, justice, and courage (8:7). Next, she offers immortality (8:13); finally, those who live with her will experience gladness and joy (8:16).

How was wisdom to be won? Even though “a good soul” fell to Solomon (8:19), he recognized that he could not gain wisdom on his own. Wisdom was the gift of God and could only be achieved through prayer (8:21). The reference to “a good soul” alludes to the Platonic idea of the pre-existence of the soul, a gift from God, which must be returned (15:8).

The Prayer for Wisdom (9:1-18)

The prayer for wisdom begins with the recognition that God has created all things through his word and wisdom. This same idea is expressed in John 1:1-3, where word is equated with Jesus Christ, the author of truth and freedom (John 8:31-32).

The possession of wisdom helps one to discern the Will of God (9:10), and enables one to judge fairly (9:12). Solomon became known for these two things, even if he blew it at the end of his career. Wisdom saves those who maintain contact with it, but it cannot help those who stray from it. As God's gift, it is discerned not only in his Son Jesus Christ, but also in the Holy Spirit (9:17), the gift, which Jesus promised, would come following his ascension.

THE ROLE OF OUR POLITICAL LEADERS

Our leaders affect our lives for good or for bad; therefore, they better know what they are doing. The Wisdom of Solomon says that they need to love righteousness (1:1) and learn wisdom (6:9). Wisdom, as we have seen before, has to do with reverence for (or fear of) God, obeying the commandments and shunning evil. This classical definition of wisdom is also a good job description for political leaders. The way they live will also determine the way the rest of us live. That is why it is so important for them to love righteousness and learn wisdom.

Both of these things are obtained through prayer, which humbles our political leaders before God. They must be made aware of the fact that they are not gods and that they too must live in subservience to the higher power. In this relationship, they come to know God's Will, so that they can organize justice according to God's righteousness.

King's are human too and that makes their concepts of righteousness and wisdom open to selfish ambition and prone to arrogance. While Solomon was considered the wisest man who ever lived, the end of his reign shows everything but wisdom. We expect our leaders to know God and his commandments, but we do not want them to identify their own ambitions with God's will.

Leaders who love righteousness and desire wisdom will not make decisions on the basis of selfish ambition or simply to satisfy the selfishness of their constituents. Their standard for justice is God's righteousness: they are willing to accept that standard through prayer. It means that they will make decisions that may actually be contrary to what the majority might want. In a democracy, this can be political suicide.

If leaders are going to take their cue from God, then they are going to have to be extremely careful in separating God's Will from their own ambitions. This will require the ability to discern the Will of God and to judge fairly.

6. GOOD ADVICE FOR POLITICAL LEADERS (1:1—9:18)

COMPARING RIGHTEOUSNESS AND WICKEDNESS (1:1—5:23)

Immortality (1:1-15)	Eternal Death (1:16—2:24)	Judgment (3:1—5:23)
<p style="text-align: center;">To the Rulers of the Earth (1:1)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">God is not responsible for Death (1:13)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Righteousness leads to Immortality (1:15)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Life is Short We are born of chance (2:1-2)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Eat, Drink, and be Merry (2:6-9)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The New Law: Might replaces Right (2:11)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Devil is responsible for Death (2:24)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Traditional Values:</p> <p>(1) Children (2) Long Life</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Values:</p> <p>(1) Virtue of Life (3:13-14; 4:1)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Barren Women Eunuchs</p> <p>(2) Quality of Life (4:10)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Enoch (They in NRSV)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Evil (5:9-13) <i>Ship, Bird, Arrow</i> Righteous (5:15, 17-20) <i>(Isaiah 59:17 and Ephesians 6:11-17)</i></p>

IN PRAISE OF WISDOM (6:1—9:18)

Wisdom and Rulers (6:1-25)	The Content of Wisdom (8:2-21)
<p>Kings and Judges (6:1)</p> <p>The Lowliest may be Pardoned (6:6)</p> <p>Leaders Need Wisdom (6:9)</p> <p>Wisdom is...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Desire for Instruction (6:17) 2. Keeping God's Laws (6:18) 3. Immortality and the Kingdom (6:19-20) 4. Salvation & Stability of World (6:24) 	<p>Take Wisdom as a Bride (8:2)</p> <p>Wisdom and the Cardinal Virtues (8:7)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self Control 2. Prudence 3. Justice 4. Courage <p>Wisdom gives Immortality (8:13 and 17)</p> <p>Wisdom gives Gladness and Joy (8:16 and 18)</p>
Solomon's Testimony (7:1—8:1)	The Prayer for Wisdom (9:1-18)
<p>Kings are Human too (7:1-6)</p> <p>Wisdom is achieved through Prayer (7:7-8)</p> <p>The Characteristics of Wisdom (7:22b-23)</p> <p>More beautiful than the Universe (7:29)</p> <p>Wisdom overcomes Evil (7:30)</p>	<p>God creates all things (9:1-2a)</p> <p>Discernment of the Will of God (9:10)</p> <p>Ability to Judge Fairly (9:12)</p> <p>Pray for the Holy Spirit (9:17-18)</p>

7. THE POWER OF WISDOM

Wisdom of Solomon 10:1—19:22

ASSIGNMENTS			
Examples of Wisdom 10:1—12:27	The Nature of Idolatry 13:1—15:17	Punishments and Rewards 15:18—16:29	The Justification of Divine Punishment 17:1—19:22

EXAMPLES OF THE POWER OF WISDOM (10:1—12:27)

Examples in History (10:1-21)

A summary of historical events is given beginning with Adam and ending with Moses. One thing is peculiar. No names are mentioned, but this does not keep us from recognizing those who chose wisdom. They are referred to as the righteous. This fits in with the traditional definition of wisdom, which is to fear the Lord, obey the commandments and shun evil. That is precisely what the heroes from Abraham to Moses did. Two are also mentioned who did not do this; they are Cain (10:3) and Lot's wife (10:7-8). The ones who did are Adam (10:1-2), Noah (10:4), Abraham (10:5), Lot (10:6), Jacob (10:9-12), Joseph (10:13-14) and Moses (10:15-21). These were wise men, because they worshipped God and sang praises to His wisdom.

The Consequences of Rejecting Wisdom (11:1—12:2)

Wisdom brought prosperity to Israel, but its rejection brought punishment to Egypt. When Israel cried out for water in the wilderness, water flowed from the rock (11:4). Egypt with its mighty Nile found its abundant water turning into blood (11:6). This does not mean that God loved Israel more than He did Egypt. Even God's punishment is tempered by his mercy. He increases the punishment in order to lead people towards repentance, but if they refuse to be led, then their own sins play a role in punishing them.

Instead of worshipping the Lord, Egypt worshipped animals. In the end the animals they worshipped turned on them (11:15-16). This is the meaning of some of the plagues, which involved frogs, gnats, flies and locusts. God was trying to move Egypt to repentance, but its Pharaoh and its people would not be moved.

Examples of Judgment (12:3-27)

God's condemnation of the Canaanites was not impulsive. He exercised extreme patience, even though he hated the Canaanite's sin of child sacrifice (12:5); but because they were human beings (12:8), he gave them every opportunity to repent (12:10). All the while, he knew they would not. God pursued the Canaanites with patience and mercy respecting their "freedom of choice," a gift he also gave to Israel. When he finally had to condemn the Canaanites, it was with righteousness and fairness. God condemns no one unjustly (12:15). If God exercised such patience and mercy on the Canaanites, think of how patient and merciful he must be in regard to those descendants of the fathers of the faith who made a covenant with him? (12:20-21)

The people rightly condemned by God were the Egyptians. They were tormented first by the very animals that they worshipped, and although they acknowledged Israel's God as the Lord, they refused to liberate their Hebrew slaves. God exercised extreme patience and mercy, but his gifts were not received. This resulted in the "utmost condemnation" of the loss of their first-born sons (12:26-27). God acted justly in regard to both the Canaanites and the Egyptians and we can depend upon him to act justly in regard to all people, including ourselves.

THE NATURE OF IDOLATRY (13:1—15:17)

Types of Idolatries (13:1-19)

The Worship of Living Nature (13:1-9)

The beauty and power of nature should move the seeker of God to the Creator. Those who worship nature stop short of its true object. They should know better (13:3-5 and Romans 1:19-20). Of the two kinds of idolatry, this is the least objectionable; but it still needs to be overcome.

The Worship of Dead Objects (13:10-19)

The worst kind of idolatry consists of the worship of handmade lifeless objects (13:10), which have no power to affect or influence our lives (13:17-19). There is no excuse for worshipping something that we have made and there is folly in praying to it. One might as well eat ashes (Isaiah 44:9-20).

The Sources of Idolatry (14:1-31)

Following an illustration of asking for guidance from a god shaped out of a piece of wood from a ship (14:1-7), the writer goes on to identify two sources of idolatry. The first source is the desire to make an image of a child lost in death (14:15) and the second source has to do with making an image of a distant monarch (14:16-17). This latter source fits into the theory of Euhemerus (300 B.C.E.), who suggested that gods were nothing but deified mortals.

Making idols is not an innocent practice of remembering the image of a dead child or reminding oneself of the presence of a distant monarch. It is a dangerous business, which results in immorality. One's distorted image of God always leads to immorality and for the Canaanites it led to child sacrifice and sacred prostitution. These problems are mentioned here in the Wisdom of Solomon 14:23-24, but also in Romans 1:24-32. The creation and worship of idols always leads to evil (14:27).

The Consequences Compared (15:1-17)

Those who worship God will know "righteousness" and obtain "immortality" (15:3), but those who worship idols will "sin" and become "immoral" (15:13 and 17). The idol is not as good as the one who makes it, for it is dead while its creator lives. We are to worship the living God, not a dead image.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL (15:18—19:21)

Punishments and Rewards (15:18—16:29)

The Egyptians worshipped animals and were tormented by them (15:18; 16:1). That they were killed by the bites of locusts and flies is not mentioned in the Old Testament. What is mentioned is their attack on them. In contrast to this, the Israelites received quails to eat. They were also attacked by the bites of serpents, but it was only a warning (16:5-6). All who looked upon the bronze serpent, according to Numbers 21:9, were healed. The bronze serpent was not an idol, but a reminder of the Law (16:6b). The healing came by means of God's Word (16:12 and 26).

Another punishment given to the Egyptians was the rain of hail that destroyed all their crops (16:15-16); even though the Israelites were without food in the desert, God rained the food of angels—manna—upon them (16:20).

The chapter closes with a warning about gratitude and ingratitude. The grateful will thank God morning and night, but the ungrateful will see all their hope melt like the wintry frost exposed to the sun (16:28-29).

Darkness and Light (17:1—18:4)

Chapter 17 and part of 18 is an expanded poetical paraphrase of Exodus 10:21-23 in which the Egyptians find themselves in total darkness while the Israelites find themselves surrounded by light. All this takes place at the same time. The author is undoubtedly comparing the moral darkness of Egypt in the time of the Pharaohs with the moral darkness of contemporary Alexandria. The darkness of Egypt is self-imposed. They live in a prison not made of iron (17:2, 16). In contrast to their moral darkness, Israel—the Holy One—lives in moral light (18:1). This light became a pillar of fire to guide Israel on its journey (18:3), but it is not to be hidden, for Israel must share its light with the world (18:4b).

The Visitation of Death (18:5-25)

The Egyptians started the visitation of death with the killing of the Hebrew children; but one, Moses, was rescued and led the multitude out of Egypt (18:5). As the Israelites left Egypt, God destroyed all of the Egyptian first born and many of their soldiers in the Red Sea. The visitation of death upon the Egyptian children is vividly described in 18:14-16, where God's Word, like a stern warrior, leaps from heaven to carry out the death sentence that touches nearly every Egyptian family. This same image can be seen in Revelation 19:11-15, where the Word of God carries out judgment on earth.

During the Exodus, the Hebrew families were spared the visitation of death (Exodus 12:23), but death would also visit them. The example of Korah's rebellion is given in which 14,700 Israelites died in a plague before Aaron interceded on their behalf (18:20-22 and Numbers 16), putting an end to God's visitation of death. God was ready to wipe out more, but Aaron stopped the visitation of death by appealing to the oaths and covenants God had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Deliverance and Punishment (19:1-21)

Using the power of nature, God delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery (19:6-8). At the same time God was forced to punish the Egyptians (19:13-14). The Egyptians were not unfairly punished. They had been inhospitable to the Israelites. Even after being forced to set the Israelites free, the Egyptians were intent on recapturing them to continue their enslavement. Punishment of the Egyptians was just.

A FINAL DOXOLOGY (19:22)

In this final doxology we are told the lesson of the historical survey in this entire book; God is to be glorified. He has heard the cries of his people, and he has delivered them. What has happened in the past will happen in the future. God can be trusted at all times and in all places.

IDOLATRY

Sometimes we think that idolatry is harmless. So what if people want to make their own gods and worship them. What we do not realize is that idolatry always leads to immorality. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the history of the holy land. It is difficult for us to understand why God would call a people out of Egypt to go into the holy land and kill everyone—men, women and children. In the Wisdom of Solomon 12:3-5 we are given the reason: "Those who lived long ago in your holy land you hated for their detestable practices, their works of sorcery and unholy rites, their merciless slaughter of children, and their sacrificial feasting on human flesh and blood." In short, those who had made their own gods, served them by sacrificing their children and by participating in sacred prostitution. As God's people replaced the idolaters of Canaan, they were warned not to imitate the Canaanite practice of idolatry.

Making idols has always been a common practice. Some of the more common idols were the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, planets, and stars. They seemed like gods and so the people worshipped them. In doing so, they turned what God had created into idols (13:2). At the same time God called his people to look beyond creation to himself. That was difficult to do, because, God could not be seen. It was easier to worship a revered monarch, even after that monarch had died. They could make a visible image of the king whom they honored (14:17) Another source of idolatry, was the image of a child lost prematurely to death (14:15). God rejected all of these practices and warned that they all lead into immorality. The Wisdom of Solomon 14:12-13 states it clearly: “For the idea of making idols was the beginning of fornication, and the invention of them was the corruption of life; for they did not exist from the beginning, nor will they last forever.”

Idolatry leads us into darkness. The worship of God leads us into light. This contrast is made in The Wisdom of Solomon 18:3-4:

Therefore you provided a flaming pillar of fire as a guide for your people’s unknown journey, and a harmless sun for their glorious wandering. For their enemies deserved to be deprived of light and imprisoned in darkness, those who had kept your children imprisoned, through whom the imperishable light of the law was to be given to the world.

The Law was given to help people avoid idolatry and to enter into an authentic relationship with God. When that seemed to fail, the prophets began to contrast the letter of the law with the spirit of the law. The wise men of old had been trying to say these things but they lacked the zeal of the prophets. In Jesus Christ we see an interpreter of the law, a wise man, and a prophet all wrapped up into one. We think of him as the Son of God because in him we gain an authentic image of God. Without him all we can do is to make our own useless images of God, which are nothing but idols and lead us into immoral behavior.

The modern idols are our addictions, some of which are nationalism, money, alcohol, drugs, sex, etc. From these idols we need to be delivered or we flounder in immorality. The purpose of religion is to acquaint us with the divine who can deliver us from all idolatry and addiction and move us in the direction of righteousness and immortality. The Wisdom of Solomon 15:3 sums this thought up beautifully:

For to know you is complete
righteousness,
and to know your power is the
root of immortality.

7. THE POWER OF WISDOM (10:1 – 19:22)

EXAMPLES OF THE POWER OF WISDOM (10:1 – 12:27)

Examples in History (10:1-21)		Consequences (11:1 – 12:2)	Examples of Judgment (12:3-27)
NEGATIVE Cain (10:3) Lot's Wife (10:7-8)	POSITIVE Adam (10:1-2) Noah (10:4) Abraham (10:5) Lot (10:6) Jacob (10:9-12) Joseph (10:13-14) Moses (10:15-21)	Prosperity to Israel (11:4) Punishment to Egypt (11:6, 15)	Canaan: Child Sacrifice (12:5, 10) Israel: Covenant (12:20-22) Egypt: First Born (12:26)

THE NATURE OF IDOLATRY (13:1 – 15:17)

Types (13:1-19)	Sources (14:1-31)	Consequences (15:1-17)
Least Objectionable (13:3-6a) Worship of Living Nature	Wood from a Ship (14:1-7) 1. Image of a Dead Child (14:15) 2. Image of a Monarch (14:16-17)	Worship God and know...(15:3) Righteousness Immortality
Most Objectionable (13:10) Worship of Dead Objects	Idolatry leads to Immorality (14:27) Child Sacrifice (14:23) Sacred Prostitution (14:24)	Worship Idols and know (15:13,17) Sin Immorality

CONTRAST BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL (15:18 – 19:21)

Punishment and Rewards (15:18 – 16:29)		Visitation of Death (18:5-25)	
Punished by Animals (15:18 & 16:1) Hail (16:15-16)	Rewarded with Quail (16:2) Food of Angels (16:20)	The Hebrew Children (18:5a) Death in the Red Sea (18:5b)	The First Born Sons (18:5b, 14-16) Korah's Rebellion (18:20-22) 14,700
Ingratitude and Gratitude (16:26, 28-29)			
Darkness and Light (17:1 – 18:4)		Deliverance and Punishment (19:1-21)	
Self-Imposed Darkness (17:2, 16, 21, 18:4a)	The Gift of Light (17:20, 18:1, 3)	Deliverance of Israel (19:6-8)	Punishment of Egypt (19:13-14)

FINAL DOXOLOGY (19:22)

8. THE ORIGIN AND GOAL OF WISDOM

Sirach 1:1—10:5

ASSIGNMENTS					
The First Instruction on Wisdom 1:1-30	Temptation and Parents 2:1—3:16	Humility and Alms 3:17—4:10	The Pursuit of Wisdom 4:11—6:37	Warnings and Advice 7:1—9:16	Wisdom in the Ruler 9:17—10:15

INTRODUCTION TO SIRACH

The Name

The original title is unknown. The book was originally written in Hebrew and no complete Hebrew text exists. Those that do exist lack the opening passage, which would have included the title. The Greek manuscripts introduce the book as “The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach.” In Hebrew the author would be, “Joshua (Jeshua) ben Sira.” When it was translated into Latin, the title became known as *Ecclesiasticus*, which means “The Church’s Book.” It probably received this title, because it was highly regarded used more frequently than all of the other Deutero-canonical Books. If we were to guess what the original title was, the best guess would be “The Wisdom of Ben Sira,” the Hebrew title given to it in the Talmud.

The Author

Of all the books in the Apocrypha, this is the only one, which tells us who wrote it and where he lived. According to 50:27, his name was Jesus the son of Sirach and he lived in Jerusalem, where he conducted an academy, lecturing to young men on religious and moral subjects. At some point, probably late in his career, he committed his oral teachings to writing in two volumes. While the two volumes are easily distinguished as being chapters 1-23 and 24-51, they both are very difficult to outline.

The Date

There is evidence in chapter 50:1-24 that helps scholars to date this book with a fair amount of precision to around 180 B.C.E. The original was written in Hebrew. His grandson translated it into Greek around 132 B.C.E. and Jerome translated it into Latin

around 400 C.E. After that the Hebrew copies dropped from sight. The Greek translations are now regarded as the basic texts, even though the original was written in Hebrew. Of course it would be nice to get back to the original Hebrew text, as scholars are always trying. Two developments have occurred in this century that have aided in this effort. In 1896 they found a Genizah in an old Cairo Synagogue. A Genizah is a storeroom for worn out and discarded manuscripts. By 1931, they had identified five fragments of this book in Hebrew, which together, make up two-thirds of the book. The difficulty is that these fragments date back only to the eleventh century C.E., so initially many scholars suspected that they were mere translations of the Greek. Then the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered and by 1952 more Hebrew texts began appearing. There was a scroll containing chapters, 39:27 to 44:17 and two fragments containing 6:20-31 and 51:13-20. All of these dated to the time of Jesus and seem to confirm the validity of the Cairo fragments.

The Purpose

The author’s purpose was to put his teachings down in writing, so we find essays, maxims, hymns, prayers, eulogies, and autobiographical allusions. What is really significant is that this author bridges the gap between the early wisdom teachers of Proverbs and the later rabbis of the Talmud. This would include the rabbinical schools of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Wisdom is defined consistently with Proverbs 9:10 which defines it as “the fear of the Lord.” It is also personified. What is new in Sirach is the emphasis on the Law, the election of Israel, the monarchy of David, and the priesthood of Aaron. This is the first time that wisdom is connected with the Law (24:23). This is the book’s most unique feature and greatest contribution. By Law the author means the Pentateuch, but his emphasis is on its moral, rather than its ritual prescriptions.

How do we attain wisdom, he asks, only to answer, by listening to the wise men and meditating on the Law (6:32-37). In making this connection, he is the first to look back to the wisdom of the Proverbs and anticipate the wisdom of rabbinic Judaism.

1:1—10:5	10:6—23:27	24:1—36:17	36:18—42:14	42:15—51:30
Origin and Goal of Wisdom	Divine Wisdom and Human Behavior	Lessons on Living	Practical Guide for Living	God in Creation and History

The Outline

A. Book One (1-23)

1. The Origin and Goal of Wisdom (1:1—10:5)
2. Divine Wisdom and Human Behavior (10:6—23:27)

B. Book Two (24-51)

1. Lessons on Living (24:1—36:17)
2. A Practical Guide for Living (36:18—42:14)
3. God in Creation and History (42:15—51:30)

The Prologue

In the Prologue we discover the translator was the grandson of Jesus the son of Sirach. His name is not given, but the date is given as 132 B.C.E.

The thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes refers to Ptolemy VII Euergetes II Physcon, who ruled from 170 to 117 B.C.E. When you subtract 38 from 170 B.C.E., the result is 132 B.C.E.

The above would be consistent with 180 B.C.E., the time when the Hebrew original was finished (50:1-24) The purpose in translating the original into Greek was to enable Jews of the Diaspora, particularly those living in Alexandria, to be able to discover their true identities. Their natural language would have been Greek, so they needed to study their tradition in Greek.

THE FIRST INSTRUCTION ON WISDOM (1:1-30)

Three major points are made in this first teaching on wisdom. The first is that wisdom originates with God (1:1-10). He created it and infused all his works with it. The second point is that the nature of wisdom is “the fear of the Lord” (1:11-20). There is no idea of being afraid or terrified of the Lord; it is a simple reverence of the Lord. This is consistent with Job 28:28, Psalm 111:10, and Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10. Fear of the Lord consists of exultation and gladness. The final point has to do with the marks of wisdom, which are patience, obedience, and meekness (humility) (1:22-30). According to 1:27, the Lord delights in those, who obey and are meek, which is to say, the humble.

THE INSTRUCTION ON FIDELITY AND HUMILITY (2:1—4:10)

This whole section is an expansion of 1:27, which places the primary emphasis on the delight of wisdom in fidelity and meekness.

The Need to Overcome Temptation (2:1-18)

Patience, obedience, and humility are further explained. Even the wise must prepare themselves for temptations, but they will overcome them because they have been prepared through their fear of the Lord.

The Need to Honor Parents (3:1-16)

The rewards of honoring parents are atonement for sins (3:3) and long life (3:6). In verses 1-9, the emphasis is on the positive things one can do; in verses 10-16 the emphasis is on the negative things to avoid. Fulfillment of the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16) requires honoring one's parents by "word" and "deed." (3:8)

The Need for Humility (3:17-29)

Most of the students of Jesus Son of Sirach would have been young aristocrats, who stood in great need of humility. The writer tells them that the greater they are the more they need humility (3:18). One truly recognizes humility when one is able to work within what has been revealed by God and does not get the idea that more can be known. This is a simple recognition that all wisdom has its foundation in God, and apart from him, we are not wise. The work of the wise truly begins with an attempt to understand all of God's Laws.

The Need to give Alms (3:30—4:10)

Just as honoring parents atones for sins, so does the giving of alms (3:30). The wise will not ignore the poor, but will incline their ears to them (4:8). This means that they will hear their cry and understand their plight. They have more of a responsibility to the poor than simply to soothe their own conscience by giving them a little money. Their own atonement for sin depends upon their ability to relate to the poor. This is certainly what Jesus said in his parable of the final judgment in Matthew 25:31-46.

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM (4:11—10:5)

The Reward of Wisdom (4:11-19)

Those who seek wisdom will be rewarded by the joy of the presence of the Lord. There is no greater reward than to know that the Lord loves those who love wisdom.

The Necessity of Humility (4:20—5:3)

One needs the right amount of humility. In 4:20-28 we are told that too much humility, or humility misunderstood, leads to an unhealthy passiveness. The truly humble will speak up in crucial times. They will not hide the truth when it needs to be revealed (4:23); but they also know their own limitations. They are mindful of their own ignorance (4:25).

This will never stop them from striving to know the truth. It is something for which they would gladly lay down their lives.

The Rejection of Sin (5:4-7)

The wise person does not play with sin, but shuns it like a serpent. The fool thinks that because God's wrath has not fallen, it will never be experienced. Sin should be rejected immediately, and one should not delay in turning to the Lord. God's wrath will eventually be expressed; when it is, there will be no escape.

Honesty and Sincerity (5:8—6:1)

Dishonest wealth and insincere speech court disaster. Do not be persuaded to test the direction of the wind, but place yourself on the side of truth. If you have understanding, speak; but if not, be silent.

The Need for Self-Control (6:2-4)

Do not become a slave to passion, for it will devour your youth (leaves), destroy your children (fruit), and make you old before your time (withered tree). It will also make you a laughingstock of your enemies. Sexual misconduct seems to be the culprit.

True Friendship (6:5-17)

Friends should be chosen with care. Peaceful relationships need to be established with the many, but close confidants need to be limited to a small number. Friendships should not be entered into too quickly, for many so-called friends are shallow and will betray you. Faithful friends are a treasure.

The Two Paths to Wisdom (6:18-37)

Those who seek wisdom will find it. The yoke of wisdom is a golden ornament and her bonds are a cord of blue. Wisdom is to be worn like a glorious robe and placed on one's head like a crown of gladness (6:30-31). This imagery can be traced to the blue cord described in Numbers 15:38-39, which was to be placed on the fringe of the garment. The cord was to remind the Israelites of their commitment to the Law. Another source for some of this imagery can be seen in the way in which the Pharaoh rewarded Joseph for his wisdom. According to Genesis 41:42, he gave him his own signet ring, five linen garments, and a gold chain to place around his neck.

How is wisdom to be attained? There are two basic ways. The first is to listen to the wise (6:34-35), and the second is to reflect on the Law (6:37). These are the two paths to attaining wisdom.

Warnings and Advice (7:1—9:16)

Following an introduction in 7:1-3, with verse three being a good summary, warnings and advice are given regarding many topics. The young men being taught are to be careful of arrogance and sin which will destroy them. They are to seek humility. The reason given, according to the Hebrew text, is the common fate of all—death and the destruction of the body. In the Greek text, the reason is not the natural end of life, but the fear of the punishment of the ungodly. The Hebrew text is to be preferred here and is further supported in chapter 10:9-11.

Much of what is discussed here can also be found in the Torah. About this time the oral law, which became the Talmud, was being consolidated. Some of that is being reflected in the warnings and advice given.

In the first section we find some things that should be done and other things that should not be done. One ought not to seek high office (7:4), to become a judge (7:6), to offend the public (7:7), sin the same sin twice (7:8), ridicule people (7:11), lie (7:12-13), or gossip (7:14); in contrast to these things, one should pray (7:10), give alms (7:10), be willing to do manual labor (7:15), and above all, be humble (7:17).

In the second section we find the emphasis on various kinds of relationships, some of which demand caution and others nurturing. One should nurture relationships with friends (7:18), one's wife (7:19 and 26), slaves (7:20-21), cattle (7:22), children (7:23), especially one's daughters (7:24-25), parents (7:27-28), priests (7:29-31), the poor (7:32), those who mourn (7:34), the sick (7:35), and one's neighbors (9:14). There seems to be an implication that a bad wife can be divorced and that servants are to be free.

One is to be careful of the powerful (8:1), the rich (8:2), the loud of mouth (8:3), sinners (8:10 and 9:11-12), the insolent (8:11), those who want to borrow money (8:12-13), the reckless (8:15), the quick tempered (8:16), fools (8:17), and killers and thieves (9:13).

The old (8:6 and 9) and the wise (8:8 and 9:15) are to be respected. Righteousness is to be one's dinner companion and the Lord is to be feared (9:16). This is not only the conclusion, but consistent with the traditional wisdom of the canonical books.

Wisdom in the Ruler (9:17—10:5)

As the work of a craftsman can be seen in what he has made, so will the people reflect their ruler. The ruler should also reflect God, for in the end, the success of every ruler lies in the hands of God.

WISDOM IS ACHIEVABLE

There is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. It is impossible to know everything but it is not impossible to exercise wisdom. Wisdom is the correct use of the knowledge one has. Without God, wisdom is impossible, so the first thing one must do is

to fear God. The second is to take seriously God's commandments. The key verses in today's lesson can be found in Sirach 1:26-27, "If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord will lavish her upon you, for the fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline, fidelity and humility are his delight." No better example of this can be found than Jesus' interpretation of the commandments in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus begins by stating that he has come to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17) and then he demonstrates how that is done. "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times," he says in Matthew 5:21-22, "'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment...." Wisdom is only possible for those who fear God and attempt to understand what God means by his commandments.

The one closest to wisdom then is the one closest to God. "Most removed from wisdom," wrote Paul Tillich, "are not those who are driven by desire for pleasure or power, but those brilliant minds who have never encountered the holy, who are without awe and know nothing sacred, but who are able to conceal their ultimate emptiness by the brilliant performances of their intellect."¹ Wisdom is not achieved through education. It is achieved by drawing close to the divine. While we might like to think that by education and life experience one would grow wiser, the only way it can happen is if one nurtures a relationship with God at the same time. Sirach recommends to his students in 6:18 how to achieve wisdom in old age: "My child, from your youth choose discipline, and when you have gray hair you will still find wisdom." The aged are only wise if they know the Lord. Some do and some do not.

A story may help to illustrate the importance of this relationship with God for those who would be wise. It begins with a man's Model-T Ford, which stalled in the middle of the road. No matter what he did he could not get it started. He tried to advance the spark and adjust things under the hood, but nothing seemed to help. Just then a chauffeured limousine pulled up behind him. A wiry, energetic man stepped from the back seat and offered his assistance. After tinkering for a few minutes, the stranger said, "Now try it!" The engine leaped to life. The well-dressed man then identified himself as Henry Ford. "I designed and built these cars," he said, "so I know what to do when something goes wrong." If we are to achieve wisdom, we will have to fear God, for he is our creator. He alone can fix us when things go wrong.

This does not mean that we will never make mistakes. The wise learn from their mistakes. We learn wisdom by observing those who have managed to live in relationship with God. No one has done this like Jesus Christ and that is why we view him as the visible image of the invisible God. Annie Cole put it as follows:

¹ Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner's), p. 168.

Knowledge roams creation o'er,
Telling what the ages say,
[Christ's] wisdom evermore,
Holds the light to show the way.

Wisdom can be achieved, but it will only be achieved by those who are humble enough to relate to God, who are willing to learn from their mistakes and commit themselves to obeying the true intent of God's commandments. No one has led the way like Jesus of Nazareth. He is the beginning of wisdom for the rest of us.

8. THE ORIGIN AND GOAL OF WISDOM (Sirach 1:1 – 10:5)			
PROLOGUE			
A Grandson of Jesus	Written for those who love Learning	Written Originally in Hebrew	Translated in the 38th year of Euergetes
THE FIRST INSTRUCTION ON WISDOM (1:1-30)			
Wisdom Originates with God (1:1-10) (1:1 and 8)	Wisdom is the Fear of the Lord (1:11-20) (1:14, 16, 18 and 20)	The Marks of Wisdom (1:22-30) 1. Patience (1:23) 2. Obedience (1:26) 3. Meekness (1:27 & 30)	
INSTRUCTION ON FIDELITY AND HUMILITY (2:1 – 4:10)			
Need to Overcome Temptation (2:1-18) Those who fear the Lord are prepared for temptation (2:1 & 15)	Need to Honor Parents (3:1-16) Atonement for Sin (3:3) Long Life (3:6)	Need for Humility (3:17-29) The “Great” need Humility the most (3:18)	Need to give Alms (3:30 – 4:10) Alms atones for sin (3:30) Listen to the Poor (4:8)
THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM (4:11 – 10:5)			
The Reward of Wisdom (4:11-19) Joy (4:12-14)	The Necessity of Humility (4:20 – 5:3) Speaking (4:23) Truth (4:25)	The Rejection of Sin (5:4-7) Reject Sin (5:4) Turn to the Lord (5:7)	
Honesty and Sincerity (5:8 – 6:1) Avoid dishonest Wealth (5:8) Avoid Insincere Speech (5:12)	The Need for Self-Control (6:2-4) Leaves: Youth/Fruit: Children Withering Tree: Aging	True Friendship (6:5-17) Small number of Friends (6:6) A Friend is a Treasure (6:14)	
Two Paths to Wisdom (6:18-37) Listen to the Wise (6:34-35) Reflect on the Law (6:37)	Warnings and Advice (7:1 – 9:16) Summary (7:3) Wife (7:19), Parents (7:28), Friends (9:10)	Wisdom in the Ruler (9:17 – 10:5) We reflect our Ruler (10:2) Success lies with God’s (10:4)	

9. DIVINE WISDOM AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Sirach 10:6—23:27

ASSIGNMENTS			
Discourses on Pride 10:6—11:28	Exploitation and Wisdom 11:29—15:10	Punishment and Reward 15:11—18:14	Discretion in Behavior 18:15—23:27

REFLECTIONS ON PRIDE AND WEALTH (10:6—15:10)

Eight Discourses on Pride (10:6—11:28)

Eight discourses on pride follow, which are based on the Prayer of Hannah, which is found in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Hannah's prayer is one of the oldest portions of Scripture and all of what follows relates to one or more of the fourfold emphases we find in her prayer. The prayer emphasizes the uniqueness of God, the dangers of human arrogance, the divine awareness of all human actions and how God remains in control of life and death. The underlying theme is God's rejection of human pride interpreted as arrogance. Some have found eight discourses on this pride.

1. The Origin and Results of Pride (10:6-18)

The source of all human pride lies in one's refusal to recognize one's dependence upon God. The wise and the humble fear God and obey his commandments. The foolish and the arrogant, rebel against God. All their sins are but signs of this basic rebellion. God is in control and he brings down rulers and nations who rebel against him.

2. Fear the Lord and Keep the Commandments! (10:19-25)

Those deserving of our honor are not those who are simply in positions of wealth and power, but those who fear the Lord and are righteous. The world may act one way in honoring people, but we should act another. None is greater than the one who fears the Lord.

3. Do not Honor Yourself! (10:26—11:1)

No one is to make a display of their wisdom or to draw attention to their own humility. God will lift up the humble and honor them. There is no room for self-elevation.

4. Do not Judge by Appearances! (11:2-6)

Do not trust in outward appearances, for they indicate nothing.

5. Listen before You Decide! (11:7-9)

The humble and wise person will not pass judgment prior to understanding, and understanding depends on good listening skills. One does not find fault prior to investigating, nor does one answer before one has heard what the other person is trying to say.

6. Submit to God's Way! (11:10-13)

The self-made person is rejected. The problem with it is that it always leads to the unethical crimes of dishonesty and oppression of others. God has a different interest, and so we must submit to doing things his way. We are to become God-made people, not self-made ones.

7. Wealth offers no Security against Death! (11:14-20)

The arrogant will rely on their wealth, but one does not know when death will come. Wealth will not prevent it.

8. Wealth offers no Security against Adversity! (11:21-28)

In the day of prosperity, adversity is forgotten, and in the day of adversity, prosperity is forgotten. God can provide for the poor and he can also impoverish the wealthy.

Call no one happy prior to death. Does the author believe in the resurrection of the dead, or does he believe that rewards and punishments must be handed out in one's lifetime? He seems to be saying that they could come at the last hour, or even be handed out through one's children.

Warnings against Exploiters (11:29—13:13)

Strangers (11:29-34)

Choose your friends and companions very carefully, for there are people out there who would exploit you in a moment. Be careful of the strangers you invite into your home, for they can estrange you from your family.

Sinners (12:1-7)

While almsgiving is good, it should not be done without some discrimination. You do not have to give to sinners. Such a gift would not be appreciated and it might even stand in

the way of God's desire to punish them. While Jesus (Luke 6:27-31) and Paul (Romans 12:19-21) talk about giving oneself to anyone, including the enemy, Paul also talks about favoring the godly (Galatians 6:10).

Enemies (12:8-18)

Be on your guard. When you prosper you will have many friends, but in adversity, these so-called-friends will disappear. Adversity proves who your friends really are, and you should prepare yourself by constantly evaluating your friendships. Be like a person who constantly polishes a mirror. It helps you to see clearly the image that is in it. Do not take friendships for granted.

The Rich (13:1-8)

Be careful of associating with the rich. You have little in common with them, and many of them will use the relationship to exploit you. They will treat you like cattle, maintaining the relationship only so long as it is profitable to them.

The Influential (13:9-13)

When invited into the company of the influential, be reserved and do not say too much. What you say can be used against you. Do not be too pushy, lest you be repulsed; but do not remain at too great a distance, lest you be forgotten. Be cautious with your words. The influential can use them against you.

The Rich and the Poor (13:15—14:19)

In all the various species, likes attract. This is true for human as well as animal relationships, and one can also conclude the opposite—unlikes repel. As the strong prey upon the weak, so will the rich prey upon the poor; everyone prefers wealth, and all of society measures people by their economic status.

Coming dangerously close to identifying the wealthy with righteousness and the poor with unrighteousness, the author quickly corrects himself, pointing out that neither riches nor poverty bring happiness. The wise avoid sin and the guilt that accompanies it, and therein lays their happiness. They learn to use wealth to make things pleasant for themselves and others, recognizing that they must ultimately keep their covenant with death.

Death is described in terms of descending into Hades, which is the Greek version of the Hebrew Sheol. The abode of the dead is a gloomy underground chamber, but it is not a place of reward or punishment. It is just a place to which the dead must go. Knowing that such a covenant must be kept, the wise take the best course of action, knowing that their wealth cannot be taken with them. It must be left behind. In light of this it should be used properly to insure happiness, but happiness cannot be achieved by greed and the accumulation of wealth. In Hades one cannot look for luxury.

The Relationship with Wisdom (14:20—15:10)

Those who relate to wisdom will find blessedness. Three images are shared in an attempt to get people to relate to wisdom. They are to pursue wisdom like a hunter, to camp near her (wisdom's) house and to lodge under her (wisdom's) boughs.

Those who keep the law will obtain wisdom and their rewards will be fivefold: They will experience refreshment (15:3), security (15:4), exaltation (15:5), joy (15:6a) and an enduring reputation (15:6b).

The foolish and sinful cannot find wisdom, for its paths are justice and righteousness. As they move down their self-chosen path, they also move away from God, who is the beginning of wisdom. Jews, who have neglected the law for Greek culture, are moving away from wisdom and God. This passage is a call to them to return to the foundation of their faith.

REFLECTIONS ON PUNISHMENT AND REWARD (15:11—18:14)

The Power of Free Choice (15:11-20)

God causes no one to sin. Everyone is given the power of free choice. The inclination (yeser) to do evil may be present, but so is the inclination to do good. While one might lament the presence of the inclination to do evil (37:3), God has given everyone the power to overcome it. Without this ability to choose, we would not be human. Every person has the power to choose between life and death. It is divinely given (15:17). Obedience of the Law leads to life and disobedience leads to death.

The Certainty of Punishment (16:1-23)

Five illustrations of the certainty of punishment are given, one from personal experience and four from history. The one from personal experience has to do with having children. It is quality, not quantity that counts. One godly child is better than a thousand ungodly children and it would be better to go childless than to have any ungodly children. Godly children contribute to the building up of society, but ungodly children tear it apart.

The four illustrations from history are allusions to the giants being destroyed by the flood (Genesis 6:1-4), the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19:12-25), the self-destruction of the Egyptians or Canaanites (the nation is not named) and the rebelliousness of the Israelites in the wilderness (Numbers 11:21 and 14:22-24). Sinners will not escape punishment; therefore, the righteous can afford to be patient (16:13-14).

No one will escape the punishment of the Lord. He is not too busy to notice the individual (16:17); and those who think that He is too preoccupied to judge them are foolish and devoid of understanding (16:23).

The Revelation of Divine Wisdom (16:24—17:14)

No one has an excuse for being foolish. Through His own creation of the world (16:24-30), of life itself (17:1-10) and of the Covenant (17:11-13), God has revealed His wisdom to us. Human beings were created in God's own image (Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:7) and given the task of praising their Creator (17:10). Human beings have the five operations of the Lord (17:5), which are the five senses, plus the ability to reason. We can understand the end of good and evil and we have the power to choose which direction we want to move with our lives. God has even revealed this to us in his Covenant, which is a guide to life. The wise choose the Law of Life and Freedom, but the foolish choose the way of death and slavery. The law of life in 17:11 is summarized in the Ten Commandments, and the commandment concerning the neighbor, is similar to Jesus' summary of the Law in Matthew 22:35-40 and the Golden Rule found in Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:3.

The Offer of Forgiveness for Repentance (17:15-24)

Israel has been God's chosen people; and although God knew that they would sin, he has always held out the opportunity to repent and return to him. Almsgiving and kindness are symbols of a genuine return. That return is the Apple of God's eye (17:22). Those who do not repent bring judgment down upon their own heads.

The Primary Goal of Life (17:25—18:14)

Those who return to God sing his praises and offer him thanks. This is our primary reason for existence. We cannot do it in death, but only as we live. God is worthy of our praise and gratitude, for he has created the whole universe and lives forever. We are lucky to reach a hundred years. We are extremely fortunate that he has compassion on all who accept his discipline and are eager for his judgments.

DISCRETION ON BEHAVIOR (18:15—23:27)

Almsgiving and Kindness (18:15-29)

While God highly values almsgiving, he prefers a kind word to the gift itself. Ideally, one should offer both alms and a kind word. In giving to others, we should not humiliate them. We are all only a few short steps away from poverty; therefore, we should pay our vows promptly and do so with great sensitivity to those we are helping.

Self-Control (18:30—19:19)

We should not give in to our base desires and appetites (18:30-33), excessive wine and loose women (19:1-3), malicious gossip (19:4-12) and premature judging (19:13-19). The Canonical Scriptures encourage moderation, but warns against overindulgence. Prior to judging anyone, we need to open the lines of communication. Everyone makes mistakes

and needs understanding. This does not mean that Law should not be exercised against those who disobey it. The Law of the Most High must take its course.

Making Distinctions (19:20—20:31)

Between Wisdom and Folly (19:20-30)

The classic definition of Wisdom is expressed in the very first verse. Wisdom is the fear of the Lord and the fulfillment of the Law. Any definition of wisdom must emphasize that it is not enough simply to obey the letter of the Law. The spirit or intention of the Law must also be obeyed. Many allusions to wisdom may be found in Sirach, some of which are: 1:26; 6:37; 15:1; and 24:23. Any attempt to manipulate knowledge without fearing the Lord is folly, and a pious ignorant person is better than a shrewd person. No one can hide wisdom or folly. Their appearance and their speech always give them away.

Between Silence and Reproof (20:1-30)

The wise know when to reprove and when to be silent. Fools lack both knowledge and timing. This is not to recommend silence in the midst of great evil. That would be like burying one's treasure. Better are those who hide their folly than those who hide their wisdom. Fools ought to be silent and the wise ought to speak, but in speaking, knowledge and timing are crucial.

A Warning against Sin (21:1-10)

Sin is deadly, leading to physical and spiritual death; therefore, avoid sin and flee from it. Those who do not flee, take the path of sin down into the pit of Hades. Three examples are given, each one with a more serious consequence. To amass a fortune unjustly is to dig your own grave (21:8), the assembly of the wicked ignites evil in all who associate with it (21:9), and although the way of sinners seems smooth, its end is the pit of Hades (21:10), that is, physical and spiritual death. Hades is not to be understood as hell. The point being made is that sin leads to death.

The Sensible and the Senseless (21:11-28)

This section begins with another classical definition of wisdom. Wisdom has to do with keeping the Law and fearing the Lord (21:11). The sensible grow through life experiences. The senseless do not. The senseless despise wisdom sayings as if they were chains (21:19) while the sensible see them as ornaments to be worn, that is, applied (21:21). The senseless speak before thinking and the sensible think before speaking (21:26).

The Undisciplined and the Foolish (22:1-18)

The undisciplined, that is the lazy, and the foolish are a disgrace to their parents; and teaching them is like trying to glue a broken pot together. While the undisciplined and the

foolish are talked about as if they were always sons, something is also said about daughters.

The birth of a daughter was considered a loss for three reasons. First, they could not carry on the family name, second, they could not bring income into the family, and finally, they could not support their aging parents. These are the reasons why daughters were valued less than sons.

The Preservation of Friendship (22:19-26)

Many things can threaten a friendship, but the disclosure of secrets will destroy it (22:22b). Friendships can endure suffering, poverty, affliction and even hostility; but no friendship can survive betrayal. Fidelity lies at the foundation of every friendship and no friendship can be preserved without it.

The Sins of Speech and Lust (22:27—23:27)

Prayer for Self-Control! (22:27—23:6)

This section begins with a prayer for self-control and then moves quickly into advice on how to avoid the sins of the tongue and of the flesh.

Sins of the Tongue (23:7-15)

One should not take too many oaths or utter the name of God habitually. God's name is Holy and should be used with extreme caution. While the name of God was generally avoided in the Old Testament period, substitutes were used. The primary substitute was *Adonai*, which can be translated into the English with Lord. Some translations use LORD in capital letters to refer back to Yahweh. Lord God is usually a translation for Adonai Yahweh. Although the name was not permitted for most people, priests were allowed to use it in special blessings. Examples of this can be found in Sirach 50:20 and in Numbers 6:23-27.

When oaths were taken, the name had to be used to make valid the oath; but oaths were not to be taken too frequently, lest they become meaningless. Swearing, or using the name without thinking, was considered a very serious sin indeed. Swearing was very close to blasphemy, the unforgivable sin (23:10b). That it is done today without thinking makes it even more serious. No one can be justified for doing it unconsciously.

Sins of the Flesh (23:16-27)

Three sins of the flesh are named. They are fornication, with the focus on incest, adultery by the husband and adultery by the wife. Those who commit these sins of the flesh think that they are not seen, but “the eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun....” Every sin is seen, including fornication and adultery. Adultery is wrong because it breaks the marriage vow and faithfulness in marriage is the ideal.

There is no warning of the death penalty for adultery. Perhaps stoning those guilty of adultery was not practiced in this time. There is however a warning about what such a relationship does to children. Children born of adulterous relationships suffer the most, for they will never find full acceptance in society.

Nothing is better than the fear of the Lord and nothing sweeter than to heed his commandments. This is another summary of the classical definition of wisdom.

THE POWER TO CHOOSE

Whoever fears the Lord and seeks to fulfill the spirit and intent of the law will obtain wisdom (15:1). Wisdom is not a gift given to a select few. It belongs to all who exercise the power to choose God and His Will. God has given each of us free will. Nowhere is that more beautifully described than in Sirach 15:14-17:

It was he [God] who created humankind in the beginning,
and he left them in the power of their own free choice.
If you choose, you can keep the commandments,
and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.
He has placed before you fire and water;
stretch out your hand for whichever you choose.
Before each person are life and death,
and whichever one chooses will be given.

The first choice we need to make is for God. That means that we need to discern God from all the idols that surround us. Joshua understood this when he led the Israelites into the Promised Land. In Joshua 24:14-15 he calls upon them to make their choice:

Now therefore revere the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

Jesus expected anyone who would become his disciple to make a similar choice. The greatest of the commandments, said Jesus in Mark 12:30, is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Love is not simply an emotional feeling, but the exercising of one’s will. Anyone can choose to love God. Once that choice is made one needs to nurture it. Without nurturing one’s love for God, one falls back into idolatry.

The second choice one needs to make is to obey the spirit of God’s commandments. Since the commandments govern all of life, it will take a lifetime to comprehend them. That is where education comes in—it empowers us to discern and choose between the ways of the world and the will of God. “To the sensible person,” says the author of Sirach

21:21, “education is like a golden ornament, and like a bracelet on the right arm.” The purpose of education is to learn more about God and his commandments. As we learn these things they ought to affect every aspect of our lives. One person we cannot fool is God, for “...the eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun; they look upon every aspect of human behavior and see into hidden corners.” (23:19).

Jesus defined the commandments of God in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. When he finished defining the spirit and intention of those commandments, he warned in Matthew 7:13 that the way into the Kingdom of God passes through a narrow Gate. Even though everyone has the power to choose that gate, most people will choose the wide gate which leads to destruction. The choice, he said, is up to us, for we have been given the power to choose. “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them,” concludes Jesus in Matthew 7:24, “will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.” To build one’s house on the rock is to love the Lord and to consider nothing sweeter than to heed his commandments (23:27).

9. DIVINE WISDOM AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR (Sirach 10:6—23:27)

REFLECTIONS ON PRIDE AND WEALTH (10:6—15:10)

<p>Eight Discourses on Pride (10:6—11:28) (10:12 & 11:19)</p> <p>Origin and Results of Pride (10:6-18) Fear the Lord! (10:19-25) Do not Honor Yourself (10:26—11:1) Do not Judge by Appearances (11:2-6) Listen before you Decide (11:7-9) Submit to God's Way (11:10-13) No Security against Death (11:14-19) No Security against Adversity (11:20-28)</p>	Warnings against Exploiters (11:29—13:13)	
	Strangers (11:29-34) (11:29) Sinners (12:1-7) (12:4 & 7) Enemies (12:8-18) (12:8 & 14)	Rich (13:1-8) (13:4) Powerful 13:9-13) (13:9-10)
	The Rich and the Poor (13:15—14:19) (13:16, 18b, 14:13, 17)	
	The Relationship with Wisdom (14:20—15:10)	
	The Law is the Key (15:1) Pursue Wisdom like a Hunter (14:22) Camp next to Wisdom (14:24) Nest in Wisdom's Boughs (14:26)	Refreshment (15:3) Security (15:4) Exaltation (15:5) Joy (15:6a) Reputation (15:6b)

REFLECTIONS ON PUNISHMENT AND REWARD (15:11—18:14)

<p>Power of Free Choice (15:11-20) 15:14 & 17)</p>	<p>Certainty of Punishment (16:1-23)</p> <p>Personal Example: Children (16:3-4) Historical Examples: (16:7-10) Giants (16:7) Sodom (16:8) Egypt/Canaan (16:9) Wilderness (16:10)</p>	<p>Revelation of Divine Wisdom (16:24—17:14)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Senses and Reason (17:5)</p>
<p>Forgiveness for Repentance (17:15-24)</p> <p>Sin (17:15); Almsgiving and Kindness (17:22); Forgiveness (17:24)</p>	<p>Primary Goal of Life (17:25—18:14)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Praise (17:27-28)</p>	

DISCRETION ON BEHAVIOR (18:15—23:27)

<p>Almsgiving and Kindness (18:15-29)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(18:17, 22, 25-26)</p>		<p>Self-Control (18:30—19:19)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Excessive Wine (19:2) Loose Women (19:2) Malicious Gossip (19:10) Premature Judging (19:15, 17)</p>		
<p>Making Distinctions (19:20—20:31)</p>		<p>A Warning Against Sin (21:1-10)</p>		
Between Wisdom and Folly (19:20-30) (19:20)	Between Silence and Reproof (20:1-31) (20:1, 6, 31)	<p>Sin Leads to Death (21:2)</p>		
Other People's Money (21:8)		The Assembly of the Wicked (21:9)	The Pit of Hades (21:10)	
<p>The Sensible and the Senseless (21:11-28)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Classic Definition of Wisdom (21:11) The Value of Education (21:19, 21)</p>		<p>The Undisciplined and the Foolish (22:1-18)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">An Undisciplined Son (22:3a) The Problem of a Daughter (22:3b) Weep for a Fool (22:11a)</p>		
<p>The Preservation of Friendship (22:19-26)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(22:22)</p>		<p>The Sins of Speech and Lust (22:27—23:27)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Eyes of the Lord (23:19b)</p>		
Prayer for Self-Control (22:27—23:6) (23:4-5)		Sins of the Tongue (23:7-15) (23:9, 11b)	Sins of the Flesh (23:16-27) Incest/Adultery (23:16b, 18, 22)	

10. LESSONS ON LIVING

Sirach 24:1—36:22

ASSIGNMENTS			
Wisdom and Marriage 24:26—26:27	Sin and Life's Essentials 26:28—29:28	Joy and Sorrow and Food and Drink 30:1—32:13	Wisdom and Worship 32:14—36:22

IN PRAISE OF WISDOM (24:1-34)

A second hymn to wisdom begins this second major section. The first hymn to wisdom can be found in Sirach 1:1-10. As the author begins a second volume, he introduces it with another hymn to wisdom. The first three verses make up an introduction, after which, he allows wisdom to speak in the first person.

Wisdom begins by stating its origin from God and how it has been seeking a resting place on earth. That resting place has finally been found in Israel (24:7-8). Following a rich comparison of wisdom to plants and trees, an invitation is extended to all who would desire to eat of the produce of wisdom (24:19). Although it has found a resting place in Israel, it also seeks to spread itself throughout the whole world. It does not have to be accepted, but the invitation extends to all.

In 24:23, wisdom is identified with the Covenant and the Law of Moses. The subjective definition of wisdom has to do with “fearing the Lord,” but the objective definition has to do with “keeping the Law.” In making this link we discover the integration of wisdom literature with the Torah (Law), the Historical Books and even the Prophets.

Wisdom is like a river and those who drink from it begin as irrigation canals, but soon they find themselves overflowing. Like the author, they begin watering their orchard or drenching their garden plots, but soon they are instructing others, unable to stop until wisdom shines forth like the dawn, extending even into future generations (24:30-34). This was the personal experience of Jesus ben Sirach, who now begins a second volume of his work on Wisdom.

SOME OBSERVATIONS (25:1-11)

Three things give pleasure: (1) agreement between brothers, (2) friendship between neighbors, and (3) a wife and husband who live in harmony. Three things also give distress: (1) a beggar who is proud, (2) a rich man who is a liar, and (3) an adulterous old man. The conclusion is that wisdom must be accumulated by experience and age, and nothing is more attractive than wisdom in the aged (25:25-26).

The above contrast is followed up with a listing of ten happy thoughts. These are difficult to follow and the Greek text only includes nine. The fourth can only be found in Hebrew and Syriac versions.

1. A man rejoicing in his children
2. A man who lives to see the downfall of his foes
3. He who lives with an intelligent wife
4. He who does not plow with ox and ass (From the Hebrew and Syriac)
5. He who does not make a slip with his tongue
6. He who has not served a man inferior to himself
7. He who has gained good sense
8. He who speaks to attentive listeners
9. He who has gained wisdom
10. He who fears the Lord

The second happy thought has not reached the moral height of Jesus' teaching; but then, neither do most of the other wisdom teachings, particularly Proverbs. The fourth happy thought has to do with the wisdom not to mix unnatural things, which is forbidden in Deuteronomy 22:10. This section does move towards the conclusion, which is to become wise and fear the Lord.

HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE (25:13—26:27)

An evil wife cannot be tolerated. Look what Eve's sin did! Because of it we all die. The only solution is divorce. The literal command is to "cut her off from your flesh." It comes from the idea that when two people marry, they become one flesh. Divorce would then involve the cutting of that flesh into two parts again. The Old Testament, including the wisdom literature, has always made a place for divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1ff.). It has not rejected divorce, as have Jesus and Paul in the New Testament.

A good wife brings happiness to her husband, increasing the length of his life. Happiness in marriage brings great joy. All of this hinges on a monogamous relationship, for "rivals" introduce grief and sorrow (26:6). While the monogamous marriage is assumed here, there are still hints of polygamy being practiced. If the old ways have not been completely eliminated, neither have the new ways been completely assimilated. We no longer expect our wives to be silent as they were in this time (26:14).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (26:28—28:26)

In this section we have a number of observations, mostly having to do with temptations that lead one away from righteousness into sin. Sin is understood here in terms of wrong relationships. Business relationships, for example, tempt us to do wrong. Sin, according to 27:2b, "...is wedged in between selling and buying." Another relationship subject to destruction by sin is that of friendship. Such a relationship can be totally destroyed when one "betrays secrets." The relationship can never be renewed.

The test of a person lies in "reasoning." Listen to people reason and you will know whether or not to trust them (27:5 and 7). Even if others do not pursue justice, you must (27:8-9); and if you do not, then you fall into the pit you have dug for yourself (27:26). Other images are used as well. It will be like throwing a stone straight up. It will fall on your own head opening up terrible wounds. It will be like setting a snare and getting caught in it.

A number of sinful actions should be avoided, such as anger and wrath (27:30), strife and quarrels (28:8 and 11) and the slander of the tongue (28:18). The solution to these sinful activities is forgiveness (28:2) and a bolt on the mouth (28:25). Everyone has the power to blow on the spark or spit on it (28:12). Those who oppose the Lord on these things will experience an evil death, perhaps hell itself (28:21-23).

LOANS TO THE POOR (29:1-20)

One must be ready to loan money to those who lack the essentials, but according to the Law in Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35-37, and Nehemiah 5:10-11, no interest can be charged. The one who receives the money must act responsibly and pay it back. The reason for lending money to the poor is the commandment (Deuteronomy 15:7-11) and it should be lent even if there is little hope of it being paid back. When it is not paid back, it must be considered as almsgiving. It is like laying up treasure in heaven (29:11).

THE ESSENTIALS OF LIFE (29:21-28)

The essentials are listed as food (water and bread), clothing and housing (29:21). Today, we would include such things as education, health care, and security in old age. One might find other basic essentials as well. A good resource for defining such essentials would be the United Nations' Document on Human Rights.

THE CAUSES OF JOY OR SORROW (30:1—31:11)

The three things that have the potential to bring joy or sorrow are the behavior of children, health or sickness and the use of wealth.

Children (30:1-13)

Those who love their children will whip them often (30:1), and those who do not, spoil them (30:7). The point being made is that a lack of discipline spoils children, who can either bring joy or misery to their parents. Discipline is required to produce good behavior and the lack of it will result in undisciplined children, who bring sorrow to their parents. Nothing is said about abusing children. One can only assume that whipping them often was not abuse. The use of the rod (or stick) was permitted in the disciplining of children.

Health (30:14-25)

It would be better to be healthy than to be wealthy (30:15); and if one could not be healthy, then death was preferred (30:17). Once a person died, there was no point in placing food on the grave (30:18). This was the imitation of pagans, who placed food in front of idols. Neither the dead nor the idols could eat it; therefore, it was a pagan custom to be avoided.

Wealth (31:1-11)

While wealth has the potential of bringing joy, addiction to it can only bring sorrow (31:5-7). It is the love of money that brings sorrow (1 Timothy 6:9-10). Possessing wealth can bring joy because it brings financial independence; and with such independence, the wealthy bear a responsibility to share, that is, to give charity. The proper use of wealth brings joy. Too much devotion to it brings sorrow.

TEMPERANCE IN FOOD AND DRINK (31:12-31)

Food (31:12-24)

Watch out for a greedy (evil) eye. The idea of an evil eye today has the connotation of black magic, but in Biblical times it had to do with envy or greed. Here in the Apocrypha it relates to gluttony. Certain table manners are given to help control gluttony, some of which are as follows: do not reach for things (31:14), eat what is set before you (31:16), do not chew greedily (31:16), and be the first one to stop eating (31:17). The responsibility of guests at a feast is good manners, and the responsibility of a host is a liberal supply of food. If you are a host then make sure there is enough food and people will praise you (31:23).

Drink (31:25-31)

Wine is a normal part of any feast and its purpose is to make people glad (31:27). Moderation is recommended, and overindulgence is deplored (31:29). When people are drinking wine it is important to discern what is inappropriate conversation and avoid it (31:31). Do not try to reprove anyone who has been drinking, for it will spoil the banquet.

THE PURPOSE OF A BANQUET (32:1-13)

Banquets are occasions of joy and laughter and so they revolve around music and wine (32:5-6). This is why the conversation must be light and food and drink must be taken in moderation. God is present in such times and must be acknowledged. This may imply the practice of saying grace before the meal (32:13). (See Deuteronomy 8:10 as well.)

WISDOM AND HYPOCRISY (32:14—33:6)

The wise seek the Law, the hypocrites stumble over it (32:13 and 33:2). Prior to the Law, the Urim and Thummim were used to determine the Lord's answers to questions; but now, the Law replaces these ancient oracular devices. It is however difficult to know when the Urim and Thummim stopped being used. Some think it was around David's time, but these devices were part of the development of the Law itself.

CHOOSING BETWEEN OPPOSITES (33:7-15)

The world is made up of opposites. There is day and night, there is good and evil, there is life and death. Everyone has the power to choose, but God's people will always choose: good over evil and life over death (33:14).

ADVICE ON PROPERTY (33:16-31)

After stating his qualifications for speaking, advice is given on financial independence and on the treatment of slaves.

Children should not get their inheritance too soon or their parents may have to become dependent upon them. It is better that children be dependent upon their parents. Distribute your inheritance in the hour of your death (33:23).

Slaves were considered property. If they were not kept busy they would either seek liberty (33:25) or be tempted by evil (33:27). While they must be disciplined (33:28), they must also be treated well, lest they run away (33:31)

FOUNDATIONS OF HOPE (34:1-17)

This whole section was inspired by Deuteronomy 13:1-5, where dreams are included among the false hopes, although room is made for God speaking through some dreams (34:6). Ordinarily, dreams are rejected along with divination and sorcery (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Hope lies in the Lord, who is to be feared. Those who fear the Lord will live (34:13).

SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP (34:18—35:26)

Certain forms of worship are unacceptable. God is not pleased with the offerings of the ungodly, and he will not accept them (34:19). This is repetition of the message of many

prophets, including Amos 5:21-24; Hosea 6:6; Isaiah 1:11-17; Micah 6:6-8; and Psalm 51:16-17. Ritual and Sacrifice cannot take the place of ethics and morality. Those who keep the law make many offerings (35:1). None of the above means that sacrifices should not be made. They are in fact commanded (35:4-5 and Exodus 23:15), but they must be related to behavior. Sacrifice is commanded three times a year (Deuteronomy 16:16). The point being made is that the Lord loves justice and mercy and expects sacrifices to be connected to what he loves.

A PRAYER FOR ISRAEL (36:1-22)

In this prayer for Israel and its restoration, there is also a concern for those who do not yet know that there is but one God, the Lord (36:5). Israel yearns for a demonstration of God's power against its enemy. That current enemy would be the Greeks.

LEARNING HOW TO LIVE

Moses stands as the representative of the Law, for the Ten Commandments were given through him. Solomon stands as the representative of Wisdom, for he knew how to decide between conflicting claims. Elijah stands as the representative of the Prophets, for he opposed King Ahab's drift into idolatry. Moses, Solomon, and Elijah were not perfect. As Solomon grew more powerful he grew less wise and by the time he died his Kingdom was in shambles. Division was inevitable.

There were laws before Moses, wisdom before Solomon, and prophecy before Elijah. What is unique in the story of Israel is the attempt to integrate law, wisdom and prophecy into life. To be wise was to fear God and keep his commandments. Keeping God's commandments required the help of prophets who could discern the spirit and the intent of the commandments.

The relationship between wisdom, law, and prophecy may sound simple, but it is one of the most complex relationships one can imagine. No one ever masters the fields of wisdom, law, or prophecy. "The first man," says the author of Sirach 24:28-29, "did not know wisdom fully, nor will the last one fathom her. For her thoughts are more abundant than the sea, and her counsel deeper than the great abyss." This should make the wisest of us humble. Isaac Newton gave us an example of such humility when he said, "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been merely a child playing on the seashore, diverting myself in now and then finding a pebble more smooth or a shell more beautiful than others, whilst before me the great ocean of Truth lay all undiscovered."¹

When we know that we do not know everything we are in a position to learn more, but wisdom does not consist in the quantity of knowledge. The purpose of wisdom is to teach us how to live. Living includes such things as the way in which we treat one another, everyone's need for food, clothing and shelter, good health, moderation in drinking, our relationship with our children, our relationship with our spouse, stewardship, and much

¹ Boyce Rensberger, *How the World Works?* (New York: Quill, 1986), p. 273.

more. The wise person knows how to deal with all these areas of and relationships in life. Although wisdom has a very practical use, it also has a lofty purpose. That purpose is described in Sirach 36:1-5:

Have mercy upon us, O God of all, and put all the nations in fear of you. Lift up your hand against foreign nations and let them see your might. As you have used us to show your holiness to them, so use them to show your glory to us. Then they will know, as we have known that there is no God but you, O Lord.

10. LESSONS ON LIVING (SIRSC 24:1—36:22)			
IN PRAISE OF WISDOM (24:1-34)			
In Search of a Resting Place (24:7)	Israel Accepts Wisdom (24:8)	The Invitation is to All (24:34)	
SOME OBSERVATIONS (25:1-11)			
Pleasure (25:1)			
Agreement between Brothers	Friendship between Neighbors	Harmony between Spouses	
Distress (25:2)			
An Arrogant Beggar	A Rich Liar	An Adulterous Old Man	
Ten Happy Thoughts (25:7-11)			
1. A man rejoicing in his children 2. A man who lives to see the fall of his foes 3. He who lives with an intelligent wife 4. He who does not plow with ox and ass together 5. He who does not make a slip with his tongue	6. He who has not served an inferior 7. He who has gained a friend (good sense) 8. He who speaks to attentive listeners 9. He who has gained wisdom 10. He who fears the Lord		
HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE (25:13—26:27)			
A place for Divorce (25:26)	The Reward of Long Life (26:1)	The Silent Wife (26:13-14)	
THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (26:28—28:26)			
Business (26:29 & 27:2b)	Anger and Wrath (27:30)	Strife & Quarrels (28:8 & 11)	Slander of the Tongue (28:18)
The Solution: Reason (27:5 & 7); forgiveness (28:2); Commandments (28:7); Silence (28:12 & 25); Avoid Hell (28:21-23)			
LOANS TO THE POOR (29:1-20)			
Lend to those in need (29:2 & 9)		Treasure in Heaven (29:11-12)	
THE ESSENTIALS OF LIFE (29:21-28) (29:21)			
Food	Clothing	Housing	
THE CAUSES OF JOY OR SORROW (30:1—31:11)			
Children (30:1-13) (30:2 & 7)	Health (30:14-25) (30:15 & 17)	Wealth (31:1-11) (31:5, 8 & 11)	
TEMPERANCE IN FOOD AND DRINK (31:12-31)			
Food (31:12-24) (31:14, 17 & 23)		Drink (31:25-31) (31:28-29 & 31)	
THE PURPOSE OF A BANQUET (32:1-13) (32:5-6 & 13)			
WISDOM AND HYPOCRISY (32:14—33:6) (32:15-16)			
CHOOSING BETWEEN OPPOSITES (33:7-15) (33:15)			
ADVICE ON PROPERTY (33:16-33)			
Children (33:20 & 24)		Slaves (33:26, 28 & 30)	
GROUNDS OF HOPE (34:1-17)			
Dreams (34:3 & 6)		Hope in the Lord (34:14-16)	
SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP (34:18—35:26) (34:19 & 23 & 35:1-2 & 29)			
A PRAYER FOR ISRAEL (36:1-22) (36:1-5)			

11. A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR LIVING

Sirach 36:23—42:14

ASSIGNMENTS			
Marriage, Friendship, and Moderation 36:23—37:31	Illness, Mourning and Vocations 38:1—39:11	Good and Evil Things 39:12—40:30	Good and Evil Things 41:1—42:14

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIOR (36:23—39:11)

Introduction (36:23-25)

A series of passages follow which offer guidance in various areas of life. As the palate exists for tasting food, the mind exists for discrimination. Similar ideas can be found in Job 12:11 and 34:3, but in those passages, the ear is used instead of the mind. Jesus made similar remarks when he said following one of his Parables in Mark 4:9: “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

Marriage (36:26-31)

It is better to have a wife than to remain single but one must be careful in making the choice of a wife. The best wives are those who are both beautiful and modest. A man without a wife has no home.

Friendship (37:1-6)

Some people are friends in name only and so one should choose a friend carefully. Do not forget your own friends when you are blessed with the good fortune of wealth.

Counselor (37:7-15)

Avoid choosing a counselor who is motivated by self-interest. Many examples are given in 37:11. A woman’s rival is a second wife in a polygamous marriage. Choose a counselor who is godly (37:12); but better yet, look to your own soul and pray to God to guide you (37:14-19). The watchmen (37:14) sitting high on a watchtower are astrologers. They are to be avoided as counselors.

Wisdom (37:16-26)

Reason should precede every action, for all choices are between good and evil, life and death. Not everyone has the gift of wisdom. Those who do should command your respect and confidence. Wisdom affects eternity.

Moderation (37:27-31)

Be careful in your choice of food and in the quantity you eat. Overeating brings sickness. Discern what is good for you and avoid gluttony. This is the way to prolong life.

Illness (38:1-15)

The skill of the physician is a gift of God, which should be used. There are however four steps that should be taken in using a physician, which are as follows:

1. Pray to God (38:9)
2. Repent of Sin (38:10)
3. Make Sacrifices and Offerings (38:11)
4. Consult Your Physician (38:12-15)

What is significant is that one does not go first to the physician, but last, after performing the necessary religious acts, which prepare us for healing. The assumption here is that sin lies behind sickness, which makes forgiveness necessary for true healing to take place. Without these religious acts, physicians cannot contribute very much, if anything, to the healing process. In the end God is the healer and a good physician recognizes that he or she only cooperates with God.

Mourning (38:16-23)

The traditional length of time to mourn the loss of a loved one was seven days, but it could last a lifetime (22:12). The wise person lets the tears fall, mourns and gets on with life. One or two days of mourning, according to 38:17, are necessary to avoid criticism. The one or two days are probably referring to the ritual obligations. The psychological work of grieving will take much longer and cannot be restricted by time limits.

Vocations (38:24—39:11)

Society needs people who can work with their hands, such as farmers, engravers, smiths and potters (38:25-31); although these people contribute much to society, they cannot do everything. Some people need to be set free of such vocations to become leaders, judges and teachers. Without freeing such people up, society lacks wisdom and leadership. The very fabric of society depends upon such leaders. For those set free of working with their hands, prayer becomes the practice of their trade (39:5ff.). They must also become students of Scripture, mainly the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. The Wisdom

Literature was not yet fully developed, although Job, the Psalms and the Proverbs were known. The Wisdom of Sirach itself falls in the category of Wisdom Literature.

GOOD AND EVIL THINGS (39:12—42:14)

The Works of the Lord (39:12-35)

There are two different opinions in this section. According to one, we have a Psalm in praise of God for his good works; and this Psalm can be broken up into three parts. There is an introduction in 39:12-15, followed with the text in 39:16-31 and concluded with an epilogue in 39:32-35. Another opinion suggests that the Psalm consists of 39:16, where we are told that all the works of God are good and whatever he commands will be done in time. This reminds us of Paul's comment in Romans 8:28, where he suggests that God works for the good of all who love him. Those who see 39:16 as the Psalm think of everything that follows it as commentary. The Psalm, or its commentary, ends with an invitation to praise the Lord with heart and voice and to bless the name of the Lord (39:35).

Suffering (40:1-11)

Suffering is inevitable from birth to death. Even kings and priests suffer (40:4). The *purple* and *crown* in 40:4 are a turban and plate in the Hebrew Version. The latter imagery would refer to the priests. Although the righteous may also suffer, the suffering of sinners is seven times more serious (40:8-9).

Enduring Things (40:12-17)

Bribery, injustice and unjust wealth will be blotted out, but good faith, generosity, kindness and almsgiving last forever. In the first activities we sow the seeds of our own destruction, but in these last activities we store our treasures in heaven.

The Joys of Life (40:18-27)

A number of things are named which give joy to life. They can be summed up in terms of financial independence, wife and family, friends, wisdom and good advice, wine and music, and above all the fear of the Lord. Everything must be understood in terms of the fear of the Lord, which is the first portion of the classical definition of wisdom.

A Beggar's Life (40:28-30)

It is better to die than to beg for one's needs. Those who like to beg will be kindling a fire in their stomach. Beggars lose their self-esteem.

Death (41:1-4)

While death is inevitable and final, it can be seen as either an enemy or a friend. To those who enjoy good health and prosperity, it is an enemy; but to those who are failing in strength and are aging, it is a friend. Whatever the case may be, death should be accepted without fear (41:3).

Influence (41:5-13)

Sinners will influence their children in a negative way, but the good name of the righteous will endure forever. This is not to say that sinners will never have godly children, or that the righteous will never have ungodly children. What is being discussed here is the general influence of sinners and the righteous.

Shame (41:14—42:8)

A number of things are listed which should cause us shame (41:17-23). They can be summed up in terms of immorality and injustice. Those things of which we should not be ashamed are also listed (42:1-8). They are summed up in terms of the Law of God and his Covenant. Although we should not be ashamed of the Law of God and his Covenant, neither should we become too arrogant over our ability to keep them.

Daughters and Wives (42:9-14)

A father naturally worries about those things that might tempt his daughters, and all the things listed are of an understandable concern; but the statement that a wicked man is better than a woman who does good is incomprehensible (42:14). This is a denial of women's rights, and no theological ideas should be developed from it.

THE TWO QUALITIES OF DISCERNMENT

“As the palate tastes the kinds of game,” says Sirach 36:24, “so an intelligent mind detects false words.” One must use reason to distinguish between those things that enrich life from those things that destroy it. Our difficulty with reason is that it generally serves our biases, and so we need something else to help us discern that which is good for us. That second quality of discernment is the fear of or reverence for the Lord, which is the classical opening to the definition of wisdom. Fear of the Lord naturally leads to a love of the commandments and a desire to shun evil. These things help to put reason on the right track, that is, to detect our misuse of it.

Reason, only when it is informed by an awareness of the divine, helps us to discern false words and acts of evil. God speaks to us through our minds, or he does not speak at all; and when our minds become sensitive to his presence, then our hearts are at the same time changed. The writer of Sirach 37:16-18 describes the process:

Discussion (or reason) is the beginning of every work, and counsel precedes every undertaking. The mind is the root of all conduct; it sprouts four branches, good and evil, life and death; and it is the tongue that continually rules them.

Reason informed by the fear of God leads to all kinds of practical decisions. For example, it leads to recognizing that God created both the physician and the medicines that he or she uses; therefore, according to Sirach 38:4, "...the sensible will not despise them." This does not mean that prayer is ignored. Anyone who fears the Lord will turn first to prayer, not last; but that same person will recognize that the physician is also needed. God created physicians and the medicines they use (Sirach 38:9-14).

Reason informed by a healthy fear of the Lord will enable us to make practical decisions on everything in life, both those things that affect our personal lives as well as our social relationships. We will avoid gluttony (Sirach 37:29-30) and drink wine in moderation (Sirach 40:20). Life will be enjoyed when we use all of God's gifts appropriately.

None of this is possible without fearing the Lord and using the intelligence, which he has given to us. This does not mean that we will never make mistakes. We most certainly will, just as has Jesus ben Sirach in his comment on women. In Sirach 42:14, he says, "Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good..." How could anyone say such a thing who has reverence for God and who is using the divine gift of intelligence? The only answer that can be given is that we are also products of the culture in which we have been raised. This is why we can never take anything for granted. What seems so right in one generation is often shown to be wrong in the next. Just as reason can mislead us, so can our ideas of God, particularly if we do not discuss them with one another. Women today are making us aware of how insensitive men have been to them in the past, even in Scripture.

Fear of the Lord and reason are very practical qualities, but they also require further study. That is why some people need to be freed up of manual labor to reflect on the meaning of life and how to apply the things of God to practical everyday concerns. This is emphasized in Sirach 38:24 and 34:

The wisdom of the scribe depends on the opportunity of leisure; only the one who has little business can become wise.

But they maintain the fabric of the world, and their concern is for the exercise of their trade.

Theology, that is the fear of or reverence for God, is not a waste of time, nor is the study of Logic, which helps us to understand how reason operates. Both of these disciplines help us to distinguish between what God is saying to us and what we are saying to ourselves; and if we desire to be truly wise, then we must spend some time sorting out what all this means. The alternative is to drift into evil, which will destroy the fabric of life. What we want is that which will bring joy to our lives. The Greek Philosophers have shown us why it is important to use reason, but the Jewish prophets have shown us why it

is important to stand with fear and reverence in the presence of God. One without the other will not work, but both together will make life worth living.

11. A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR LIVING (36:23—42:14)

INTRODUCTION (36:23-25) (36:24)

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIOR (36:26—39:11)

<p style="text-align: center;">Marriage (36:26-31) Companionship and Support (36:29 & 30b)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Moderation (37:27-31) Avoid Gluttony (37:29-30)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Friendship (37:1-6) Test of Friendship (37:1 & 6)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Illness (38:1-15) Lord Created Physicians/Medicine (38:1 & 4) Pray (38:9) Repent (38:10) Make Sacrifices and Offerings (38:11) Consult Your Physician (38:12-14)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Counselor (37:7-15) Choosing a Counselor (37:7, 11 & 15)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mourning (38:16-23) Get on with Life (38:16-18)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Wisdom (37:16-26) The Importance of Reason (37:16-18)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Vocations (38:24—39:11) Workers and Leaders (38:24 & 34)</p>

GOOD AND EVIL THINGS (39:12—42:14)

The Works of the Lord (39:12-35)

<p style="text-align: center;">First Option Introduction (39:12-15) Text (39:16-21) Epilogue (39:32-35)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Second Option Psalm (39:16) Commentary (39:17-34) Invitation to Praise God (39:35)</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">Suffering (40:1-11) Everyone Suffers (40:4) Sinners suffer Most (40:8-9)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Death (41:1-4) Do not fear Death (41:3)</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">Enduring Things (40:12-17)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Influence (41:5-13)</p>				
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Bribery Injustice Unjust Wealth</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Good Faith Generosity Kindness Almsgiving</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bribery Injustice Unjust Wealth</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Good Faith Generosity Kindness Almsgiving</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Of Sinners (41:6)</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; border: none;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Of the Good (41:13)</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p style="text-align: center;">Of Sinners (41:6)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Of the Good (41:13)</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">A Beggars Life (40:28-30) (40:28)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Daughters and Wives (42:9-14) (42:9 & 14)</p>				

12. GOD IN CREATION AND HISTORY

Sirach 42:15—51:30

ASSIGNMENTS				
In Praise of the Creator 42:15—43:33	Enoch to Phinehas 44:1—45:26	Joshua to Jeroboam 46:1—47:25	Elijah To the Antediluvians 48:1—49:16	Simon and the Appendix 50:1—51:30

IN PRAISE OF THE CREATOR (42:15—43:33)

Introduction (42:15-25)

Even the angels cannot fully comprehend all of God’s marvelous works. They are too numerous for anyone to know. God himself is all-powerful (omnipotence) and all-knowing (omniscience), and the best we can do is to stand in awe of his works.

The Works of God (43:1-26)

Similar lists of God’s works have been given in Job 36:24—38:38; Psalm 136:4-9; Psalm 148; and the Song of the three Young Men 35-60. Some of those works are as follows:

Firmament	Clouds
Sun	Hail
Moon	Mountains
Stars	Thunder
Rainbow	Storm
Snow	Drought
Frost, Ice	Dew
Lightning	Sea

Some of the more important works of God are the firmament, the moon, and lightning. The firmament was thought of as an arch or dome in the sky, which held the waters in place above the world. The moon measured the seasons and determined when important religious feasts would be celebrated. Two important feasts determined by the full moon were Passover in the Spring and Ingathering in the Fall. Lightning was a symbol of God’s judgment. All of these works are created and sustained by God.

Conclusion (43:27-33)

God is the All. All of his works have not yet been seen, nor can even the angels comprehend it all. The reference to God as the All has nothing to do with pantheism, but is simply another reference to his omnipotence and omniscience. He will make all things known to the godly and grant them wisdom (43:33).

IN PRAISE OF FAMOUS MEN (44:1—50:29)

Introduction (44:1-15)

Many different kinds of men are praised. A few of the categories mentioned are kings, warriors, prophets, teachers/wisemen, and musicians. All men of piety and loyalty deserve to be praised for their leadership. It is acknowledged that there are many more people who deserve praise, but it would be impossible to lift them all up. So, like Hebrews 11, the heroes of the faith are singled out for praise; but in praising them, we also praise the God who called them into service.

Enoch (44:16)

Why does Enoch head the list? In the best Hebrew and Syriac Versions he does not. That he appears again in 49:14 is a good indication that there were two opinions. Since he was also mentioned in Hebrews 11:5, there is good reason for placing him early. Chronologically, he does precede all those who follow, and according to 44:1, the author did intend to lift up famous men “in their generations.” What was it that Enoch did? According to Genesis 5:24, he simply walked with God and avoided the taste of death.

Noah (44:17-18)

The story of Noah is better known. He was spared from God’s wrath in the flood because he lived a blameless and righteous life. God made a Covenant with him and with all who will live as he did; so he is the first to establish a Covenant with God, symbolized by the Rainbow.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (44:19-23)

These three famous men are frequently mentioned together as the Fathers of the Faith. They all had their faults, but they were men of faith. Abraham established what has become known as the historical covenant out of which his descendants have become known as the chosen people. Isaac stands in the shadow of his father, but Jacob, who obtained the inheritance and blessing, shaped the chosen people into twelve tribes, whom God named Israel. They were promised an influence on the world symbolized by the phrases “from sea to sea” and “to the ends of the earth.” They were to become a Light to the Nations.

Moses (45:1-5)

The faithfulness and meekness of Moses made him the choice of God to deliver the commandments of the Covenant. Moses had the opportunity to see a portion of God's glory, and even though he overshadows his brother Aaron in history, more space is given to Aaron in this list of famous men.

Aaron (45:6-22)

Aaron and Simon (50:1-24) are given the most space in this list of famous men and so one must assume that the author has high respect for the priesthood, initiated by Aaron. His priestly garments are described and his tools of the trade—the Urim and Thummim—are named. The latter are oracles of judgment needed by the priest to discern the Will of God.

Phinehas (45:23-26)

When the people began to intermarry with idolaters, God got angry and sent his judgment through a plague, which killed 24,000 people. Phinehas stopped the plague by killing Zimri and his Midianite wife, Cozbi; and he was rewarded for this with a perpetual priesthood. All of this may seem crude and archaic, but the issue here was faith and loyalty to the one God who had created all humanity and called Israel to be his Light to the Nations. In his own way Phinehas was trying to root out the evil that had inflicted God's people.

Joshua and Caleb (46:1-10)

The real heroes of the Exodus were Joshua and Caleb, the only two real supporters of Moses. As a result, they alone were allowed to enter the Promised Land. The other 600,000 people died in the wilderness.

The Judges (46:11-12)

The Judges are considered as a whole, but there is a reference to some who did not remain faithful. Gideon slipped into idolatry and Delilah deceived Samson.

Samuel (46:13-20)

Some people played more than one role. Samuel was just such a person. He functioned both as a priest and a prophet. Although he opposed the establishment of the monarchy, he was the one to anoint both Saul and David, establishing a United Kingdom. A reference is made to the Battle at Mizpah in which Israel defeated the Philistines. The reference to the people of Tyre is a mistake, for the Phoenicians were not involved in the battle.

Nathan and David (47:1-11)

It is difficult to identify the beginning of prophecy. We usually think of Elijah as the father of prophecy, but there were elements of prophecy in Samuel. Nathan kept prophecy alive in the time of David. He seems to be a transitional figure connecting Samuel to Elijah. While David is known for his military exploits over the Philistines, he became even more famous for his devotion to God and for centralizing politics and religion in Jerusalem. He was clearly chosen by God from the beginning, and the Covenant continued through him.

Solomon (47:12-22)

No one was wiser than Solomon. His parables, riddles, songs, proverbs, and interpretations stand as testimony to his great wisdom. The Kingdom under his rule reached its peak in power and wealth, but he also sowed the seeds of its eventual dissolution when he married foreign women, who introduced pagan ideas.

Rehoboam and Jeroboam (47:23-25)

The son of Solomon, Rehoboam, lacked his father's wisdom and exercised folly in not listening to his older advisers to ease up on the oppression of his people. Jeroboam led the revolution, but failed to understand the relationship between theology and morality. He led the northern kingdom into idolatry. Both kingdoms were doomed to fall, the northern to Assyria and the southern to Babylonia. The seeds of their destruction had been planted.

Elijah (48:1-11)

Along with Enoch, Elijah ascended into heaven without dying. He also raised the dead and brought down kings. Many legendary stories were told about him, but none as significant as the expected return of Elijah.

Elisha (48:12-14)

Elisha was filled with Elijah's spirit and went on to perform many wonders and miracles. After he died, the miracles continued.

An Interlude (48:15-16)

In this historical interlude, the fate of the Northern Kingdom is mentioned. They would be defeated by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E. and be scattered all over the earth. The Southern Kingdom would survive for a longer time under the Davidic monarchy.

Hezekiah and Isaiah (48:17-25)

The survival of the Southern Kingdom was due to Hezekiah, whose name means "Yahweh strengthens." The opening words, "Hezekiah fortifies" is a play on the meaning

of his name. He prepared the city by building a 1,749, foot tunnel through solid rock to bring water into the Pool of Siloam from the Spring of Gihon. This was a tremendous architectural achievement in this period of time, and one can still visit Hezekiah's tunnel today and read the inscription where construction workers from both ends met in the middle.

Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, his court official, failed to defeat Hezekiah. Hezekiah listened to the prophet Isaiah and held to the ways of the Lord. Isaiah's sign to Hezekiah was that the Lord would heal him and extend to him another 15 years of life. This was sufficient to hold out against Assyria, but Isaiah foresaw the eventual downfall of the Southern Kingdom in the future. Following an Exile, Israel would be restored. It is clear that this author knows nothing of the theory that the Book of Isaiah contains the writing of at least two, maybe three, authors.

Josiah (49:1-3)

Josiah is praised for his courage to lead the nation in a reform movement and to convert the people. Upon finding the Book of Deuteronomy, he not only read it, but he tried to put its teaching into practice nation-wide.

Jeremiah (49:4-7)

David, Hezekiah and Josiah are the national heroes. Jeremiah is the prophetic hero, who preached about the end of Jerusalem and experienced it first-hand. While he was still in the womb, God called him to be a prophet and he responded, even though he himself felt too young.

Ezekiel (49:8-9)

Ezekiel also lived through the demise of Jerusalem and shared the vision of a restored Temple. He would not live to see it, but God gave him the vision to share with others that they might live through this terrible time with a sense of hope.

The Twelve Prophets (49:10)

What we call the Minor Prophets is referred to here as the twelve. In the Hebrew Scriptures their books are combined into one, which follows the Book of Ezekiel. The names of these prophets are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The Twelve make up the end of the Protestant Old Testament.

The Postexilic Heroes (49:11-13)

Zerubbabel and Jeshua are mentioned as the ones responsible for rebuilding the Temple and Nehemiah is given credit for rebuilding the walls. Nothing however is said about Ezra, who is usually thought of as the greatest of the postexilic leaders. Why is he not

even mentioned? One reason might be that the author had Sadducean tendencies and so he deliberately ignored Ezra, who became the father of Pharisaism. These two parties had political and theological conflicts with one another.

The Antediluvians (49:14-16)

The list of heroes ends with a quick look back from Enoch through Joseph, Shem, Seth, Enosh, and finally to Adam, who is to be honored above every living creature in creation. Perhaps he deserves such honor because he was the first living being.

Simon (50:1-24)

The final person to be praised is Simon, the most recent High Priest. Josephus called him Simon II and set the dates for his service from 219 to 196 B.C.E., but others called him Simon the Just (or Righteous) and suggested 225 to 200 B.C.E. Simon has been praised for two basic reasons. First, he was responsible for repairs to the Temple and for the fortification of Jerusalem; secondly, he extended the blessings of God to the people.

The repairs to the Temple and to Jerusalem probably took place around 199 to 198 B.C.E., following the time when the Seleucid King, Antiochus III the Great seized control of Palestine from Ptolemy V of Egypt. The repairs were made with Antiochus the Great's consent. Josephus seems to agree with this conclusion.

An extended description of the High Priest is given, which seems to describe his work on the Day of Atonement. On this day the High Priest was allowed to give the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers 6:24-27, actually saying the divine name, *Yahweh*. This could only be done once a year but it was indeed a cherished time for everyone (50:20-21).

A Fragment (50:25-26)

This fragment seems out of place. It is simply a denunciation of the Idumeans, the Philistines and the Samaritans. The Idumeans were those who lived on Mount Seir. Mount Seir was a mountain range in Edom, which became a synonym for Edom itself. The Edomites had been driven off their land and forced to live in Southern Palestine, where they encroached on Judah's territory. The Philistines had been absorbed into Phoenicia, and were receptive to the Hellenistic influences, which the author despised. The foolish people dwelling in Schechem are clearly the Samaritans, who were hated by the Jews.

A Signature (50:27-29)

The author concludes by signing his name as Jesus the son of Sirach from Jerusalem. Those who abide by what he has written will become wise and find themselves blessed, for the light of the Lord will guide them.

THE APPENDICES (51:1-30)

The above signature seems to mark the end, but then we discover this appendices. In the Hebrew version, which is not included in the Revised Standard Version, there is more, including an additional signature. In this version we find two parts—a psalm of thanksgiving (51:1-12) and an acrostic poem (51:13-30). Both were found in Qumran Cave II.

A Psalm of Thanksgiving (51:1-12)

The Psalm of Thanksgiving expresses gratitude for divine deliverance from some form of slander before a King (51:2). The author has faced dangers before (34:12) and has always looked to God for help. He has done so again and concludes with thanksgiving and praise (51:11b-12). The Hebrew text adds a litany of praise similar to Psalm 136, but this is absent in both the Greek and Syriac Versions.

An Acrostic Poem (51:13-30)

In an acrostic poem each verse begins with a new letter of the alphabet. This was a device used to assist one's memory. There are two major parts in this acrostic poem. The first part, found in 51:13-22, consists of the search for wisdom, perhaps by the author as a youth. The focus of the search is on prayer and the temple. The result of this search for wisdom is praise. The second part, found in 51:23-30, is an invitation to study wisdom. At first there was no tuition (51:25), but even after tuition was charged, it was worth the money (51:28). Obtaining wisdom prepares one for the judgment and one's reward (51:30). In saying this one must be careful. We are talking about the classical definition of wisdom which is to fear God and obey the commandments. Doing this prepares one for meeting the Lord.

THE TWO OBJECTS OF CREATION

Wisdom is built into creation, if we would only look for it. This is true for the inanimate as well as the animate objects of creation. "How desirable are all his works" says Sirach 42:22, "and how sparkling they are to see!"

When we look at the inanimate objects of creation, we discover that not everything is as we might have designed it. Why do there have to be storms? Why cannot every day be sunny? Without the rain, there is no rainbow, nor is there any growth of crops. Others have asked these questions too, such as Job and the Psalmists. Perhaps no answer really satisfies us, but then we do not fully comprehend everything that God has made, "...for [we] have seen but few of his works." (Sirach 43:32)

When we look at the animate objects of creation, especially human beings, we ask similar questions. Why did God create the possibility of evil? The answer of course is to make us in his image, with freedom of the will. This may not satisfy us completely, but it tells us

enough to make us aware of the fact that we are not puppets, nor would we want to be manipulated as puppets.

What is so amazing is that we are able to progress at all. Sometimes we need to be reminded of the progress that has been made and lists of famous people do that for us. What is disappointing in the list of famous people in Sirach is that they are all men, except for the indirect reference to the Judges as a group. We know Deborah was a judge, but why is she not mentioned by name? Why are there no women in this list? Rahab the prostitute is mentioned in the list of heroes in Hebrews 11:31. No answer can be given to this question except that this list was written prior to the list found in Hebrews.

What is interesting in both lists, the one in Sirach 44-50 and the one in Hebrews 11, is that there is such a variety of gifts. No one possesses everything and there are people lacking in the most essential gifts. No one is perfect, and everyone depends upon the gifts of others. This requires cooperation if history is to progress; even if it does not, God does not give up on us. He allows his heroes to experience the tragedies of life, even the total loss of their promised land. Out of the ashes he gives new visions and some people, we call a remnant respond to him.

We learn from the past. We learn from nature as well. Together there are great lessons for us and we ignore them at our peril. We not only have to learn how to cooperate with one another, making use of each other's gifts, but we also need to learn how to cooperate with nature, or we will end up destroying it and ourselves.

The search for wisdom is no idle task. It is worth spending all we have to gain insight into divine wisdom, for it not only makes living in the world better, but it also prepares us for the final encounter with God. "Do your work in good time," says Jesus ben Sirach, "and in his own time God will give you your reward." (Sirach 51:30)

To be wise one must know one's Creator and to approach him in fear and reverence; and if one will do that, then there will be a harmonious relationship between God's two objects of creation. The commandments he gives have an impact beyond our relationships with one another. Our violation of them results in not only the fall of human society, but also in the destruction of that other object of creation, the very environment in which we live. When Adam and Eve sinned, the Garden of Eden was finished, and they were forced to leave. Human sin, summed up in arrogance and greed, is an attack on creation itself. This is why it is so important to get wisdom that is to sense the presence of God, obey his commandments, and shun evil in every form.

12. GOD IN CREATION AND HISTORY (42:15 – 51:30)

IN PRAISE OF THE CREATOR (42:15 – 43:33)

Introduction (42:15-25) (42:15b and 22)

The Works of God (43:1-33) (43:32)

Firmament Sun Moon Stars	Rainbow Snow Frost, Ice Lightning	Clouds Hail Mountains Thunder	Storm Drought Dew Sea
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IN PRAISE OF FAMOUS MEN (44:1 – 50:29)

Enoch (44:16) Fellowship with God	Judges (46:11) Leaders
Noah (44:17) Righteousness	Samuel (46:20) Prophet and Priest
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (44:19) Faith	Nathan and David (47:1 & 7-8) Transitional Prophet and Religious King
Moses (45:3b-4) Meek	Solomon (47:12 & 18-19) Wisdom
Aaron (45:6) Holiness	Rehoboam and Jeroboam (47:23) Folly and Apostasy
Phinehas (45:23) Zeal	Elijah (48:4-5 & 9) Miracle Worker
Joshua and Caleb (46:7-8) Committed	Elisha (48:12) Spirit Filled

AN INTERLUDE: The Fall of the Northern Kingdom (48:15-16)

Hezekiah and Isaiah (48:22) Cooperation	Ezekiel (49:8) Visionary
Josiah (49:2) Reformer	Twelve Prophets (49:10) Divine Lights
Jeremiah (49:7) Consecrated	Postexilic Heroes (49:11-13) Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Ezra (?)

The Look Back (49:14-16)
Enoch, Joseph, Shem, Seth, & Adam

Signature
Jesus Son of Sirach (50:27-29)

Simon II (50:1-24) (50:1 & 20-21)
Repaired the Temple and Gave a Blessing

Appendices (51:1-30)	
Psalm of Thanksgiving (51:1-12) (51:2 & 12)	Acrostic Poem (51:13-30) Search for Wisdom (51:13-22) Prayer and the Temple (51:13-14)
“In the NRSV Psalm 136 appears.”	Invitation to Study (51:23-30) Preparation for God (51:23 & 30)

Denunciations (50:25-26)
Idumeans, Philistines, & Samaritans

13. CONFESSION OF SIN AND THE SOURCE OF WISDOM

Baruch 1:1—5:9

ASSIGNMENTS		
Baruch Prose 1:1—3:8	Baruch Poetry 3:9—5:9	Letter of Jeremiah 6:1-73

INTRODUCTION TO BARUCH

The Name

This book takes its name from Baruch, who was Jeremiah’s personal secretary. Sometimes this book is designated as 1 Baruch to distinguish it from the Apocalypse of Baruch, which is then called 2 Baruch. The Apocalypse of Baruch is found neither in the Old Testament nor in the Apocrypha.

The Author

It is difficult to identify the author. Although the book claims Baruch as its author, it is commonly known that Baruch was not exiled to Babylon. He was in Jerusalem at the time of the Fall, after which, he accompanied Jeremiah to Egypt. (See Jeremiah 43:4-7 and 32:12-16)

The Date

Although the author claims to have written this book shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., several things point to a much later date. The first is the naming of Belshazzar as the son of Nebuchadnezzar in Baruch 1:11, which follows the same mistake made in Daniel 5. The whole prayer is dependent upon Daniel 9:4-19, which means that the book could not have been written prior to 165 B.C.E., when Daniel was written.

Since there are two distinct parts, there probably are two authors. In the first part, which consists of the prose in Chapters 1:1—3:8, the author uses the word “Lord” for God forty-nine times; but this word is not used at all in the second part, which is written poetically. In the second part we find Lord replaced by God. Other terms used for God are “The Everlasting,” “Everlasting Savior” and “The Holy One.”

The above points to two authors and two dates. The content tells us that the book was written in a time of domination by a foreign power. It encourages the Jews to submit to this power. Parts of it could have been written as early as 165 B.C.E. and as late as 70 C.E. The former would then refer to the Greek domination of the Jews and the latter to the Roman domination under Vespasian and Titus.

Since there are many Hebraic images, it may have been written in Hebrew and later translated into Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, and Arabic. That it might have been written in Hebrew supports an earlier date. Some scholars suggest a date as early as 450 B.C.E., but this would be inconsistent with the arguments made above.

The Purpose

In the first part there is an introduction and a confession of Israel's sin, followed by a call to submit to foreign domination. In the second part the theme changes to wisdom. The question is asked, "Where can wisdom be found?" The answer is similar to that given in Job 28. Wisdom is to be equated with possession of the Torah. The second part ends with a poem of reassurance to the Jewish people, who are experiencing foreign domination.

The Book of Baruch has been widely accepted by Christians, and many of the Church Fathers have quoted from it. Baruch 3:36-37 has been taken to be a prophecy of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

The Outline

A. The Prose

1. Introduction (1:1-14)
2. Confession of Israel's Guilt (1:15—3:8)

B. The Poetry

1. In Praise of Wisdom (3:9—4:4)
2. Comfort and Restoration (4:5—5:9)

THE PROSE PARTS (1:1—3:8)

Introduction (1:1-14)

Authorship and Date (1:1-4)

The author claims to be Baruch, the secretary of Jeremiah; but he also claims to be in Babylon. Baruch never went to Babylon; instead, he went to Egypt with Jeremiah. There is also a problem with the dating. The claim is that the author wrote the book on the fifth year of the seventh day of the month, at the time when the Chaldeans took Jerusalem and burned it with fire (1:1-2). 2 Kings 25:8-9 tells us that this happened on the seventh day

of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah 52:12-13 agrees in part, but suggests the tenth day instead of the seventh. 2 Kings and Jeremiah are not precise, but Baruch is not even close. The only thing that all agree upon is the name of Nebuzaradan, who put the torch to Jerusalem.

Gifts for the Temple (1:5-9)

The Jeconiah taken into Exile in Babylon is Jehoiachin. What is strange in this section is the return of the vessels to Jerusalem, which, along with the Temple, had been leveled to the ground. Could some kind of worship have continued on the Temple site? The author mentions the priesthood of Jehoiakim, but nothing is known of him. He could be confusing him with the postexilic priest Joiakim (Nehemiah 12:10), but that would place the whole story at a much later time.

Prayers for the Ruler (1:10-14)

The readers are supposed to pray for Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, and his son Belshazzar. The only difficulty with this is that Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus (556-539 B.C.E.). Daniel made the same mistake (Daniel 5), and so most scholars believe that the author must have taken his information from the Book of Daniel. Whatever is the case, the point remains the same. The people are being advised to pray for the King of the nation, which has dominated and defeated them. This is a call to submission.

The Confession of Sin (1:15—3:8)

The Confession of Sin

The nation has suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Babylon because its people have sinned before the Lord, disobeyed him, and not heeded his voice (1:17-18); moreover, they should have submitted to the King of Babylon, who inflicted God's punishment upon them (2:24-25). The author confesses all of Israel's sins and makes no excuses for any of them.

The Appeal for Mercy

Since the dead can no longer praise God from Hades (2:17-18), an appeal for mercy is made (3:6-7). The appeal is not made for the whole nation, but for that remnant, who have turned to God in Exile. With them the Covenant is renewed and the Promise made that they will regain their Promised Land and never again lose it (2:29-35).

THE POETIC PARTS (3:9—5:9)

In Praise of Wisdom (3:9—4:4)

Three main points are made in this first poem, "In Praise of wisdom." In the first point, we discover the reason for Israel's exile. It is because the people and the nation as a

whole have forsaken the fountain of wisdom (3:12). In the second point the author names some of Israel's leaders who have not known where to look for wisdom. They include princes and rulers (3:16), business leaders (3:18), and the young (3:20). Frequently Israel has even dared to follow after the Canaanites, where wisdom was unknown (3:22ff.). Finally, we are told the source of wisdom, which is none other than God, who has given it to Israel in the Book of the Law, which would be the first five books of the Bible—the Pentateuch. All Israel has to do is “...walk toward the shining of her light.” (4:2).

The early Christian Church understood Jesus—the Messiah—as the source of Wisdom, and interpreted Baruch 3:37 to point to the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Since the Son had existed prior to creation, there was no contradiction with Wisdom being available to Israel prior to the Incarnation. In Jesus, Wisdom came in human flesh.

Comfort and Restoration (4:5—5:9)

God forsook Israel because of its idolatry. It was never God's intention to destroy Israel (4:5-7). Even in allowing Israel's collapse, God's intention was Israel's restoration (4:18). Restoration, however, cannot happen without a zealous repentance. Israel is invited to return with a tenfold zeal to seek God (4:28). That is what it will take to rediscover wisdom, but it will be worth it because it will bring everlasting joy and salvation (4:29). In the end all the children of Israel will return rejoicing in the glory of God (4:36-37), and God will level every high mountain and fill in every valley “so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.” (5:7). All this should give great comfort to God's erring children, for his goal is not their destruction, but their restoration.

13. BARUCH (1:1–5:9)

THE PROSE (1:1–3:8)

Introduction (1:1-14)

Author	Place	Date
Baruch (?)	Sud River in Babylon (?)	(Baruch 1:1-2) 5th Year of the 7th Day of the Month (2 Kings 25:8-9) (19th Year) 7th Day of the 5th Month (Jeremiah 52:12-13) 10th Day of the 7th Month (Agreement) Nebuzadran torched Jerusalem

Gifts (1:5-9)	Prayers for the Ruler (1:10-14)
Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) Money (1:6) Vessels (1:8) Jehoiakim (Joiakim)	Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar (1:11) Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus (556-539) Baruch makes the same error as Daniel 5:1-2

The Confession of Sin (1:15–3:8)

The Confession of Sin for Israel	An Appeal for Mercy for the Remnant
For disobeying the Lord (1:17-18) For not submitting to Babylon (2:24-25)	They cannot praise from Hades (2:17-18) They will praise from Exile (3:6-7)

THE POETRY (3:9–5:9)

In Praise of Wisdom (3:9–4:4)

Reason for the Exile (3:12-13)	False Leadership Political (3:16) Economic (3:18) Youth (3:20)	Source of Wisdom (3:37 & 4:1-2)

Comfort and Restoration (4:5–5:9)

Punishment Due to Idolatry (4:5-7)	The Purpose is Restoration (4:27-29)
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14. LETTER OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 6:1-73

ASSIGNMENTS		
Baruch Prose 1:1—3:8	Baruch Poetry 3:9—5:9	Letter of Jeremiah 6:1-73

INTRODUCTION

The Name

The name of the book is based on a letter written by Jeremiah to the Exiles in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:1). Some suggest that this work seems more like an impassioned sermon than a letter.

The Author and the Date

Although Jeremiah did indeed write a letter, this is not it. Jeremiah makes a reference to his letter in Jeremiah 29:1-23, and the content is described in Jeremiah 10:1-16.

This letter was written too late in time to be from the pen of Jeremiah. The reference to “seven generations” and “taking them away in peace,” which is described in The Letter of Jeremiah 6:3 indicates that the letter was written close to the end of this time. Two possibilities are given. In the first, the first Exile is used, which would have taken place around 597 B.C.E. With each generation lasting 40 years, a total time of 280 years is calculated. This would give an approximate date of 317 B.C.E. Another way of doing this is to use 586 B.C.E., which was the second Exile. Using the same 40 years for each generation, one subtracts 280 from 586 and comes up with the year 306 B.C.E. Many still feel that this book was written much later and reflects the concern of Hellenization or the spread of Greek Culture. The earliest fragment was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls in Cave VII at Qumran, and can be dated to 100 B.C.E. The fragment is in Greek, but there are some scholars who think that the original was written in Hebrew. This at least narrows the date down between 317 to 100 B.C.E., with most scholars preferring a later dating of the letter.

The above reference to “seven generations” of exile must be countered with other opinions of the exile. Jeremiah says in Jeremiah 29:10 that the exile was to last 70 years. Ezekiel says in Ezekiel 4:6 that it would last 40 years. Daniel 9:24 talks about seventy

weeks of years. If one dates the Exile from the destruction of the Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 and its restoration in 515 B.C.E., then we come up with a time of 71 years, which verifies the figure used by Jeremiah.

The Purpose and Place in the Bible

The purpose is clearly a warning not to take seriously the practice of idolatry that people will see taking place all around them. The key verse is 6:65: “Since you know then that they [the idols] are not gods, do not fear them.”

This letter was very relevant to the early church which had to live in the midst of the pagan atmosphere of the Roman Empire.

In the Septuagint (LXX) *The Letter of Jeremiah* followed *Lamentations*, but in the Latin Vulgate, it was attached to Baruch and numbered as its sixth chapter. The older English Versions also concluded with Baruch. The Revised Standard Version separated it from the book, but maintained its chapter and verse designations.

The Outline

While there is no clear outline to be found in *The Letter of Jeremiah*, we can discern some important points being made about idols. There are at least four of them.

1. Idols cannot look after themselves. (6:12-13, 22, 26-27, 55-56) They have to be cleaned, protected from animals, and carried about. The reference in 6:22 to cats is the first Biblical reference concerning their domestication which began in Egypt. The idols cannot move on their own to protect themselves, and if a fire breaks out, they are dependent upon human beings to save them.
2. Idols and their worshipers are immoral and unclean. (6:10-11, 28-29, 43) The priests take some of the gold and silver and spend it on themselves and the harlots in the brothel. Sacrifices may be touched by women in menstruation or at childbirth, which would have been considered unclean in Jewish Law. The reference in 6:43 to the women with cords concerns young virgins who had to lay with passer-bys prior to marriage. This sexual act was regarded as a way of paying tribute to Ishtar, but according to Jewish Law it was a violation of the Commandments. What is worse however is that nothing is given to the poor and helpless, which the Law requires.
3. Idols cannot play the saving role of a true Deity. (6:34-38, 41, 53-54, 66) A true Deity would have the power to bless or curse kings, heal the sick and restore the dead, and bring the rains. Idols can do none of these things.

4. Idols do not control the elements of nature. (6:60-64) None of the elements of nature obey idols, for they have no part in the grand design of the Universe. They are therefore as useless as a scarecrow in a cucumber bed (6:70).

Idols are not gods and do not have to be feared (6:65). In fact, it would be better to simply be a just person with no idols at all than to be a religious person worshipping idols (6:73).

THE FOOLISHNESS OF IDOLATRY

Baruch 1:1—5:9 and Jeremiah 6:1-73

“The heart of man,” wrote John Calvin, “is an idol factory.” The wisdom of the Bible has done its best to steer us away from making idols. Making idols is no innocent past time having little or no effect on our lives. It is an activity that causes nations to fall and it can be traced back to the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve think that they know better than God. It can be seen in the arrogance of those building the Tower of Babel and it can be followed through the history of Israel and the early Church. Its terrifying results are vividly illustrated in the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation. It was the reason for Israel’s fall, Babylon’s collapse, the end of the Roman Empire, and the fall of every nation that pursues idols, whether they can be easily identified or not. The wisdom of Jeremiah 6:65 in the Apocrypha is to fear God, not idols. “Better,” says Jeremiah 6:73, “...is someone upright who has no idols; such a person will be far above reproach.”

Apart from a commitment to God, we all make idols. No one can be an atheist without making an idol. “In a spiritual vacuum,” wrote Blaise Pascal, “men can pursue only two options: first, to imagine that they are gods themselves, or second, to seek satisfaction in their senses.” Atheists either make gods of their nation, or they lose themselves in materialism. Both are forms of idolatry and the consequences of both are terrifying. Such idols bring about the fall of the deified nation and the collapse of personal lives. The only thing that can hold nations and individuals together is to place God at the center.

It is not sufficient to give God lip service, or even to place, “In God we Trust,” on our coins. Rejecting idolatry involves much more than refusing to make statues, which represent God. “It is just as much idolatry to worship God according to a false mental image,” wrote William Temple, “as by means of a false metal image.” The biggest danger in the Old Testament was the temptation to accept the idols of the Canaanites who lived all around the Israelites in the Promised Land, and the biggest danger in the New Testament was the attractiveness of the Greek and Roman gods in a world dominated by Greek culture and Roman politics. The same danger is present today in the attraction of the idols of money, science, and nation, all of which are the gods we worship when we do not worship the Lord.

No one is without excuse, for history is full of the rise and fall of nations and individuals and we all should be able to recognize the hand of God in their collapse. Scripture was

written to describe what was taking place in the collapse of Israel as a nation and this truth can even be found in the Apocrypha. One of the most beautiful descriptions of this can be found in the Apocryphal Book of Baruch 3:35—4:2:

This is our God; no other can be compared to him. He found the whole way to knowledge, and gave her to his servant Jacob and to Israel, whom he loved. Afterward she appeared on earth and lived with humankind. She is the book of the commandments of God, the law that endures forever. All who hold her fast will live, and those who forsake her will die. Turn, O Jacob, and take her; walk toward the shining of her light.

The only way to avoid the disaster that inevitably results from idolatry is to recognize this shining light of wisdom, which calls us to fear God, obey the commandments, and shun all forms of evil. This requires God at the center of our lives rather than merely on our lips. “Where you hang your heart,” said Luther, “there is your God.” The heart of sin is idolatry and the only way it can be rooted out is to replace it with God. This requires a closer walk with God, as described by the English poet, William Cowper:

The dearest idol I have known,
 Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
 And worship only Thee.

14. JEREMIAH (6:1-73)

THE EXILE

Jeremiah 6:3	Jeremiah 29:10	Ezekiel 4:6	Daniel 9:24
7 Generations 597 586 -280 -280 317 306	70 Years 586 -515 71	40 Years	70 Weeks of Years

THE WEAKNESSES OF IDOLS

They Cannot Look after Themselves (6:55-56)	Their worshipers are Immoral and Unclean (6:10-11 & 6:43)	They cannot play Saving Role of Deity (6:36-38)	They canot control Nature (6:60-64)
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DO NOT FEAR IDOLS (6:65)

**15. THE PRAYER OF AZARIAH
AND
THE SONG OF THE THREE YOUNG MEN**

The Prayer of Azariah 1-22 and The Song of the Three Young Men 23-68

ASSIGNMENTS			
Azariah and the Song of the 3 Young Men 1-68	The Story of Susanna 1-42	Bell and the Dragon 1-42	The Prayer of Manasseh 1-15

INTRODUCTION

The Name

Azariah is the Hebrew name for Abednego, one of the three young men thrown into the fiery furnace in the Book of Daniel. The other two named in verse 66 are Hananiah and Mishael, whose pagan names are Shadrach and Meshach respectively. The prayer of Azariah or Abednego is contained in verses 1-22, and the Song of the Three Young Men can be found in verses 23-68.

Along with Susanna and Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young men make up what we call Additions to Daniel. Susanna is an introduction to the Book of Daniel. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men are inserted between verses 23 and 24 of chapter 3 in Daniel and Bel and the Dragon make up a supplement to Daniel.

The Author and the Date

Authorship is difficult to deal with, but these books must be dated in relatively the same period as the Book of Daniel itself. The Prayer of Azariah was composed during the Jewish War with AntiochUS IV Epiphanes, when worship in the Temple was impossible. The Song of the Three Young Men must have been written after this war because it alludes to the restoration of worship in the Temple. The best guess that can be made on the date would be somewhere in the second and first centuries B.C.E.

The Place in the Bible

None of these three books are contained in the Hebrew and Aramaic Versions of the Book of Daniel, but they are all in the Septuagint (LXX), which was the Bible of the early Christian Church. Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate, noted that they were not in the Hebrew Bible, and concluded that Bel and the Dragon and Susanna were fables. In the Douay Version, the Prayer of Azariah can be found in Daniel 3 between verses 23 and 24.

The Song of the Three Young Men was used in the liturgy of the Church. Verses 35-65 appear as an alternate Canticle in the Morning Prayer service of the *Book of Common Prayer*. The name given this Canticle is *The Benedicite*, which is the opening word in Latin.

THE PURPOSE

The Prayer of Azariah (1-22)

Azariah, the Hebrew name for Abednego, was one of the three young Jews (Daniel 1:6-7) thrown into the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar for refusing to worship the golden image set up on the plain of Dura.

The prayer blesses God for having exercised true judgment. Israel had been guilty of violating the covenant, and God was justified in turning the nation over to its enemies. The “unjust king” mentioned in verse 9 would be Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who sacked Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple in 168 B.C.E.

Azariah does not want God to give up on Israel and so he reminds him of his part of the Covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). Since there is no longer a Temple in which Sacrifices might be offered, Azariah prays in verse 16-17 that a contrite heart and a humble spirit might be accepted as though they were burnt offerings. He pleads with God to deliver the faithful and in the process give glory to his own name.

The Song of the Three Young Men (23-68)

This Song, or Hymn, is supposed to have been sung by Shadrach (Hananiah), Meshach (Mishael), and Abednego (Azariah) in the fiery furnace. The fiery furnace symbolizes the painful experiences the faithful had to endure as they battled against the forces of Antiochus IV Epiphanes on the hills and in the city of Jerusalem.

The Three Young Men bless God and call for all in heaven and on earth to join them in blessing God. Why? God rescued them from Hades and saved them from death in the fiery furnace (Verse 67). The persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes has ended and there is reason to celebrate that God’s “mercy endures for ever.”

Why does this song not simply praise the Lord? What is the difference between praising and blessing? In blessing one offers to another something they do not have. What could God not have? God does not have the love of his people unless they give it and that is what these three young men are offering. In the process they call heaven and earth, including the angels, to join them in blessing—that is in giving their love to—God.

15. PRAYER OF AZARIAH/ SONG OF THE THREE YOUNG MEN

THE PRAYER OF AZARIAH (1-22)

Azariah prays from within the fire (1) He blesses God for his True Judgment on Jerusalem (3 & 5)	He acknowledges the Unjust King as God's Instrument (9)	He asks God to remember his Covenant with Abraham Isaac and Jacob (11-13)	He asks God to accept their contrite heart and humble spirit (16-17 & 20)
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THE SONG OF THE THREE YOUNG MEN (23-68)

Shadrach Meshach Abednego		Hananiah Mishael Azariah	
An Angel delivered them from the Fiery Furnace (26-27)	They call upon Heaven and Earth to bless the Lord (35-36 & 52)	They call upon all of Israel, including themselves, to bless the Lord (60 & 66)	The Lord's Mercy endures forever (67-68)

16. SUSANNA (1-64)

The Couple (1-4) Joakim and Susanna (1-2) Righteous and Rich (3-4)	The Elders (5-14) Their Passion (5 & 10) Their Intention (14)	The Seduction (15-27) The Threat (21) The Resistance (22-23)	The Accusation (28-43) Adultery (37) The Sentence (41)
The Intercession (44-59) Daniel (51) Mastic/Evergreen Oak (54 & 58)	The Message (60)	The Execution (61-62) The Elders (62)	The Reputation (63-64) Daniel (64)

16. GOD SAVES THOSE WHO HOPE IN HIM

Susanna 1-64

ASSIGNMENTS			
Azariah and the Song of the 3 Young Men 1-68	The Story of Susanna 1-64	Bell and the Dragon 1-42	The Prayer of Manasseh 1-15

INTRODUCTION

The Name

This book is named after its heroine, *Susanna*, which means “Lily.” According to Hosea 14:5, Israel “shall blossom like the lily.” This suggests that all of Israel is represented in this woman, who is the mother of the royal line. She married *Joakim*, whose name means, “the Lord will establish.” The name used in 2 Kings 24:1ff. is, *Jehoiachin*.

The Author and the Date

Authorship and date are similar to the books of *The Prayer of Azariah*, *The Song of the Three Young Men*, and *Bel and the Dragon*. Authorship is difficult to deal with, but these books must be dated in relatively the same period as the *Book of Daniel* itself. The best guess that can be made on the date would be somewhere in the second and first centuries B.C.E.

The Place in the Bible

In the Greek Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and the Douay Version of the Bible *Susanna* follows the last chapter of *Daniel* and is numbered chapter 13, but in the Greek text of Theodotion, the Old Latin, Coptic, and Arabic Versions it forms the Introduction to *Daniel*. This is also its placement in the New Revised Standard Version. This has been thought to be more appropriate than the end because of the description in verse 45 of *Daniel* as a young lad.

The Purpose

The Book of Susanna is obviously a fable with something important to teach. It seems to be set in Judah rather than in Babylon, where the Book of Daniel took place. Daniel began his life in Judah but was taken into exile as a young man.

The climax and main teaching of the Book can be found in verse 60, where we are told that God “saves those who hope in him.”

THE STORY OF SUSANNA

The Introduction (1-4)

Susanna is an excellent example of a short story. In the introduction we are told of Joakim who married Susanna. She was very beautiful and she feared the Lord. Susanna’s piety came from her parents, who taught her the Law of Moses. Her husband was rich and respected. It was not unusual to have people come to his house to visit.

The Lustful Elders (5-14)

Two Elders, or as we would call them, Judges, lusted after her; but at first, they did not tell one another. Upon leaving Susanna’s home each one decided to return on his own, but in the process, they met up with one another. Their intentions became clear and so they plotted to seduce Susanna together.

Are these two elders Zedekiah and Ahab, who according to Jeremiah 29:21-23, committed adultery against other people’s wives? These are probably not the same elders.

The Attempted Seduction (15-27)

Susanna was abducted in the garden where she had been bathing. If she refused to cooperate, the two Elders threatened to bear false witness against her. Although she feared being sentenced to death, she chose not to give in to them and to trust in the Lord.

The False Accusation and Sentencing (28-43)

The two Elders were believed because they were judges. Their story was that she was committing adultery with a young man who overpowered them and ran away. Adultery was indeed a serious crime, for which death was the punishment. (See Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22; and John 8:4-5) According to Deuteronomy 19:16-21, false witnessing also bore a serious punishment, but of course, it had to be proven.

The Intercession of Daniel (44-59)

Even though Daniel is described as a young lad, he seems to be as wise as Solomon. He chastens the people for condemning Susanna without proof, and then he sets up a

situation in which both Elders are questioned separately. They are asked to name the kind of tree under which the adultery had taken place. One named a mastic tree and the other an evergreen oak. Obviously they were both lying. Punishment was to be carried out by an angel of God, who would cut them in two.

The Death Sentence (60-62)

The Assembly of people pronounced the death sentence. How this connects with the intent of the angels of God is unclear. Perhaps they were carrying it out on behalf of the angels. The main point in this story is that God saves those who hope in him.

The Reputation of Daniel (63-64)

This is a happy ending kind of story. Susanna is cleared and Daniel gains a great reputation for his part in clearing her of the accusations made against her.

15. PRAYER OF AZARIAH/ SONG OF THE THREE YOUNG MEN

THE PRAYER OF AZARIAH (1-22)

Azariah prays from within the fire (1) He blesses God for his True Judgment on Jerusalem (3 & 5)	He acknowledges the Unjust King as God's Instrument (9)	He asks God to remember his Covenant with Abraham Isaac and Jacob (11-13)	He asks God to accept their contrite heart and humble spirit (16-17 & 20)
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THE SONG OF THE THREE YOUNG MEN (23-68)

Shadrach Meshach Abednego		Hananiah Mishael Azariah	
An Angel delivered them from the Fiery Furnace (26-27)	They call upon Heaven and Earth to bless the Lord (35-36 & 52)	They call upon all of Israel, including themselves, to bless the Lord (60 & 66)	The Lord's Mercy endures forever (67-68)

16. SUSANNA (1-64)

The Couple (1-4) Joakim and Susanna (1-2) Righteous and Rich (3-4)	The Elders (5-14) Their Passion (5 & 10) Their Intention (14)	The Seduction (15-27) The Threat (21) The Resistance (22-23)	The Accusation (28-43) Adultery (37) The Sentence (41)
The Intercession (44-59) Daniel (51) Mastic/Evergreen Oak (54 & 58)	The Message (60)	The Execution (61-62) The Elders (62)	The Reputation (63-64) Daniel (64)

17. DESTROYING THE IDOLS

Bel and the Dragon 1-42

ASSIGNMENTS			
Azariah and the Song of the 3 Young Men 1-68	The Story of Susanna 1-64	Bell and the Dragon 1-42	The Prayer of Manasseh 1-15

INTRODUCTION

The Name

This book is named after the two idols, Bel and the Dragon, which were destroyed by Daniel. Another name frequently given to Bel was Marduk, Babylonia's chief deity. Other names given to dragons in the Bible are Leviathan (Psalm 74:14; Isaiah 27:1), Rahab (Psalm 87:4; 89:10; Isaiah 51:9), and Tannin (Psalm 74:13; Jeremiah 51:34).

More needs to be said about dragons. In Revelation 12:9 the devil is called the great dragon. Dragons were thought to be red because of the blood they had spilled in killing their enemies. A dragon was considered dangerous and was represented by flames spitting from its mouth. In the Medieval Christian morality plays, King Herod was dressed up in a red costume and given a red beard and portrayed as the monster who had killed innocent children. Dragons and monsters are symbols of nations and their kings who behave in monstrous ways.

The Author and the Date

Authorship and date are similar to the books of *The Prayer of Azariah*, *The Song of the Three Young Men*, and *Susanna*. Authorship is difficult to deal with, but these books must be dated in relatively the same period as the book of *Daniel* itself. The best guess that can be made on the date would be somewhere in the second and first centuries B.C.E.

The Place in the Bible

The Codex Alenandinus divides *Bel and the Dragon* into two books, which follow the Psalter; but the Latin Vulgate, the Codex Chisianus of the Greek Septuagint, the Greek

text of Theodotion, and the Douay Version of the Bible place *Bel and the Dragon* in one book, which follows *Susanna* as chapter 14 of the book of *Daniel*.

From the fourth century on, both Bel and the Dragon were used liturgically in Christian worship. They were sung.

The Purpose

These stories gave courage to Jews fighting against ruthless kings and the king who lies behind all this imagery is the Syrian Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who was out to Hellenize Palestine. He was another Bel or Dragon who needed to be destroyed.

BEL AND THE DRAGON

The Introduction (1-2)

The opening scene is Cyrus' taking over as the Persian King. He would have been looked upon with favor because of his role in allowing the Jews to return to Israel to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. Cyrus began his reign in 538 B.C.E., but these stories are not about Cyrus. They are about two idols that Cyrus helped Daniel to destroy. The contemporary idol to the author is of course Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

Bel (3-22)

The Babylonians had an idol called Bel, who had an enormous appetite. He consumed twelve bushels of flour, forty sheep, and fifty gallons of wine every day. This proved to the people and to King Cyrus how authentic a god he was. Daniel considered Bel to be nothing but an idol and was called upon by Cyrus to prove it. The agreement was that the food would be placed before Bel and the Temple would be sealed so that no one could enter to disturb the food and wine. The 70 priests agreed to the experiment and so the food and wine were placed in position. Prior to sealing the Temple, Daniel spread ashes around on the floor in the presence of Cyrus. The priests and their wives, unaware of the ashes, entered into the Temple through a secret passage under the table and consumed all the provisions. When the Temple was opened up in the morning, their trick was revealed by their footprints in the ashes. Cyrus allowed Daniel to destroy Bel and its Temple. Historically speaking, the Temple was destroyed by Xerxes I in 479 B.C.E. This does not matter because the story is not portrayed as history but as encouragement to those who have to resist idolatry in their society. It is foolish to go against the living God of Israel, and even kings should realize this.

The Dragon (23-42)

In this second story a powerful Dragon is described as a living god. Daniel asks permission to slay the dragon without sword or club. He does it by giving the Dragon pitch, fat, and hair to eat. The Dragon ate these ingredients and burst open. Having heard about what Daniel had done to both of their gods, the Babylonians had Daniel thrown

into the lions' den. Normally the seven lions were fed two human bodies and two sheep every day, but they had not been fed for sometime. They hoped that the lions would devour Daniel.

Meanwhile the prophet Habakkuk, back in Judea, had boiled pottage and broken bread into a bowl for his reapers. An angel of the Lord took him by the crown of his head and set him down in Babylon right over the lions' den. Habakkuk gave the dinner to Daniel, who ate it. Nothing is said about his sharing it with the lions. The angel immediately returned Habakkuk to Judea, leaving Daniel alone with the lions. On the seventh day the king returned to the den to mourn what he thought would be Daniel's death, but to his astonishment, he found Daniel alive. Daniel was pulled out of the lions' den, and the men who had thrown him in were fed to the lions. The lions immediately devoured them.

Babylon is being portrayed here as the dragon who tries to swallow up Israel and its people; but God intervenes through his prophet Habakkuk, whose main message was that "the righteous live by their faith." (Habakkuk 2:4) Daniel lived by faith and God protected him for it.

17. BEL AND THE DRAGON

INTRODUCTION (1-2) (Cyrus and Daniel)

BEL (3-22)

Bel (3) 12 Bushels of Flour 40 Sheep 50 Gallons of Wine	The Contest (10) 70 Priests, Wives, and their children	Sealing the Temple (11)
The Hidden Entrance (13)	The Ashes (14, 19-20)	Destruction of Bel (22)

THE DRAGON (23-42)

Permission to slay the Dragon without sword or club (25-26)	Dragon Food: Pitch, Fat, and Hair (27)	The Lion's Den Six Days (31-32)
		Seven Lions are fed: 2 Human Beings (31) 2 Sheep (32)
Habakkuk's Food: Boiled Pottage/Broken Bread (33)	The Angel delivers Habakkuk (34 & 36)	The Lion's Food: Idolaters (41-42)

18. THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH (1-15)

God of History and Creation (1-4) (1-2)	God of Wrath and Mercy (5-7) (5b-6)	God of the Righteous and of Sinners (8)
The Sins of Manasseh (9-10) (9)	The Prayer of Repentance (11-14) (12)	the Praise of God from Manasseh and the Angels (15)

18. THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH

The Prayer of Manasseh 1-15

ASSIGNMENTS			
Azariah and the Song of the 3 Young Men 1-68	The Story of Susanna 1-42	Bell and the Dragon 1-42	The Prayer of Manasseh 1-15

INTRODUCTION

The Name

The book is named after Manasseh, the most evil of the Kings of Judah, who was responsible for Yahweh's bringing about the final end to Judah through the Babylonian Conquest in 586 B.C.E. This story is told in 2 Kings 21-24, but a different story is told in 2 Chronicles, where Manasseh is taken prisoner into Assyria, where he repents of his evil ways, prays for forgiveness, and is allowed by Yahweh to return home to initiate a reform movement (2 Chronicles 33:10-17). This might be an explanation as to why such a wicked King managed to reign for such a very long time.

The Author and the Date

The book of Manasseh was probably written by a second or first century Jew living outside of Palestine, possibly in Alexandria. His purpose was to write what Manasseh might have said in a prayer. We still do things like this in movies of Biblical Events, but of course, we do not try to make Scripture out of them. The author intended to insert this prayer in 2 Chronicles 33:13, but it never won a place there.

The Place in the Bible

The original language of the Prayer of Manasseh is debated. If it was written in Hebrew, no copies survive. This might explain why it could not make it into 2 Chronicles. A number of Greek Septuagint manuscripts do include it at the end of 2 Chronicles.

It only survives in Greek, but there are also Latin, Syriac, Armenian, and Ethiopic copies as well. The Prayer failed to make it into the Roman Catholic Scriptures, but it was

placed in the Appendix. It is also included among a group of Canticles and Liturgical pieces such as the Magnificat and Benedictus.

The Purpose

That God could forgive a sinner such as Manasseh was remarkable. If it were true, this story needed to be told. The seriousness of Manasseh's sins, the depth of his repentance, and the remarkable mercy of God are important themes in both the Old and New Testaments. Manasseh is an example of how God can forgive the vilest of sinners.

The Outline

The prayer is difficult to outline, ideas run quickly into new verses; nevertheless, one can find an order moving through the prayer, with the heart of it being Manasseh's deep repentance. It reminds one of David's repentance in Psalm 51.

The mention in verse 8 that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not sin clearly identifies this work in the late postexilic period when such ideas were common. The reference to the "depths of the earth" in verse 13 may be referring indirectly to a postexilic development of the concept of hell, but then, it may also simply refer to the abode of the dead known as Sheol or Hades.

- A. The Acknowledgement of God as Creator (1-4)
- B. A Description of God's Wrath and Mercy (5-7)
- C. The God of the Righteous and of Sinners (8)
- D. The Sins of Manasseh (9-10)
- E. The Prayer of Repentance and Forgiveness (11-14)
- F. The Praise from Manasseh and the Angels (15)

THE CHOICE BETWEEN HOPE AND HOPLESSNESS

The Prayer of Azariah through the Prayer of Manasseh

One day when I was waiting in a doctor's office, I picked up a copy of *Redbook* and began to read an article by Bernie Siegel, entitled, "Love is a Medical Miracle." One statement fascinated me. "Refusal to hope," he wrote, "is nothing more than a decision to die."¹ This means that hope is a decision that we make.

The Bible is a textbook of hope. Every page and every word, says Jürgen Moltmann, "is concerned with the burning question, 'What may I hope?'"² Even though we Protestants do not accept the Apocrypha as Scripture, it raises this same burning question. No verse says it more clearly than Susanna 60: "Then the whole assembly raised a great shout and blessed God, who saves those who hope in him."

¹ Bernie S. Siegel, "Love is a Medical Miracle," *Redbook*, December, 1986, p. 181.

² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Gospel of Liberation* (Word Books, Publisher: Waco, 1973), p. 20.

Nothing could be so relevant to our world today as to learn that hope is a decision that we all must make. I recently read a book entitled, *Disappointment with God*, in which Philip Yancey discusses a young man's disappointment with God. The young man named Richard asked three questions about God. They had to do with God's fairness, silence, and absence. Yancey decided not to hope in a God who allowed unfairness in the world, who seemed to say nothing as he prayed to him, and who seemed too hidden to be relevant in the modern world. God did not seem to be helping him or guiding him through life. Richard lost his girl friend, his job, and his faith; and as a result, he turned against God. He made a conscious decision based on the fact that God seemed to be treating him unfairly, would not talk, and remained hidden. Yancey wrote a book about Richard's problem, and then asked himself at the end why he continued to hope. He and Richard shared a similar religious upbringing. Richard's three questions caused Yancey to deal honestly with his own faith, but he made a different decision from Richard. He chose hope instead of hopelessness. "The alternative to disappointment with God," said Yancey "seems to be disappointment without God."³

The Bible is an affirmation of hope. So is the Apocrypha, especially these brief books of the Prayer of Azariah through the Prayer of Manasseh. They were written in a time when pressures to conform to Greek culture and religion were so intense that resistance would lead to death. When Susanna was pressured to sin, she replied in verse 22-23, "I am completely trapped. For if I do this, it will mean death for me; if I do not, I cannot escape your hands. I choose not to do it; I will fall into your hands, rather than sin in the sight of the Lord." It is better to fall into the hands of those who can kill only the body than to fall into the hands of the one who has power to kill the soul or spirit as well. In the Prayer of Manasseh, a book named after one of Judah's worst Kings, the author assumes that even he could have been forgiven simply by confessing his sin and pleading for God's mercy. In verses 12 and 14b-15a, he cries:

I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge my transgressions.

...unworthy as I am, you will save me according to your great mercy, and I will praise you continually all the days of my life."

The decision to hope in God requires more effort than the decision to give up on God, but it is much more satisfying. It leads one to the purpose of one's life, which is to praise God. It also forces us to exercise our free will, which is the essence of what makes us human. When we decide to hope in God, and turn to him in praise, then we are not only on the way to full humanity, but we are also drawing closer to God. Hope does not disappoint us. In fact, it makes faith and love possible. All three of these things are decisions. We decide to hope, to believe, and to love; and even though love may be the greatest, it depends upon the prior decision to hope.

³ Philip Yancey, *Disappointment With God* (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, 1988), p. 253.

17. BEL AND THE DRAGON

INTRODUCTION (1-2) (Cyrus and Daniel)

BEL (3-22)

Bel (3) 12 Bushels of Flour 40 Sheep 50 Gallons of Wine	The Contest (10) 70 Priests, Wives, and their children	Sealing the Temple (11)
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God of History and Creation (1-4) (1-2)	God of Wrath and Mercy (5-7) (5b-6)	God of the Righteous and of Sinners (8)
The Sins of Manasseh (9-10) (9)	The Prayer of Repentance (11-14) (12)	the Praise of God from Manasseh and the Angels (15)

19. JUDAS

1 Maccabees 1:1—8:32

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Developing Crisis and the Outbreak of War 1:1—2:70	Victories under Judas 3:1—4:61	An Organized Campaign and the Struggle for Power 5:1—6:63	The Roman Threat and the Roman Alliance 7:1—8:32

INTRODUCTION

The Name

The title comes from the name given to Judas, son of Mattathias, who led a guerrilla war against Antiochus IV and successfully took Jerusalem and rededicated the Temple to the glory of God. He was given the name *Maccabee* which, means “hammer.”

The Author

A Palestinian Jew living in Jerusalem was the author. What do we know about him? He modeled his work after the Kings and Chronicles of the Old Testament, and his sympathies were with Jewish warriors who challenged Antiochus IV and his hellenization of Palestine. The country was split into several parties, mainly the Essenes in Qumran and the Sadducees and Pharisees; but there is no evidence in the book, which helps us to discover the author’s party loyalties. This is indeed a complement to his historical objectivity. Josephus makes full use of his material without giving him any credit.

The Date

The author must have lived after the close of the period about which he has written. The reference in 16:23-24 to the High Priest, John Hyrcanus I (134-104 B.C.E.) helps us to reach the earliest possible date, which would be 104 B.C.E., but some scholars suggest that chapters 14-16 might have been added as late as 70 C.E. Since nothing is said about the rise of Roman power in Palestine, which occurred in 63 B.C.E., one could conclude that 1 Maccabees was put into its final form between 104 B.C.E. to 63 C.E. The author may have started sooner, say in about 140 B.C.E.

The Purpose

1 Maccabees is a book of history, which describes the Maccabean or Jewish resistance against Syrian power. The time period covered is between 175 to 135 B.C.E. The books of Daniel and Ecclesiasticus were written within this same time period. A great deal of other writing was going on at the same time. The Prophetic Books, for example, had just been collected, edited, and canonized around 200 B.C.E. Since Greek was the international language of the time, the Jews eventually translated their Scriptures into Greek so that they could have a wider influence. This new translation was called the Septuagint. (LXX). Not everyone was happy about the impact of Greek culture and language. This is a story of Jewish resistance to it. It is a story of the recovery of sacred things and also of the sacred language, which was Hebrew. Many idiomatic Hebrew phrases can be found in this book, and that leads scholars today to suggest that it was originally written in Hebrew. Since Josephus had only a Greek copy, earlier scholars concluded that it was only written in Greek. This is one of the reasons why it could not be accepted into the Jewish Sacred Scriptures, even though it is a story of how God worked to liberate them from Antiochus IV.

The story begins with an introduction to how Greek domination began. The author tells about the conquests of Alexander the Great from 336 to 323 B.C.E. After Alexander's death the empire was divided up. For the sake of this author's story, the main divisions consisted of the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt and the Seleucid Empire in Syria. We will be mainly concerned with the Seleucid Empire beginning with rise of Antiochus IV in 175 B.C.E. to the reign of the High Priest, John Hyrcanus I (134-104 B.C.E.), which marks the beginning of an independent Jewish State. When Antiochus IV came to the Syrian or Seleucid throne, he gave himself the special name of *Epiphanes*, which means "God made manifest." This really caused some problems, for the Jews considered such a claim to be blasphemous. They responded by calling him *Epimanes*, which means "mad man."

The real trouble began in Jerusalem as Antiochus began to feel pressure from Rome. He responded by taking his hostility out on the Jews. Within three days, his soldiers slaughtered 80,000 men, women, and children (2 Maccabees 5:11-14). When it was all over, he stormed into the Temple in Jerusalem, robbed it of its treasures, tore the curtain down, which hid the Holy of Holies, and set up an altar to Zeus, where swine could be sacrificed. This was a terrible act of blasphemy to the Jews and it was later referred to as "the abomination that desolates" or "the desolating sacrilege." One Old Testament reference can be found in Daniel 9:27 and a New Testament reference can be found in Mark 13:14.

Antiochus IV desired to hellenize the Jews and he proceeded by putting an end to the three distinctive traits of Judaism: the reading of the Law, circumcision, and the observance of the Sabbath. Many scrolls were destroyed and this may explain why we do not have some of the Apocryphal books that might have been originally written in Hebrew, including Maccabees.

Resistance to Antiochus revolved around one family, which was headed by an elderly priest named Mattathias. When an officer came to his hometown of Modein, which was located between Jerusalem and Joppa, to enforce the Royal Decree, Mattathias killed him. He had to flee to the hills where he died shortly thereafter, leaving his five sons to carry on the struggle. Judas was the son who became the dominant leader and he was given the nickname *Maccabee*, which means “the Hammer.” The guerrilla war lasted three long years, but Jerusalem was finally captured and the Temple rededicated to the glory of Yahweh. In Jewish tradition the remembrance of these two events is called Hanukkah. The celebration of these events is mentioned in John 10:22 and it falls near Christmas in December.

When Judas died, his brother Jonathan took over the leadership, but the nature of the struggle changed. It was transformed from a religious to a nationalistic war and the Jews began to dominate some of their neighbors. Jewish Independence lasted from 142 to 63 B.C.E. The Romans were about to move in to replace Greek and Syrian domination and that sets the scene for the New Testament era, with the expectation of a new Anointed King, the Messiah.

Maccabees as Scripture

Why has Maccabees not been accepted as Scripture? For Jews of the time it was unthinkable to accept anything not written in the Sacred Language, which would have been Hebrew. For Christians it was not part of the Scriptures Jesus interpreted on the Emmaus Road, nor was it necessary to the understanding of the Gospel, even if it did fill in the historical gap between the Old and New Testaments. It was a secondary book, important, but not necessary; and it contained nothing new in regard to the revelation of God. Its heroes were fighting for a faith already revealed through Moses and the prophets. Had the Jews known that it was indeed originally written in Hebrew, and had they possessed a copy in Hebrew, it may well have become part of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate, thought it was originally written in Hebrew and that is why he included it as a part of the Roman Catholic Scriptures.

The Outline

In addition to the historical parts of Maccabees, there are a number of dirges, laments, and songs, a list of which follows:

1. The Dirge for Judea (1:24-28)
2. The Dirge for Jerusalem 1:36-40
3. The Lament over Jerusalem by Mattathias (2:7-13)
4. The Song Praising Judas (3:3-9)
5. The Dirge for Jerusalem (3:45)
6. The Song in Praise of Simon (14:4-15)

Now for the outline, the main points of which are:

- A. The Developing Crisis (1:1-64)
- B. The Outbreak of War (2:1-70)
- C. The Victories under Judas (3:1—4:61)
- D. The Organized Campaign (5:1-68)
- E. The Struggle for Power (6:1-63)
- F. The Roman Threat (7:1-50)
- G. The Alliance with Rome (8:1-32)
- H. The Transition (9:1-73)
 - I. The Alliance with Alexander (10:1-89)
 - J. Continued Struggles (11:1-74)
- K. Alliance with Rome and Sparta (12:1-23)
- L. The Rise of Simon (13:1-70)
- M. A New Breakout of War (15:1—16:24)

THE DEVELOPING CRISIS (1:1-64)

Alexander the Great's Conquests (1:1-9)

The book begins with a summary of Alexander the Great's Life and influence. Alexander was the son of Philip of Macedon in northern Greece. He was born in 356 B.C.E. and by 336 B.C.E. he was King. He quickly set out to conquer the known world and brought down Darius II of Persia in 333 B.C.E. (Daniel 8:5). The Dead Sea Scrolls say that he came from Kittim, which was a word used to describe Greece. Alexander died in 323 B.C.E. and his generals divided up his Kingdom, but that is not what is said in the Book of Maccabees. According to 1 Maccabees 1:6, he divided up his kingdom after he fell sick, prior to his death. Historians reject this account in 1 Maccabees. Three Dynasties did emerge however, and they are the Antigonids of Macedonia, the Ptolemies of Egypt, and the Seleucids of Syria.

Antiochus IV's Paganizing Program (1:10-15)

Antiochus III the King (or Great) reigned in Syria from 223 to 187 B.C.E. His son, Antiochus IV reigned from 175 to 164 B.C.E. He is the villain in this story, who adopted the name "Epiphanes" for himself. According to the calendar of the Seleucids of Syria (Daniel 8:9), the reign of Antiochus IV began in 137th year of the Kingdom of the Greeks.

At first Greek culture penetrated the area rather peaceably, but Antiochus IV adopted a very aggressive program of hellenization. Lawless men were those who acted against the Law of Moses. Antiochus IV replaced Onias III, who had been the High Priest, with Jason, his brother. Jason then entered into a covenant with Antiochus IV to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem. In Greece a gymnasium was no more than a country club, but to the Jews it was anathema. What made it so offensive was that Jewish participants underwent surgery to remove the marks of their circumcision. They did this because all

athletes practiced in the nude, which was offensive to the Jews. The gymnasium reflected a culture totally incompatible with the Law of Moses.

Antiochus' Invasion of Egypt and Palestine (1:16-40)

After subduing Egypt, Antiochus went up against Jerusalem in the 43rd year. He seized Judea, which had been a Ptolemaic Province, and robbed the Temple of all of its treasures. Two years later he sent a chief collector, named Apollonius (2 Maccabees 5:24) with a large force. At first they spoke of peace, but quickly killed many Israelites, plundered the city, and burned it with fire.

Elephants are mentioned along with chariots and cavalry in 1 Maccabees 1:17. Elephants in this time meant about the same thing as tanks mean today. Antiochus had a formidable army, but some suggest that the Roman army challenged him over his desire to annex Egypt. This is why he returned to Judea.

There are two laments in this section. The first is the Dirge for Judea (1:24-28) and the second is the Dirge for Jerusalem (1:36-40) These Laments are usually considered to be older than the historical prose.

Antiochus' Call for Unity (1:41-64)

As is well known, Antiochus desired to hellenize Palestine. His call for unity around Greek culture meant the death of Judaism and that is why it was so strongly resisted. Many Jews went into hiding. The persecution, which began at this time lies in the background of the Book of Daniel. The “desolating sacrilege” in 1 Maccabees 1:54 refers to the making of sacrifices to the Olympian Zeus. The sacrifices were swine, which made it even more difficult for the Jews to accept. Copies of the Torah were torn up and burned and anyone caught with a copy was killed. The intensity of the persecution can be seen in the murdering of circumcised children and the hanging of these children around their mothers' necks.

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR (2:1-70)

The Revolt of Mattathias (2:1-14)

Mattathias came from the priestly family of Hasamonaioi, who was his great grandfather. Out of this line arose the Hasmoneans. All five of Mattathias' sons are named, but Judas is the most important one in this story. He was nicknamed Maccabeus, which means “The Hammer.” This refers to his great skills as a warrior (2:66). His older brother, Simon or Simeon (Thassi) was known for his great wisdom (2:65). The other sons were John (Gaddi), Eleazar (Avaran), and Jonathan (Apphus). Nothing is known of their nicknames. The family lived in Modein, which lies halfway between Jerusalem and Joppa.

Mattathias was deeply pained by the blasphemies being committed in Judah, particularly in Jerusalem, and so he wrote the Dirge Over Jerusalem in 2 Maccabees 2:7-13.

The First Acts of Violence (2:15-41)

The King sent one of his officers to Mattathias offering him an opportunity to set an example to the others by obeying the royal decree, but he refused on the grounds that he would remain loyal to the covenant of his fathers. When a Jew came forward to offer a sacrifice on the altar in Modein, in accordance to the royal decree, Mattathias killed him and then killed the king's officer. These two acts of violence won over many Jews who had been wavering but they had to flee into the wilderness southeast of Jerusalem, where John the Baptist later lived. This was also the place where Satan tempted Jesus. Many caves existed in the area, some of which later held the Dead Sea Scrolls. There must have been several groups because one, not including Mattathias and his sons, was attacked on the Sabbath. Trying to remain loyal to their God and Covenant, they refused to defend themselves and 1,000 of them were killed. When Mattathias heard of it, he called his people to fight on the Sabbath in self-defense (2:41). He believed that it was necessary to profane the Sabbath temporarily to make it possible to keep it later. The royal decree temporarily eliminated the Sabbath. The end justified the means. They had to violate the Sabbath in order to restore it to its central place in Jewish life or the enemy would kill all of them.

The Hasideans Join the Cause (2:42-48)

The Hasideans had existed for some time and are mentioned in Daniel 11:33. They were more religious than Mattathias and his followers, and all though the two groups were not in complete agreement, they saw good reason to join forces. Those who did not fight with them were called sinners, and those who did, were called Hasideans. This does not mean that all who joined them were part of the Hasidean Party, but since Hasidean meant "loyal ones," it became a common expression used for those joining up with Mattathias. When the war was over, the Hasideans parted company and became known as the Pharisees, which means "separate ones." They had fought with Mattathias extremists, but they did not like them, for they were more religious and less political. This does not mean that they were less ferocious. Wars fought for religious purposes can be far more violent than those fought for political or economic causes.

The Death of Mattathias (2:49-70)

When Mattathias came close to death, he summarized his covenantal relationship, tracing it back to the Patriarchs, naming such biblical characters as Daniel, Elijah, David, Caleb, Joshua, Phinehas, Joseph, and finally Abraham. During this time the Law of Moses gets exalted to the point that it is understood as God's Eternal Word. Keeping it will gain the favor of God. One must contrast this to the reason why the Psalmists suggest one should keep the Law. In the Psalms the Law is kept out of gratitude for God's Mighty Acts of Redemption.

Before Mattathias dies, he names Judas, his warrior son, as his successor; at the same time, he notes the wisdom of Simeon and advises his followers to listen to him as a

father. Mattathias died in the 146th year, which would have been in 166 B.C.E. He was buried in the tomb of his fathers at Modein.

THE VICTORIES UNDER JUDAS (3:1—4:61)

Judas: The New Commander (3:1-9)

With the death of his father, Judas took over the leadership, with his brothers and all who had joined his father, uniting behind him. 1 Maccabees 3:3-9 is a Song in Praise of Judas for his dedication to the cause. From this song we conclude that the war was fierce and forced everyone to choose sides. There was no room for neutrality. Hebrews 11:33-38 may be a description of the ferocity of this war.

The Initial Victories (3:10-26)

The Fall of Apollonius (3:10-12)

Apollonius, who was the military and civil governor of Samaria and Judea, led the first battle against Judas and his followers. The exact location of this battle is not given, but it probably took place somewhere in Samaria. Not only did Judas and his men defeat Apollonius, but Judas took Apollonius' sword and used it in battle for the rest of his life (3:12).

The Fall of Seron (3:13-26)

Seron was a more important officer. He was of the opinion that putting down this Jewish insurrection would be relatively easy. As he and his large company approached Beth-horon, Judas went out to meet him with a small company, reminiscent of Gideon's ability to fight with only a few chosen men. They resisted Judas' leadership because they were hungry and had not eaten on that day, but Judas encouraged them by saying that it is not the size of the enemy army that counts. Their strength will come from heaven. Heaven in this case is a substitute for God. It was used as a reverent way of referring to God. Similar references can be found in Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:15. This was commonly done in the intertestamental times. At any rate, they followed Judas, attacking Seron and his army, killing 800, before the remaining soldiers fled into the land of the Philistines. Judas and his small force had become famous and were the talk of the Gentiles. News of these victories reached the King.

The First Campaign of Lysias (3:27—4:35)

Judas' initial victories caught the Syrian Empire at a bad time. Antiochus IV was involved in dealing with problems on his eastern border. The seriousness of the threat from the south can be seen in his attempt to gain the loyalty of his forces by paying them a year's salary in advance (3:28). This naturally drained the royal treasury and forced Antiochus IV to go to Persia with half of his troops to demand more Tribute. The other half were put under the command of Lysias, who had orders to take care of his son Antiochus V

(Eupator), who was according to some sources seven and others nine years old, and to choose leadership to wipe out the Jewish insurrection led by Judas. This took place in the 147th year, which would be 165 B.C.E.

The leaders chosen by Lysias were Ptolemy, Nicanor, and Gorgias. They took 40,000 men to Emmaus. So sure was everyone of victory that traders gathered at the same place with their silver and gold, ready to purchase Jewish slaves following the battle. 1 Maccabees 3:45 is a Dirge for Jerusalem. The Jews, under Judas, went to Mizpah to pray and to seek guidance for the imminent battle with the forces of Lysias. This was a Holy War to be fought according to God's rules and so it was also important to look at them. They can be found in Deuteronomy 20-21. Even with God on their side, they feared the worst; but this did not keep them from believing that they were doing the right thing. They believed that they were fighting in the tradition of Gideon and so they sounded the trumpets and gave a loud shout, girding themselves for battle.

Gorgias took 5,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry and attacked the Jewish camp at night, but Judas heard of the plan and moved his men to attack the king's force at Emmaus. When Gorgias entered the camp that night, he found no one there and concluded that Judas and his army was fleeing from him. How wrong he was. Judas and his men were about to attack them. While most of the Gentiles were fighting for wages, the Jews were fighting for a religious cause from which they gained much inner strength. The size of the opposing army did not matter, for they believed that God would deliver them as he had delivered their ancestors from the Pharaoh. As both sides engaged in battle, 3,000 Gentiles were killed; and the Jews pursued the others to Gazara (Gezer), Azotus (Ashdod), Jamnia (Jabneh), and to the plains of Idumea. The pursuit went in all directions. Judas and his men returned to the enemy camp to plunder it of gold, silver, dyed cloth, and any wealth that could be found and then they sang hymns and praises to Heaven.

Some of those who escaped reported what had happened to Lysias in Antioch. One year later (October/November of 164 B.C.E.), Lysias sent an even larger army south to subdue them. He mustered 60,000 infantrymen and 5,000 cavalry. Judas met the threat with 10,000 men at Beth-zur. Lysias' army lost 5,000 men in the encounter and when he saw how boldly the forces of Judas fought, he returned to Antioch to enlist an even larger army of mercenaries.

The Rededication of the Temple (4:36-61)

Pockets of resistance still existed in Jerusalem and so Judas had to appoint men to secure the citadel. Having liberated Jerusalem, the first step was to cleanse the sanctuary and rededicate it. Instead of simply rebuilding it with existing materials, they tore it down and rebuilt it with unhewn stones, as the law directed them. They did not want to use stones that had been desecrated. Offerings had been made to Zeus on the old altar and so they built a brand new one. Three years after its desecration, to the day, they were ready to dedicate the new altar. The precise date was the twenty-fifth of Chislev, which would be on December 14, 164 B.C.E. (the 148th year). The altar was dedicated with songs and

harps and lutes and cymbals. Since *Hanukkah* is the Hebrew word for “Dedicate” this dedication of the altar has become known as Hanukkah.

Judas and his brothers, with the support of all the assembly of Israel, set the observance of Hanukkah at eight days. It was to be a season of joy and gladness. The fact that it is observed close to the winter solstice has some symbolic meaning as well. The longer days symbolized the returning of light to Jerusalem.

The threat from Syria however was not over and so Judas fortified Jerusalem and Beth-zur, which faced Idumea. What had been essentially a religious war was quickly turning into a political and patriotic war. The Jewish population as a whole was being called to fight against the Seleucid Empire.

THE ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN (5:1-68)

The Threat from the Southeast (5:1-8)

The Gentiles did not sit around doing nothing while Judas rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem. They reacted by killing and destroying Jews. The threat came from the sons of Esau in Idumea at Akrabattene. Judas responded by leading an attack on them, the Basons of Baeon, and the Ammonites led by Timothy. He also took Jazer before returning to Judea. The threat was not limited to the southeast. Judas was quickly expanding his conquests.

The Threefold Organization (5:9-63)

The Organization (5:9-20)

Other threats quickly followed coming primarily from Gilead and Galilee. Some of the Jews in Gilead fled to the stronghold of Dathema and sent a letter to Judas requesting help. Timothy was again leading the attack against them. While Judas was reading the letter, messengers came from Galilee with a similar report. Judas responded by telling his brother Simon to take 3,000 men and go to rescue the people in Galilee. He and Jonathan would take 8,000 men and go to help the people in Gilead. Joseph and Azariah were to be left with the rest of the forces to guard their interests in Judea.

The Attack on Galilee (5:21-23)

Simon went up to Galilee where he fought many battles against the Gentiles. He does not seem to have encountered many problems. After killing 3,000 Gentiles, he led Jews from Galilee and Arbatta into Judea with great rejoicing.

The Attack on Gilead (5:24-54)

Judas and Jonathan met the Nabateans as they crossed over the Jordan River. The Nabateans were friendly Arabs, who told them what had been happening to their brethren

in Gilead. Many of them had been shut up in Bozrah, Bosor, Alema, Chaspho, Maked and Carnaim. Judas and his army invaded Bozrah, Dathema, Alema, Chaspho, Maked, Bosor, and Carnaim. In many of the places they killed every living male, and in one battle sounding very much like one of Gideon's battles, they killed 8,000 of their enemies in one day. With the main battles behind them, they gathered together to make the trip to Jerusalem, but they had to pass through Ephron. They asked the people of Ephron to let them pass through, but they were denied permission. They simply fought their way through, killing every male with the edge of the sword and then they went up to Mount Zion with gladness and joy to offer sacrifices to God.

The Attack on Jamnia (5:55-62)

Joseph and Azariah were supposed to wait for Simon, Judas, and Jonathan to return; but they got anxious, for they too wanted to win some battles. They led an attack against Gorgias and his men at Jamnia, but lost 2,000 men and were beaten back. They suffered this loss because they did not listen to Judas and his brothers.

The Honoring of Judas and His Brothers (5:63-68)

Even though Judas and his brothers were honored for their success, there were still pockets of resistance all around them. They went down to fight the sons of Esau to the south, taking Hebron and its villages and Azotus (Ashdod) in the land of the Philistines. Altars were torn down, images burned with fire, and plunder was taken.

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER (6:1-63)

The Death of Antiochus IV (6:1-17)

The last act of aggression attempted by Antiochus IV was to take Elymais in Persia, a city known for its wealth in silver and gold. Although he tried, the city withstood his attack; and Antiochus IV in great grief returned to Babylon, where he heard more bad news from Judah. Lysias had been defeated and the Jews now controlled the altar. Beth-zur was also in Jewish hands.

This sent Antiochus IV into a deep depression. He reflected on what went wrong and finally concluded that he was being punished for the evils he did in Jerusalem. The reference in 6:11 to "a great flood" refers to the wrath of God. Knowing that he was going to die, he appointed Philip to rule the Kingdom and to prepare his son Antiochus V for eventual rule. Antiochus IV then died in the one hundred and forty-ninth year.

Another person that had born some responsibility for preparing Antiochus V to rule was Lysias. He had brought him up as a boy and named him Eupator, which means "of a good father." It is Philip however who possesses the crown, the robe, and the signet.

The Second Campaign of Lysias (6:18-54) (162 B.C.E.)

Within Jerusalem there was the citadel, which was extremely important to the Syrians and the Jews. No one could maintain power without holding it. The Jews threatened to take it, but were prevented from doing so. They developed a kind of citadel around the sanctuary. Pressure built up and finally Lysias mobilized a large army to put an end to Judas' insurrection. The army consisted of 100,000 infantry, 20,000 horsemen, and 32 elephants. The elephants were used to force an opening in the enemy's ranks. This huge army was preparing to attack Beth-zur.

Judas led his army to Beth-zechariah, just opposite the Syrian camp. When the battle began Judas' army killed 600 men. Eleazar, Judas' brother, noticed an elephant taller than the rest, and supposed it to be the king's elephant. He stabbed the elephant from underneath, but was killed when the elephant fell upon him. Nothing is said about whether or not the king was on that elephant. He probably was not. The Syrians went on to retake Beth-zur. The Jews had little food because they had been observing a sabbatical year.

The Lifting of the Siege (6:55-63)

When Lysias heard that Philip had been given custody of the new king, and that he was trying to seize control of the government, he quickly gave orders to lift the siege against the Jews. He probably felt threatened by Philip. In lifting the siege, he agreed to allow the Jews to follow their Law, to observe their Sabbath, and to practice circumcision. These conditions were accepted and the Jews evacuated from the area of the citadel; but when the Syrians saw the kind of fortress being built at Mount Zion, they tore down the wall, violating their oath. Meanwhile, Lysias returned to Antioch to challenge Philip, who had taken control of the city. The chapter ends stating that Lysias took the city of Antioch by force.

THE ROMAN THREAT (7:1-50)

A New Administration (7:1-20)

Demetrius took over as King in the one hundred and fifty-first year, or one year later. Without seeing Antiochus and Lysias, he had them killed by his army.

Alcimus approached Demetrius with all the lawless and ungodly men of Israel. It was Alcimus' ambition to be the High Priest. Having come out of Aaron's line, he was qualified; and this attracted many of the pious, such as the Scribes and the Hasideans. These groups must have become dissatisfied with Judas to accept Alcimus.

Needing a governor for the land, Demetrius chose Bacchides, one of his friends and governor of the province Beyond the River, meaning between the Euphrates and Egypt. Bacchides took on the same responsibilities as Lysias before him. Bacchides left

Jerusalem and encamped in Beth-zaiton. Those who deserted to him, were killed by him and thrown into a great pit. He put Alcimus in charge and returned to King Demetrius.

The Defeat of Nicanor (7:21-50)

The king sent Nicanor, an honored prince who hated Israel, to destroy its people. Nicanor's first overtures seemed peaceful, but his intent soon became clear. Judas refused to have anything to do with him and war quickly broke out, with Nicanor losing 500 men near Capharsalama.

Nicanor went up to Mount Zion and demanded that Judas and his army be delivered into his hands. If they were not, he threatened to burn up the Temple. Nicanor gathered his troops in Beth-horon and Judas encamped in Adasa with 3,000 men. Judas reminded God in prayer how he spared Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the Assyrians and asked him to help him crush Nicanor and his army. The battle took place on the thirteenth day of Adar. Nicanor was the first to fall in battle and Judas and his army pushed them back from Adasa to Gazara. They seized the spoils of war and cut off Nicanor's head and right hand and displayed them just outside of Jerusalem. The thirteenth of Adar was declared a holiday to be celebrated each year.

THE ALLIANCE WITH ROME (8:1-32)

When Judas heard that the Romans were very strong and well-disposed toward those who entered into an alliance with them, he sent Eupolemus and Jason to Rome to establish an alliance. Since the Jews, were being enslaved by the Greeks, they preferred a Roman alliance. Rome was emerging as a world power at this time and had made significant gains against the Gauls, Spain, and Greece. Their influence was even being felt as far away as India, Media, and Lydia in Asia.

Rome was not run by a king, but by a senate of 300. A different man served as the chairman each year. When Eupolemus and Jason approached this senate, they agreed upon an alliance and it was written on two bronze tablets, one being kept in Rome and the other sent to Jerusalem. In the alliance Rome and Jerusalem were committed to supporting one another from any enemy who might attack. There was to be an immediate economic boycott against an attacking enemy (8:26-28). Military help was also expected. A letter of this alliance went out to King Demetrius to warn him that Rome and Jerusalem were now ready to defend each other against him. Future battles would take place on sea and on land.

RELIGIOUS INDEPENDENCE

What can this story about the Jewish revolt against Antiochus IV possibly have to say to us today? Its most important message is that every ethnic group needs the freedom to express its own religious faith and the freedom to secure its own destiny. No dominant ethnic group has the right to force another group to accept its religion and culture. In the tragic story of 1 Maccabees, the Syrian King Antiochus tries to force the Jewish people to

accept Greek culture and religion. The message contained in these writings is that the Jews have the right to choose their own religion and culture. In all the violence that follows they may seem as immoral as the Syrians, but we must be careful about judging them too harshly, for they were being forced to do something against their will.

The high point of the book lies in 1 Maccabees 4:52-54, and this is worth quoting word for word:

Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-eighth year, they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering which they had built. At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals.

Greek culture, with its nudity in the gymnasium, and Greek religion, with its multitude of gods, were both objectionable to the Jews, who tried to maintain high moral standards according to the Moasic Law and worship only one God.

19. JUDAS (1 Maccabees 1:1—8:32)		
THE DEVELOPING CRISIS (1:1-64)		
Alexander's Conquest (1:1-9) (1:1) (Reigned from 336-323 B.C.) (Defeated Darius II in 333 B.C.)	Antiochus's Paganizing (1:10-15) (1:10) Antiochus III the Great (223-187) Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164) Jason and the Gymnasium (1:11 & 14)	
Threefold Kingdom (323 B.C.) 1. Antigonids (Macedonia) 2. Ptolemies (Egypt) 3. Seleucids (Syria)	Antiochus' Invasion (1:16-40) (1:17 & 20) Dirge for Judea (1:24-28) Dirge for Jerusalem (1:36-40)	
	Antiochus' Call for Unity (1:41-64) The Desolating Sacrilege (1:54) Swine to Zeus and burning of Torah	
THE OUTBREAK OF WAR (2:1-70)		
The Revolt of Mattathias in Modein (2:1-14) (Simon, Judas, John, Eleazar, Jonathan)	The Hasideans (2:42-48) (2:42) (Loyal Ones) Forerunners of Pharisees	
The first Acts of Violence (2:15-41) Jew and an Officer (2:23-25) The Attack on the Sabbath (2:38)	The Death of Mattathias (2:49-70) (166 BC) Simon=Wise Father (2:65) Judas=Mighty Warrior (2:66)	
THE VICTORIES UNDER JUDAS (3:1—4:61)		
The Initial Victories (3:1-26) Fall of Apollonius (3:10-12) (3:10) Judas took his sword (3:12) Fall of Seron (3:13-26) (3:13) They fled into Philistine territory (3:19 & 24)	First Campaign of Lysias (3:27—4:35) He cared for Antiochus Eupator (3:32-33) He chose Ptolemy, Nicanor, Gorgias (3:38-40) Judas attacked at Mizpah (3:46) Pursued him to Idumea, Azotus, Jamnia (4:15)	
The Rededication of the Temple (4:36-61) 25th Day of Chislev or December 14, 164 B.C. (4:52-54)		
THE ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN (5:1-68)		
The Cry for Help (5:1-20) They all defeated Timothy (5:3)	The Attack on Gilead (5:24-54) Judas & Jonathan in Ephron (5:48 & 54)	
The Attack on Galilee (5:21-23) Simon pursued them to Ptolemais (5:22)	The Attack on Jamnia (5:56-62) Joseph and Azariah defeated by Gorgias	
THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER (6:1-63)		
The Death of Antiochus IV (6:1-17) Attack on Elymais in Persia (6:1) Return to Babylon (6:3) Philip and Lysias (6:14 & 17)	Lysias' 2nd Campaign (6:18-54) (162) Lysias in Beth-zur Judas/Eleazar in Beth-zechariah (6:43-48) The loss of Beth-zur (6:50)	Lifting the Siege (6:55-63) The offer of Peace (6:60) The Broken Peace (6:62) Lysias' challenge to Philip (6:63)
THE ROMAN THREAT (7:1-50)		
A New Administration (7:1-20) Demetrius comes from Rome (7:1-2) He killed Eupator and Lysias He set up Alcimus and Bacchides (7:5, 8, and 9)	The Defeat of Nicanor (7:21-50) A disguised overture (7:28 & 30) Nicanor (Beth-horon) and Judas (Adasa) (7:39-40) A Holiday (7:43) and the fate of Nicanor (7:47)	
THE ALLIANCE WITH ROME (8:1-32)		
A Senate of 320 (8:14-15) Judas sent Eupolemus and Jason (8:17-18)	The Two Bronze Tablets (8:21) The Letter to Demetrius (8:31)	

20. JONATHAN

1 Maccabees 9:1 – 12:53

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Transition from Judas to Jonathan 9:1-73	The Alliance with Alexander and Egypt 10:1-89	Continued Struggles between Jonathan and Demetrius 11:1-74	The Alliance with Rome and Sparta and the Capture of Jonathan 12:1-53

THE TRANSITION (9:1-73)

The Death of Judas (9:1-22)

In May of 160 B.C.E. (the first month of the 152nd year), Demetrius sent Bacchides and Alcimus into Judah a second time to destroy Judas and his army at Elasa. Bacchides and Alcimus had 20,000 foot soldiers and two thousand cavalry. Judas camped in Elasa with 3,000 hand picked men, but 2,200 of them deserted. Many of those remaining wanted to flee, but Judas decided to fight. The 800 fought bravely, but the battle became desperate and Judas was killed. Jonathan and Simon took him to Modein for burial.

The Selection of Jonathan (9:23-31)

Judas had appointed himself leader, but the people chose Jonathan. This was no great honor, for they were in retreat and their number had dwindled significantly.

The Battle Continues (9:32-53)

When Bacchides learned of the election of Jonathan, he planned to attack them and so Jonathan and Simon led their little group into the wilderness of Tekoa and camped by the water of the pool of Asphar. That they could all camp around one waterhole is an indication that their numbers had become very small. That is why Jonathan sent his brother John to seek the help of the Nabateans, who had been supportive. This time they were not, for they killed John. Bacchides attacked with a large force on the Sabbath, thinking that Jonathan and his army would not fight on the Sabbath. Nothing is said as to whether they fought or refused to fight; but in the end, they were able to inflict casualties, for Bacchides lost 1,000 men in one day. This caused him to return to Jerusalem and to

fortify several cities. Some of the main cities were Jerusalem, Jericho, Emmaus, Beth-horon, Bethel, Timnath, Pharathon, Tephon, Beth-zur, and Gazara. The threat from Jonathan and his small army must have still been formidable.

The Temporary Peace (9:54-73)

In May/June of 159 B.C.E. (the 153rd year) Alcimus gave orders to tear down the wall separating the inner and outer courts of the Temple. Since the Gentiles used the outer court, this seems like he was providing equal access to the worship of God, a place where Jews and Gentiles could mingle with equality. This is not what it meant to the Jews. It symbolized the end of their special covenant relationship with Yahweh. They were to be a light to the Gentiles (Nations), but their faith was not to be compromised or diluted.

Before Alcimus could finish tearing down the wall, he was stopped with a paralysis that affected his speech. This resulted in Alcimus' death and a two-year retreat on the part of Bacchides. When the battle resumed, Bacchides sent a large force into Judea with the plan to capture Jonathan and his men; instead, Jonathan's men seized about 50 of those leaders involved in the treachery and had them killed.

Jonathan and Simon withdrew to Bethbasi in the wilderness, where they dug in and divided forces. Since Bacchides was suffering many casualties, he killed some of his counselors for bad advice and prepared to withdraw. When Jonathan learned of this, he made peace with Bacchides to obtain release of the captives. The "sword ceased" from Israel for several years, and Jonathan dwelt in Michmash, where he had sufficient time to consolidate his forces and gain control of many of the surrounding villages.

THE ALLIANCE WITH ALEXANDER (10:1-89)

Two Invitations for an Alliance (10:1-50)

The landing of Alexander Epiphanes in Ptolemais caused Demetrius to seek an alliance with Jonathan and the Jews. Alexander's given name was Balas and he posed as the son of Antiochus IV. He heard of Demetrius' attempt to form an alliance with Jonathan, and so he made a better offer. He made Jonathan the High Priest of the Jewish nation. Not to be outdone, Demetrius offered to exempt the Jews from tribute and taxes and to pay for the restoration of the Temple, Jerusalem, and its walls. In return, the Jews would provide 30,000 men in the king's military forces. They would be allowed to observe their faith and holy days.

Jonathan chose to accept Alexander's offer. This was fortunate for him because Alexander went up against Demetrius, defeating his army and killing him.

An Alliance with Egypt (10:51-66)

Alexander's next step was to forge an alliance with Egypt. He did this by offering to marry Cleopatra, the daughter of Ptolemy VI Philometor, who had ruled Egypt for a

generation. Ptolemy accepted the invitation and suggested that the marriage take place in Ptolemais, which is the Biblical Akko, just north of present day Haifa. Cleopatra was taken up to Ptolemais to marry Alexander in a great ceremony. Jonathan was invited to Ptolemais as well and provided with purple robes fit for a King. Jonathan did not however rank with Alexander and Ptolemy. He was still a vassal of Alexander, but one who had been given priestly, political, and military power in his own country (10:65). He was the first Jew to possess all three forms of power. Even David and Solomon did not have priestly authority.

The Threat from Demetrius II (10:67-89)

Demetrius II, son of Demetrius I, decided to leave Crete and try to regain his father's throne. He was angry that Jonathan had not accepted his father's offer and so he challenged him in battle. Alexander quickly returned to Antioch to defend himself. Demetrius appointed Appollonius governor of Coelesyria and assembled a large military force to take Jamnia. Jonathan responded by choosing 10,000 men and set out with his brother Simon to encamp near Joppa. Appollonius had a garrison in Joppa and so Joppa was officially closed to Jonathan, but Jonathan gained possession of it anyway. Having heard of this, Appollonius mustered 3,000 cavalry and a large army and went to Azotus. Jonathan pursued him to Azotus and the two armies engaged in an exhausting battle, with Appollonius losing, finally having to flee to Beth-dagon. Jonathan responded by burning Azotus and the surrounding towns, including the temple of Dagon, and killed 8,000 men. When Jonathan approached Askalon, the men of the city came out to meet him. When Alexander heard of Jonathan's victories, he sent him a golden buckle and gave him Ekron as well. The Philistine cities were now under Jonathan's control.

CONTINUED STRUGGLES (11:1-74)

The Invasion by Ptolemy VI (11:1-19)

Even though Ptolemy's daughter, Cleopatra, had married Alexander, Ptolemy determined to take possession of Alexander's Kingdom and give it to Demetrius II. After he had taken Syria, he moved down the coast through Azotus, where he saw the charred bodies of Jonathan's victims, to Joppa, where he met Jonathan. After gaining control of the coastal cities, Ptolemy offered Alexander's wife to Demetrius. Ptolemy then entered Antioch and put on the crown of Asia. He now held on to two crowns, that of Egypt and that of Asia.

Alexander was in Cilicia at the time, putting down a revolt. When he heard the news he engaged Ptolemy's forces in battle, but was put to flight. He fled to Arabia, where Zabdiel the Arab cut off his head and sent it back to Ptolemy. Three days later Ptolemy died, and Demetrius emerged as the unchallenged King.

The Agreement Between Demetrius and Jonathan (11:20-37)

Jonathan gathered forces together to attack the citadel in Jerusalem. When Demetrius heard of this he wrote Jonathan asking him to stop the siege, offering to meet him for a conference in Ptolemais. Jonathan agreed to meet but he did not stop the siege. When the two arrived in Ptolemais Jonathan offered gifts to the sixteen-year-old king. Demetrius confirmed Jonathan as the High Priest, and bestowed upon him many other honors, including that of friendship. Confirmation was made of Jonathan's right to possess Judea and the three districts of Aphairema, Lydda, and Rathamin. A copy of this agreement was given to Jonathan to put in a conspicuous place in Jerusalem. In all of this nothing more is said of Jonathan's attack on the citadel.

Jonathan's Aid to Demetrius (11:38-52)

In a cost cutting measure, Demetrius dismissed a large number of his troops, but he maintained his foreign troops in the islands of the nations, mainly Crete. This made him very unpopular. Trypho, who had been one of Alexander's supporters, moved against him. He went to Imalkue the Arab, who had been raising Antiochus, the young son of Alexander, and urged him to hand Antiochus over to him to become the new King. This created a major threat to Demetrius.

Jonathan asked Demetrius to remove his troops from the Citadel in Jerusalem because they were constantly fighting against Israel. In exchange for this act, Jonathan sent 3,000 men to Antioch to aid the King. It was just in time, for 120,000 men were being mobilized against Demetrius. When the king called the Jews to his aid, they killed 100,000 men in one day. This put down the threat and Demetrius sat securely on his throne, at least for the moment.

Estrangement between Jonathan and Demetrius (11:53-74)

Trypho continued his opposition against Demetrius with the king's former troops until he and his foreign army were routed. Trypho captured the elephants, which helped him finally gain control of Antioch, where Antiochus was crowned. One of his first acts as King was to confirm Jonathan as the High Priest and to recognize his authority over the four districts. It was a gesture of friendship. Jonathan's brother Simon was made governor from the Ladder of Tyre to the borders of Egypt. The Ladders of Tyre refers to the coastline from Tyre to Ptolemais.

When Jonathan made a trip into the Philistine cities of Askalon and Gaza, he found acceptance in Askalon, but the people of Gaza shut him out. Jonathan responded by attacking the city and burning its suburbs, forcing it into submission.

Demetrius moved into Kadesh in Galilee with the intent of removing Jonathan from office. Jonathan responded by going to meet the threat. Simon was left in Beth-zur to meet the threat there. Jonathan and his army encamped by the waters of Gennesaret and then marched to the plain of Hazor. The battle did not go well at first, but in the end

Jonathan managed to kill 3,000 of Demetrius' foreign army, and upon returning to Jerusalem, he became a hero.

ALLIANCE WITH ROME AND SPARTA (12:1-23)

Two Jews, Numenius and Antipater, visited Rome to renew the alliance they had made previously, but now they seem to be including Sparta. It is difficult to see the reason for this alliance since the letter concludes that the Jews are doing okay because of the help they have received from Heaven to fight off their enemies (12:14-15).

The letter is delivered to Arius I, the King of Sparta (309-265 B.C.E.), and Onias I, the High Priest (323-300 or 320-290 B.C.E.). The dating of this letter must lie in that common time when Arius was King and Onias the High Priest. One unusual element in the letter is the reference to a common relationship with Abraham (12:21). It is highly unlikely that any Greeks would be related to Abraham. Is the letter simply referring to a common bond or does it mean to imply blood relationships? The former must be the intention.

THE CAPTURE OF JONATHAN (12:24-53)

When Jonathan heard that the commanders of Demetrius were threatening him, he left Jerusalem to take the battle to Hamath (modern Hama) on the Orontes River in Syria. When the enemy realized that Jonathan was prepared for battle, they kindled fires in their camp and withdrew. Jonathan was fooled by this act until morning, after which, he pursued them. When he was unable to catch up with them, he took his anger out on the Zabadeans, an Arab Clan that just happened to be around, and he crushed and plundered them. Jonathan then moved on to Damascus. Simon, Jonathan's brother, took Askalon, Joppa, and Adida (near Lydda).

Before taking on Trypho, Jonathan returned to Jerusalem to build its walls higher and to construct new walls around the Citadel. He feared Trypho, who had ambitions of becoming King of Asia. Trypho took his army to Beth-shan, where Jonathan went out to meet him with 40,000 fighting men. Instead of a battle, Trypho convinced Jonathan that he was his friend and that Jonathan could send his men home. Jonathan kept 3,000 men with him. When Trypho invited him to Ptolemais, he only took 1,000 men with him. When they arrived in Ptolemais, Trypho's men killed everyone and took Jonathan prisoner. This left the Jews without a leader, and all the nations around them tried to move in and conquer them. This is what usually happens when a nation is left leaderless.

ALLIANCES

Solomon seemed to live in a time of Peace, in part, because he formed so many political alliances. He did this by taking on so many wives and mistresses. Since they came from different countries, some being daughters of Kings, alliances were formed. It seemed like an alliance when Ptolemy offered Cleopatra to Alexander, but then he betrayed Alexander by offering Cleopatra to Demetrius. Alliances seemed to be made only to be broken. They

were made when they served a King's interest and broken when they were no longer useful.

Jonathan had an alliance with Rome and Sparta, but that alliance didn't seem to help him all that much. In the end both Judas and Jonathan are killed in war, and Rome and Sparta are not there to help. An alliance only seems to help when both parties have a vital interest strong enough to make both parties honor the alliance.

Although there is no family connection between Jonathan and Sparta, the letter in 1 Maccabees 12:21 indicates such a tie. "It has been found in writing concerning the Spartans and the Jews that they are brothers and are of the family of Abraham." It didn't seem to make any difference when Jonathan got into trouble. The Spartans didn't show up to help. This assertion only served the interest of diplomacy.

Christians and Muslims do have a relationship to the family of Abraham, and we know that makes little difference in their relationships to one another.

20. JONATHAN (1 Maccabees 9:1 – 12:53)

THE TRANSITION (9:1-73)

<p style="text-align: center;">The Death of Judas (9:1-22)</p> <p>Bacchides and Alcimus (20,000/2,000)(9:3-6 & 10b) Vs. Judas (3,000-2200=800) Death of Judas (9:18-19)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Battle Continues (9:32-53)</p> <p>1 Waterhole in the Wilderness of Tekoa (9:32-33) John killed by the Nabateans (9:35-36) Bacchides attacked on the Sabbath (9:43 & 49) Bacchides lost 1000 men Bacchides fortified several cities (9:50)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">The Selection of Jonathan (9:23-31)</p> <p>No Great Honor (9:30) While in Retreat</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Temporary Peace (9:54-73)</p> <p>Alcimus tears down the wall (9:54) Alcimus loses his speech and dies (9:55) Bacchides' unsuccessful Attack (9:68-69) Jonathan makes peace & dwells in Michmash (9:70 & 73)</p>

THE ALLIANCE WITH ALEXANDER (10:1-89)

Alexanders's Alliance with Jonathan (10:1-50)	
Alexander Epiphanes invades Ptolemais (10:1)	Alexander defeats Demetrius (10:49)
<p style="text-align: center;">Demetrius</p> <p>Makes Peace (10:3-4) Releases Hostages & Recruits Troops (10:6) Frees them from the Tribute (10:29-30) Gives up control over the Citadel (10:32) Recruits 30,000 for the Military (10:36) Pays for the wall and the Temple (10:44-45)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Alexander</p> <p>Appoints Jonathan High Priest (10:18-20) Jonathan accepts the High Priesthood (10:46-47)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Alexander's Alliance with Ptolemy (Egypt) (10:51-66)</p> <p>Alexander and Ptolemy Philometor The Marriage of Alexander and Cleopatra (10:58) The Invitation to Jonathan (10:59) Jonathan given priestly, political, and military power (10:65)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Threat from Demetrius II (10:67-89)</p> <p>Alexander returned to Antioch (10:67-68) Apollonius vs. Jonathan and Simon The points of Conflict: Joppa, Azotus, (Beth-dagon), Askalon The Gifts of the Golden Buckle and Ekron (10:88)</p>

CONTINUED STRUGGLES (11:1-74)

<p style="text-align: center;">The Invasion by Ptolemy VI (11:1-19)</p> <p>Ptolemy invades Syria and coast to Azotus Alexander returns from Cilicia Alexander flees to Arabia and is beheaded Ptolemy dies three days later Demetrius gets Cleopatra (11:9) and left in power</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Jonathan's Aid to Demetrius (11:38-52)</p> <p>Demetrius reduced his domestic troops (11:38) Trypho moved against him with Epator (11:39-40) Requests Demetrius remove his troops from Citadel (11:41) Jonathan helped Demetrius put down Trypho (11:44) Jonathan killed 100,000 men in a day (11:47)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Agreement between Demetrius and Jonathan (11:20-37)</p> <p>Jonathan attacked the Citadel (11:20) Demetrius invites Jonathan to Ptolemais (11:22) Jonathan is made the High Priest (11:27) Jonathan controls Judea, Aphairema, Lydda, and Rathamim</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Estrangement between Jonathan and Demetrius (11:52-74)</p> <p>Trypho continues opposition to Demetrius Antiochus VI crowned in Antioch (11:54) Jonathan confirmed as High Priest and four Districts (11:57) Simon made Governor of Ladder of Tyre (11:59) (Tyre to Ptolemais = Coastal cities) Jonathan's trip to Askalon and Gaza (11:60) Demetrius Attack in Galilee & Gennesaret (11:63 & 67) Jonathan returns to Jerusalem a hero (11:74)</p>

ALLIANCE WITH ROME AND SPARTA (12:1-23)

Jewish Representatives: Numenius and Antipater Their real help comes from heaven (12:14-15)	King of Sparta: Arius/High Priest: Onias The Bond with Abraham (12:21)
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THE CAPTURE OF JONATHAN (12:24-53)

Jonathan attacks Hamath, the Zabadeans, and Damascus	Simon attacks Askalon, Joppa and Adida
Jonathan defends Beth-shan with 40,000, but invited to Ptolemais and captured by Trypho (12:48)	

21. SIMON

1 Maccabees 13:1—16:24

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Death of John and Independence 13:1-53	The Capture of Demetrius and the Election of Simon 14:1-49	Conflict Between Antiochus and Simon 15:1-41	The Rise of John Hyrcanus 16:1-24

THE RISE OF SIMON (13:1—14:49)

The Death of Jonathan (13:1-30)

Thinking that Jonathan was already dead, Simon made an impassioned speech to his people promising to finish what his family had started. He was approximately 50 years old at the time and the people responded positively, making him their new leader. The leadership of Simon was tested first with the confrontation with Trypho, who had gathered a large army to invade the land of Judah. Trypho claimed that Jonathan owed him money for the office he held and if Simon would pay it, Jonathan would be released. Fearing that his own people would hold him accountable, Simon paid, while at the same time, he did not believe Trypho. Simon proved to be right.

Trypho began the invasion at Adora but Simon held him back. At Baskama, Trypho killed Jonathan and buried him there; Simon then took his brother's bones to Modein for burial. There he built a monument for his entire family and for himself as well. It consisted of seven pyramids, for his father and mother, for his four brothers, and for himself. The writer concludes that this monument can be seen in his own time. Eusebius, who writes in the fourth century C.E., confirms that the mausoleum was still standing.

Jewish Independence (13:31-53)

The Seleucid Empire was weakening. That Trypho, who was not of royal blood, could control the Seleucid army for four years, demonstrates what was happening. He also murdered Antiochus VI, the young successor to the throne, and continued to attack and plunder the Jews.

Simon was consolidating his power and sent a letter to Demetrius II asking for a nonaggression pact, which was granted. His good intentions were symbolized with a gold crown and palm branch. Demetrius released him from tribute but asked for some help in the military. The year was 142 B.C.E., the year when the yoke of the Gentiles was removed from Israel (13:41).

Two more victories needed to be won, one at Gazara and one at the citadel in Jerusalem. Simon encamped against Gazara, surrounding it with troops. When the siege took place, the people surrendered, and Simon expelled them from the city. He cleansed the houses of idolatry and entered with hymns and praise. After fortifying the city Simon built himself a home there.

The next step was to starve out the foreign soldiers in the citadel (in Jerusalem), which he finally managed to do. They too were expelled from the city, and at the end of May in 141 B.C.E., the Jews entered the citadel with praise, palm branches, harps, cymbals, stringed instruments, hymns, and songs.

With independence achieved, Simon began to look to his successor, who would be his own son, John Hyrcanus. His first step was to make him commander of all his forces. John would eventually reign as the High Priest from 135 to 104 B.C.E.

The Capture of Demetrius II (14:1-3)

In 138 B.C.E. Demetrius marched into Media to secure help in making war against Trypho, but Arsaces, the King of Persia and Media, sent one of his commanders to capture Demetrius alive. Although Demetrius was captured, he was treated kindly. He later married Arsaces sister.

In Praise of Simon (14:4-15)

This poem reads like a Psalm of celebration. It praises Simon for the work he and his brothers have done. Joppa has become a harbor for trade with the isles of the sea, which would have been Cyprus, Rhodes, and Crete. Other major cities taken are Gazara, Beth-zur, and the citadel in Jerusalem. There is finally peace and every man sits under his vine and fig tree (14:12).

The Alliance with Rome (14:16-24)

Whenever any major change took place in a government, it was necessary to reconsider any former alliances made with other countries. Rome and Sparta responded positively to the rise of power under Simon. They wrote to him on bronze tablets to renew their friendship, and he sent Numenius and Antipater, who had represented the Jews previously (12:16). Numenius presented Rome with a large gold shield weighing a thousand minas. Since one mina weighed over 15 ounces, this was a huge shield. The weight of it might be an exaggeration. What is important is that it symbolized friendship between the

emerging Jewish State and the emerging Roman Empire, a friendship, which would be short-lived.

The Election of Simon (14:25-49)

In appreciation for all that Simon, and his brothers before him, had done, bronze tablets summarizing their activity were placed on the pillars on Mount Zion. This means they were put in a conspicuous place somewhere in the area of the sanctuary, where all might be able to read them. It was to be a reminder of why Simon was being elevated to Military Commander, Ethnarch (civil magistrate), and High Priest. This was done in Asaramel (the court of the people) on the eighteenth day of Elul (August-September) in 140 B.C.E. The people agreed that Simon and his family should hold these positions forever, or until a trustworthy prophet should arise to say otherwise (14:41).

A NEW BREAKOUT OF WAR (15:1—16:24)

Antiochus' Letter to Simon (15:1-9)

Antiochus VII (Sidetes), the younger brother of Demetrius II, wrote a letter to Simon, confirming tax remissions and release of tribute payments. Simon was granted permission to mint coinage, which was recognition of Jewish Independence.

Antiochus' Attack on Dor (15:10-14)

With 120,000 warriors and 8,000 cavalry, Antiochus pursued Trypho, who fled to Dor, which was located about nine miles north of Caesarea (by the Sea).

The Letter from Rome (15:15-24)

The letter from Rome was from Lucius, consul of the Romans, to King Ptolemy and to a number of other dignitaries and was delivered by Numenius and his companions. The purpose of it was to confirm the alliance previously made with Simon. This alliance was symbolized by Rome's acceptance of the gold shield weighing a thousand minas.

Antiochus' Estrangement from Simon (15:25-41)

As Antiochus besieged Dor, Simon sent 2,000 men and silver and gold to help him. This offer was rejected and the two leaders became estranged.⁴ Antiochus then sent Athenobius to ask Simon to give up his control over Joppa, Gazara, and the citadel in Jerusalem, claiming that they belonged to him. If Simon wanted to keep them, it would cost him 1,000 talents, which was not an unusual amount to pay in tribute; but Simon was in no mood to pay for something he had conquered himself. So he offered to pay 100 talents, which was rejected by Antiochus.

⁴ Josephus says that Antiochus accepted this aid. (Ant. 13.7.2).

Meanwhile, the battle in Dor resulted in the flight of Trypho to Orthosia, located only a few miles north of Tripolis. From there, Trypho fled to Apamea, where he was slain.

Antiochus began to put pressure on Simon by sending Cendebeus to Jamnia to prepare an invasion of Judea. Horsemen and troops were placed in Kedron, where they made raids along the highways. The war had begun.

The Leadership of John Hyrcanus (16:1-10)

John, who had been placed in charge of Gazara, reported what Cendebeus had done to his father. Simon called upon his two oldest sons, Judas and John to fight for the nation as he had done before them. Simon was about 60 years old at the time.

John emerges as the primary leader. He is the one who chose 20,000 warriors and horsemen to march against Cendebeus. This is the first time that horsemen were used by the Jews. After camping at Modein, they proceeded to engage the army of Cendebeus. The incident at the river illustrates the inexperience of their cavalry, but in the end they put Cendebeus and his army to flight. Judas was wounded, but John pursued the enemy army to Kedron and the fields of Azotus, where many of them fled into the towers, which John then burned with fire. More than 2,000 of them fell and John returned safely to Judea.

The Treachery of Ptolemy (16:11-22)

Antiochus VII appointed Ptolemy governor over the plain of Jericho. When Simon and his sons, Judas and Mattathias, were visiting the cities of the country, attending to their needs, Ptolemy invited them to a banquet in Dok, located about three miles northwest of Jericho. After he got them drunk, he seized their weapons and killed them.

Antiochus VII was sympathetic to Ptolemy's report of the incident and so he proceeded with troops to Gazara to eliminate John. Someone who managed to run ahead of the troops warned John, helping him to escape being killed. John escaped death but he and his forces were defeated. Although 1 Maccabees does not record it, John capitulated because his people were starving.

The Annals of John's Priesthood (16:23-24)

1 Maccabees comes to a close without mentioning the death of Antiochus VII, which took place about five years later. After Antiochus was killed in battle, John managed to regain control over most of Palestine. A great deal of quarreling between parties emerged, and late in his reign, the Pharisees demanded that he give up the high priesthood. Within 65 years, Palestine was swallowed up by Roman power. The Annals mentioned here have been lost.

POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

The above symbolizes the Jewish victory in establishing their Religion. Religion and Politics cannot be neatly separated. If the first great event in these battles was religious independence, the second great event was political independence. In 1 Maccabees 13:51 the Jewish people celebrate their national independence:

On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one hundred and seventy-first year, the Jews entered it with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel.

A movement that began with a religious motivation ended with political independence. The two can never be completely separated, nor should they be. As the Jews freed themselves from Syrian domination and the attempt by Antiochus IV to Hellenize them, they began to move away from their religious roots.

In the kind of world in which we live today it is impossible to make a country of every ethnic group. There are just too many of them. We can, of course, give every ethnic group the right to worship in their own way, but there is still the question of the dominant Culture and Religion in the nation. The collision between Cultures and Religions does not always end in war and revolution, but it usually ends with one Culture and Religion doing violence to another. There is not all that much difference between spears and social pressure. Both can be very effective instruments of domination.

Does this mean that Cultures and Religions should never collide? By no means! According to Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus sent his disciples into the whole world to Jews and Gentiles alike to spread the Good News to all persons, baptizing them in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, and making disciples of them. The difference is that no one is to be placed under pressure to become one of his disciples, but no one is to prevent it either. Christianity is not to be identified with any ethnic group, but is capable of moving into every ethnic group. It is not however a pressure group. It asks for the right to work within every culture, but it always permits people of other religions and cultures to exist.

Religions and Cultures cannot be prevented from colliding, but they can respect one another. This becomes extremely difficult when moral values collide as well. The Israelites could not tolerate the child sacrifice and the sacred prostitution of the Canaanites, and Christians today have difficulty tolerating abortion on demand and couples living together outside of the bond of marriage. In societies made up of many Religions and Cultures, including those who claim to be secular, we have the right to voice our opinions and try to legislate against those things that degrade people, but we do not have the right to prevent people from expressing their religious faith and cultural practices, even if we do not agree with them. Certainly it would not have hurt the Syrians to allow the Jews to observe the Sabbath, practice circumcision, and make offerings to their God; but that of course, would not have fulfilled their task of Hellenization. As

Christians it is not our task to make of all the world one Culture, but it is our task to call everyone to follow Jesus Christ and to unify the world under the only God who has ever existed.

21. SIMON (1 Maccabees 13:1—16:24)

THE RISE OF SIMON (13:1—14:24)

<p style="text-align: center;">The Death of Jonathan (13:1-30)</p> <p>Simon's Speech and Election (13:7-8) Trypho's Bargaining for Jonathan (13:15-16) Death of Jonathan in Baskama (13:23) Burial of Jonathan in Modein (13:25, 27-28)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">In Praise of Simon (14:4-15)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Simon takes... Joppa, Gazara, Beth-zur, and the Citadel (14:5 & 7) Everyone has a vine and fig tree (14:12)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Jewish Independence (13:31-53)</p> <p>Simon's Request to Demetrius (13:34 & 37) Victories at Gazara and the Citadel (13:43, 49, & 51) John made Military Commander (13:53)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Alliance with Rome (14:16-24)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Bronze Tablets (14:18) Numenius and Antipater (14:22) (They renew the Alliance) The Large Gold Shield (14:24)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">The Capture of Demetrius (14:1-3)</p> <p>Demetrius invades Media (Trypho) (14:1) King Arsaces captures Demetrius (14:2)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Election of Simon (14:25-49)</p> <p>Bronze tablets on the pillars of Zion (14:27) (In Asaramel: "Court of the People") (14:28) Demetrius affirms Simon (14:38) Simon made... High Priest for life (14:41) Military Commander (14:47) Civil Magistrate (Ethnarch) (14:47)</p>

A NEW BREAKOUT OF WAR (15:1-41)

<p style="text-align: center;">Antiochus' Letter to Simon (15:1-9)</p> <p>Release of Tribute and Taxes (15:5) Permission to mint coins (15:6) Recognition of Jewish Independence (15:7)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Antiochus' Estrangement from Simon (15:25-41)</p> <p>Antiochus renews the attack on Trypho at Dor (15:25) Simon offered to help with 2000 men (15:26) Antiochus refused the aid and sent Athenobius to ask for 1000 talents for Joppa, Gazara, and the Citadel (16:30-31) Simon offered 100 talents (15:35)</p> <p>Trypho escaped to Orthosia (15:37) Cendebeus became commander in the costal cities (15:38) Cendebeus built up forces at Jamnia and the Kedron in preparation to attack Judea (15:40-41)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Antiochus' Attack on Dor (15:10-14)</p> <p>The Attack was against Trypho (15:10-11) Trypho fled to Dor (15:13) The city was surrounded by Sea and Land (15:14)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">The Letter from Rome (15:15-24)</p> <p>Numenius returned with the letter (15:15) Lucius sent the letter to Ptolemy, Demetrius, Attalus, Ariarathes, and Arsaces (15:22) Acceptance of the Golden Schield (15:20)</p>	

THE RISE OF JOHN HYRCANUS (16:1-24)

<p style="text-align: center;">The Leadership of John (16:1-10)</p> <p>Simon urges his sons (Judas/John) to take over (16:3) John fought against Cendebeus (16:4) They used cavalry for the first time (16:4) Judas wounded (16:4) John pursued Cendebeus to Kedron and Azotus (16:9-10)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Treachery of Ptolemy (16:11-22)</p> <p>Ptolemy appointed Governor of Judea (16:11) Simon, Mattathias, and Judas visited Jericho and Dok Ptolemy killed Simon at a Banquet (16:16) Ptolemy planned an attack on John at Gazara John is warned (16:21)</p>
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The Annals of John's Priesthood (16:23-24)

<p>We don't have these Annals (16:24) John regained control over most of Palestine</p>	<p>The Pharisees demanded that he give up the priesthood Sixty-five years later Palestine is dominated by Rome</p>
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22. EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE REBELLION

2 Maccabees 1:1—7:42

ASSIGNMENTS				
Two Letters to Egyptian Jews 1:1—2:32	The Intervention of Angels 3:1-40	The Struggle for the High Priesthood 4:1-50	Background of the Revolt 5:1-27	The Martyr Stories 6:1—7:42

INTRODUCTION

The Name

The title comes from the name given to Judas, son of Mattathias, who led a guerrilla war against Antiochus IV and successfully took Jerusalem and rededicated the Temple to the glory of God. He was given the name *Maccabee*, which means, “hammer.”

The Author

2 Maccabees was written by *the Epitomist*. The author gets this title from the way in which he condensed the five-volume work of Jason of Cyrene (2:23). Nothing is known of Jason. Cyrene of course was located on the northern coast of Africa.

Some scholars believe that verses 3:40; 7:42; 10:9; 13:26b; and 15:37a represent the conclusions of Jason’s original five volumes. The two letters in the beginning, (1:1—2:18) may have been added by an editor and the martyr stories found in the middle may also be from the hand of another writer.

The Date

Since we read in 15:37 the phrase, “from that time the city has been in the possession of the Hebrews,” we can only conclude that 2 Maccabees was written prior to the Roman conquest in 63 B.C.E. Although it is only a guess, the book was probably written early in the first century B.C.E., with Jason finishing his five volumes some time late in the second century B.C.E. A good guess for 2 Maccabees would be somewhere between 124 and 63 B.C.E.

The Place

The two preparatory letters were written either in Hebrew or Aramaic, but the main body of 2 Maccabees was written in flamboyant, emotional Greek. The most likely location for its writing is Alexandria, but Antioch cannot be ruled out.

The Purpose

2 Maccabees is a theological interpretation of history. The author is interested in the rise of the Hasmonean House, which grew out of the Maccabean revolt led by Mattathias, Judas, Jonathan and Simon. While 1 Maccabees tells the story of all four heroes, 2 Maccabees tells only the story of Judas, ending with his victory over Nicanor, omitting his final defeat and death. In doing this, the author reflects the position of the Hasideans, a party among the Jews deeply devoted to the Mosaic Law. The Pharisees and Essenes sprang from this sect. The Hasideans supported Judas as long as he fought for religious freedom, but when he turned political, they ignored him.

Several theological emphases have emerged from 2 Maccabees. They are the resurrection of the body (7:9, 11, 14; 14:46); prayers for the dead (12:43-45); the intercession of the saints (15:12, 14); the intervention of angels (3:25-26; 5:2-3; 10:29-30; 11:6-8); the example of martyrdom (6-7; 14:37-46); and the doctrine of creation out of nothing (7:28).

The idea of the resurrection was strongly affirmed by the Pharisaic Party (Acts 23:8) and the exaltation of the martyrs received a strong emphasis in the early Christian Church.

The Outline

- A. The Preface (1:1—2:32)
- B. The Intervention of Angels (3:1-40)
- C. Struggle for the High Priesthood (4:1-50)
- D. Background of the Revolt (5:1-27)
- E. The Martyr Stories (6:1—7:42)
- F. The Revolt (8:1—10:9)
- G. Warfare under the Reign of Antiochus V (10:10—13:26)
- H. The Victory over Nicanor (14:1—15:36)
- I. The Epilogue (15:37-39)

THE PREFACE (1:1—2:32)

The First Letter to Egyptian Jews (1:1-9)

This first letter is very simple. It begins with both Greek *Greetings* and the Jewish *Peace*. Its purpose is to encourage the Jews living in Egypt to keep the feast commemorating the rededication of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus. Although the Feast of Booths is mentioned in verse 9, this feast was observed in September. The author is obviously

referring to Hanukkah, which was observed on the 25th of Chislev (November-December).

The Second Letter to Egyptian Jews (1:10—2:18)

The second letter is much more complicated. It is not clear who the author of the letter is; some have suggested that it is Judas himself. It is clear however that the letter is written to Aristobulus, whom, according to Clement and Eusebius, was a famous Jewish Philosopher living in Egypt.

The first thing described in the letter is the death of Antiochus (1:11-17). One assumes that the author is talking about Antiochus IV, who had desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem; the description, however, is not an accurate account of his death. Antiochus IV died in battle. His father, Antiochus III did die plundering a Persian Temple and so the author may be confusing the two men.

The author seems to suggest that Antiochus IV died prior to the rededication of the Temple but this is historically inaccurate. The Temple was rededicated in December of 164 B.C.E. (1 Maccabees 4:52) and Antiochus IV died in 163 B.C.E. (1 Maccabees 6:16). The author could be describing the rededication of the Temple on the first anniversary. If this is the case, then Antiochus IV would have been dead, but the description given of his death is inaccurate. For other accounts of the death of Antiochus IV, see 1 Maccabees 6:8-16 and 2 Maccabees 9.

Having connected the rededication of the Temple to something in history, the author then compared it to the rekindling of the sacrificial fire by Nehemiah. The difficulty is that Nehemiah had nothing to do with rebuilding the Temple; in fact, the Temple had been standing for 70 years when he arrived in Jerusalem. Another historical inaccuracy is the reference in 1:19, where the author indicates that their ancestors took some of the fire of the altar with them to Persia. It may have been Persia when he was writing, but their ancestors actually went into exile in Babylonia. According to 2:1-8, it was Jeremiah who ordered them to take the fire along with them; after which Jeremiah hid the tent, the ark, and the altar of incense in a cave on Mount Sinai. This is the only reference that tells us what happened to the Ark of the Covenant.

The idea of rekindling the fire reminds us of Moses, who called down the sacrificial fires from heaven (Leviticus 9:23-24), and Solomon, who did the same thing at the original dedication of the Temple (2 Chronicles 7:1, but not in 1 Kings 8:62-64). Solomon's eight days of celebration mentioned in 2 Chronicles 7:8-9, are treated as a precedent for the observance of the rededication of the Temple.

A final reference is made to the similar ways in which Nehemiah and Judas collected the sacred books. What sacred books is the author talking about? There is no record of Nehemiah collecting any sacred books, but this would have been about the time that Judaism was beginning to collect sacred books. They wanted to learn the lessons of history and so they wrote a theological interpretation of it. 2 Maccabees is a theological interpretation of history as well and so it is easy to understand why Judas would collect

the sacred books. The impact of Greek culture had practically destroyed everything Jewish. This is why he calls upon the Jews in Egypt to observe the feast of the rededication of the Temple.

The Epitomist's Preface (2:19-32)

Before going into the main body of this book, the author now explains what he is doing. He is condensing the five books of Jason into a single book, and he intends to make it easy for those inclined to memorize it. As he rambles on about the preface, he admits that it is foolish to lengthen the preface while cutting short the history itself.

It must be noted that the first mention of *Judaism* is made here in 2 Maccabees 2:21. This is the very first time this word is used to give a name to the religion of Israel.

THE INTERVENTION OF ANGELS (3:1-40)

During a time of peace, when Onias III was the High Priest and Seleucus IV Philopator was King of Asia, Simon, a captain in the Temple, had a quarrel with Onias. The quarrel concerned the administration of the city market. When no settlement could be reached, Simon went to Apollonius, the governor of Coelestria and Phoenicia and told him of the vast sums of money available in the Temple, which could relieve the financial needs of the government. Apollonius in turn told Seleucus of the resources. Seleucus then sent Heliodorus, who was in charge of his affairs, with the command to remove the money from the Temple. The money belonged to widows and orphans and to Hyrcanus, a man of prominent position. The amount totaled 400 talents of silver and 200 of gold.

The intent of Heliodorus must have been widely known, for both the priests and the people turned to God in prayer and supplication. Their prayers seemed to have worked, for when Heliodorus attempted to take the money, he was met with a magnificent angel on horseback, who was assisted by two strong and beautiful young men, presumably angels. They inflicted blows on Heliodorus. Onias, the High Priest, intervened to save Heliodorus' life by offering a sacrifice for his recovery.

The point of the above story is that God is able to protect his sanctuary from those who would profane it. It was God, through his angels, who prevented the heathen King Seleucus IV from appropriating the money in the Temple.

STRUGGLE FOR THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD (4:1-50)

Simon befriended Heliodorus and falsely accused Onias of inciting his friend. At first Onias tried to ignore the problem, but Simon and Apollonius made it impossible. In desperation for the welfare of everyone, Onias went to King Seleucus to resolve the problem. Before he could do this however, Heliodorus assassinated King Seleucus, hoping that he himself might become king. This incident does not appear in 2 Maccabees, but it can be found in other sources, which also conclude that Heliodorus wanted the good will of the High Priest, who happened to be Onias at the time.

Jason (4:7-22)

Antiochus IV, called Epiphanes replaced Seleucus IV. The meaning of *Epiphanes* is “manifest” and it symbolizes the belief in the divinity of kings. Onias’ brother Jason appeared before Antiochus IV and purchased the High Priesthood for a total of 440 talents of silver. He promised to pay another 150 if permission were granted to build a gymnasium to enroll the men of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch. Since the spread of Greek culture was on the agenda of Antiochus, Jason was made the High Priest of Jerusalem. Jason’s Hebrew name was Joshua, but because he believed in the spread of Greek culture, he adopted the name Jason.

As High Priest Jason became more interested in athletic contests than in service at the altar and this kind of leadership left its mark on the ordinary priests, who also gave up service at the altar to take part in athletic events. Jason even sent 300 silver drachmas for the sacrifice to Hercules during the quadrennial games being held in Tyre. Hercules was the Greek name for the god of Tyre, who was Melkart. Those who carried the money did not use it for a sacrifice to Hercules. Instead, they applied it to the construction of Triremes, which were war vessels manned by three benches of rowers.

When Apollonius was sent to Egypt for the coronation of Philometor the new King, Antiochus learned that Philometor had become hostile to his government. He took measures for security by marching into Joppa and Jerusalem. When he arrived in Jerusalem Jason welcomed him. Both Antiochus and Jason were determined to spread Greek culture and religion and to eliminate Judaism completely.

Menelaus (4:23-50)

After three years, Jason sent Menelaus to carry some money to King Antiochus and to conduct some essential business. Menelaus, brother of Onias and Jason, did to Jason what he had done to Onias. In the company of the King he purchased the High Priesthood, replacing his brother Jason. The price he paid was 300 talents of silver. Jason was driven into exile in Ammon.

Since Menelaus did not pay the money he promised for his office with any regularity, Sostratus, the captain of the citadel, responsible for collecting it, was summoned along with Menelaus to account for the shortfall. Sostratus left Crates in charge of his troops, and Menelaus left his brother Lysimachus in charge of the High Priesthood. The two of them went to appear before Antiochus IV.

Meanwhile there was a revolt in Tarsus and Mallus. These two cities had been given to Antiochus, the King’s concubine, but the people were not pleased with this arrangement. Antiochus had to go himself to put down the revolt and so he left Andronicus to act on his behalf. Trying to bribe Andronicus, Menelaus stole some of the gold vessels from the temple and gave them to him. Onias tried to expose him but Andronicus responded by having Onias murdered. The murder of Onias is referred to in Daniel 9:26 with the

phrase, “an anointed one shall be cut off.” Some believe that Onias was not murdered but that he fled to Egypt, where he built the famous temple at Leontopolis.

When Antiochus IV returned from putting down the rebellion, he was informed of the murder of Onias, which enraged both Jews and Greeks. Andronicus was stripped of his rank, degraded in public, and executed.

Back in Jerusalem Menelaus and Lysimachus encountered hostility because of their sacrilege and theft of the gold vessels. To maintain control, Lysimachus armed 3,000 men and launched an attack under the leadership of Auranus, a man advanced in years. The Jews responded by throwing stones, blocks of wood, and whatever else they could find, wounding many and killing some. Lysimachus himself was killed near the treasury.

Charges were immediately brought against Menelaus over this incident. The King went to Tyre to hear the case. Menelaus offered a substantial bribe to Ptolemy to win over the King. The King was convinced and so Menelaus was acquitted of all charges against him, even though he was clearly guilty. Those who brought the charges before the King were executed, while Menelaus continued in office, growing in his wickedness.

BACKGROUND OF THE REVOLT (5:1-27)

Having heard a rumor that Antiochus had been killed in his second invasion of Egypt in 169 B.C.E., Jason decided to regain the High Priesthood in Jerusalem. He led 1,000 men in an assault on the city, which failed. This led to his exile, first in Ammon, then Egypt, and finally in Sparta, where he died without honor and was given no funeral.

When Antiochus heard of the fighting in Jerusalem, he assumed that it was a full-scale revolt, and so he left Egypt to put out the fires. His army massacred 80,000, 40,000 in hand-to-hand combat, and as many were sold into slavery as were slain.

Led into the Temple by Menelaus, Antiochus plundered it, taking the holy vessels. Having described this profanity, the author asks why the angels did not intervene like they did when they stopped Heliodorus from plundering the Temple. His theological answer was, “the sins of the people.” They had become intensely wicked and so God was using pagans like Antiochus to punish them for their sins.

Antiochus carried off 1,800 talents from the Temple to Antioch and left governors to afflict the people. In Jerusalem Philip became his governor and was more barbarous than Antiochus. Andronicus became the governor of Gerizim.

Two years later, in 167 B.C.E., Antiochus sent his captain, Apollonius, with an army of 22,000 to slay all the grown men and to sell the women and boys into slavery. Apollonius entered Jerusalem under the guise of peace, but on the Sabbath day when no religious Jew would fight, he began his massacre, killing great numbers of people.

In 2 Maccabees 5:27, the hero is introduced. His name is Judas Maccabeus, and he escaped the slaughter of the men with nine others, fleeing into the wilderness. The name

Maccabeus means “hammer” and could refer to his physical appearance or his vigorous leadership. Nothing is said of his father, or his brothers. The author approves of Judas, but not of what happened later. He does not want to glorify the Hasmonean Dynasty, for he has Hasidic and Pharisaic sympathies. This is why Jonathan and Simon will only get a fleeting mention. Judas is the hero.

THE MARTYR STORIES (6:1—7:42)

Forcing Greek Religion and Culture on the Jews (6:1-11)

Antiochus IV sent a senator to compel the Jews to adopt Greek culture and religion and to forsake their own religion and culture. The Temples in Jerusalem and on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria were converted to temples to the Olympian Zeus. The impact of this was sexual debauchery, that is intercourse, in the sacred precincts of the temple and the offering of unlawful sacrifices, including pigs. The Jews were forced to participate under threat of death, and they were forbidden to circumcise their children and observe the Sabbath. The intent was to wipe out Judaism.

No Jewish feasts could be observed. Instead, they were forced to celebrate the king’s birthday on a monthly basis, and to observe the feast of Dionysus (Bacchus). This was to be done everywhere, not just in Jerusalem and Samaria. At the suggestion of Ptolemy, a decree was issued in all of the neighboring Greek cities as well; and to all who disobeyed, the punishment was to be death by torture. Two women, who dared to circumcise their babies, were publicly paraded around the city with their babies hanging at their breasts, after which, they were thrown off a wall. Others who tried to observe the Sabbath in some caves, were caught and taken to Philip, who had them burned for their piety.

A Theological Interpretation (6:12-17)

Naturally, people were asking how God could allow all this suffering to go on and the Epitomist had to deal with it in some way. His answer to the question was to say that God permitted the suffering because of Israel’s sinfulness. It was a kind of corrective punishment, designed to refine the faith of Israel. God allowed other nations to sin until they had reached the full measure of their sins, meaning that they too would not be spared God’s ultimate punishment. Israel’s suffering, on the other hand, is a sign of God’s special concern. It is a call for repentance and return to God.

The Martyrdom of Eleazar (6:18-31)

The first *named* martyr is Eleazar, a ninety-year-old man. He refused to eat swine as a sacrifice. Others urged him to bring his own meat and only pretend to eat swine; but he rejected this alternative. Being an old man, he decided that he needed to leave a good example for the youth, and so he was willing to face death on the rack rather than to compromise by submitting to Greek religion and culture. 4 Maccabees gives a more detailed account of Eleazar’s martyrdom. 4 Maccabees is not a part of the Apocrypha, but

it is an important book in the Pseudepigrapha, which is a collection of books written under a fictitious name, such as Adam, Enoch, Moses, Isaiah, etc.

The Martyrdom of a Mother and Her Seven Sons (7:1-42)

Seven sons were tortured and murdered with their mother watching on, after which she too was murdered. This story is also the subject of 4 Maccabees.

The first son refused to eat swine and said that he would rather die than to transgress the laws of his fathers. These dietary laws are given in Deuteronomy 14:3-21. In response to his resistance they cut off his tongue, scalped him, cut off his hands and feet, and then fried him in a pan, while his mother and brothers watched. Moses' song, which can be found in Deuteronomy 32, gave him and his family encouragement.

After the first son was tortured and killed, the second son was threatened with like punishment, but he refused to give in to their demands, even after they scalped him. He affirmed his belief in God's ability to raise them up to "an everlasting renewal of life" because they have died for his laws.

When they came to the third son, they cut out his tongue, but he courageously stretched forth his hands, saying that even after they cut them off, he expected to get them back again. The King was astonished that this young man regarded his sufferings so lightly.

The fourth son, tortured in the same way as the others, affirmed his hope in the resurrection, but warned that there would be no resurrection for his murderers. Daniel 12:2 states that there will be a resurrection for both the righteous and the wicked, with the latter having to face punishment.

Similar responses came from the fifth and sixth sons. They both confessed that they were being punished for their own sins, but that this did not justify those who tortured and murdered them. In the end, their enemies would have to face divine punishment for they are acting against God. This seems like a contradiction. If God is punishing the Jews by means of the Hellenizers, then why would he not punish the Hellenizers? Habakkuk presented this same idea when he expressed his dissatisfaction with God punishing Israel through the Babylonians, who were more sinful than Israel. The answer given is that the just shall live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:17). This is precisely what these sons are doing, even though they confess both the sins of Israel and their own sins as well.

Something new happens when we come to the seventh and youngest son. Like the others he refused to eat swine and disobey the Law of Moses. He even interpreted the suffering of his family and people as the result of their own sins. He did not blame it on the King. What is new is Antiochus' offer of wealth and position for accepting Hellenistic ideas and forsaking Jewish law. At this point the mother intervened and encouraged her son to be faithful, as were his six brothers, and die a noble death. She assured him by telling him that God made them out of nothing and that he could certainly restore them to life again.

Accept death, she concluded, and get your brothers back again. The young man took his mother's advice. He followed his brothers into martyrdom. The king fell into a rage and treated him worse than the others.

Finally, the mother died, having witnessed the torture and murders of all seven sons. This story marks the end of Jason's second volume.

The story of the martyrdom of the mother and her seven sons lifts up two theological ideas. The first is that creation is out of nothing (7:28-29), and the second is a solid belief in a second creation, that is in the resurrection of the body (7:9, 11, 14, 23, 29). The Pharisees affirmed these theological ideas.

THE NEW HOPE OF RESURRECTION

While the Old Testament has very little to say about life after death, 2 Maccabees has a great deal to say, and what it does say differs radically from Greek culture and religion, which was trying to dominate the world. Jason, who wanted to build a Gymnasium in Jerusalem, stands as a symbol of those Jews who were ready to adopt Greek ways.

Those who resisted, such as Eleazar and the mother and her seven sons, offer the new hope of resurrection. This does not mean that the idea of resurrection began with them; only that it was clearly stated by them. Eleazar was asked to eat swine, which he refused to do; he even refused to pretend to eat swine. Why? The answer is simple; he believed that he would have to answer to God. In 2 Maccabees 6:26, he said, "For even if for the present I should avoid the punishment of men, yet whether I live or die I shall not escape the hands of the Almighty." While this might not be a clear statement of resurrection, it is a clear statement of the belief in life after death.

The story about the mother and her seven sons sounds gruesome, but it is a clear affirmation of resurrection. Refusing to eat swine, they preferred to die rather than to transgress the Law. When the king had their tongues cut out, scalped them, cut off their hands and feet, and fried them in a pan, the second son spoke for all of them just before he died. He said in 2 Maccabees 7:9, "...the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws."

Most of us would eat the swine, but that is because we are already giving in to the pagan culture that surrounds us. Our beliefs about the afterlife are more like those of the Greeks than they are of the early Christians. The very idea of resurrection sounds unbelievable to us. We find far more comfort in the Greek concept of the spirit (or soul) being separated from the body at death. Resurrection is a radical and unbelievable concept because we have already been Hellenized.

The heart of the Christian message is the new hope of resurrection. It is not the old hope of the spirit being separated from the body. Jesus' missing body is what gave hope to his fearful disciples. When he appeared, he was not simply a spirit. He ate fish and could be touched. The new hope of resurrection was an outright rejection of Greek religion, and many Christians were willing to die as gruesome a death as those illustrated in the martyr

stories of 2 Maccabees. Examples are the crucifixions of Jesus and Peter, the beheading of Paul, the burnings at the stake, and the feeding of families to the lions. Tertullian interpreted this new hope in the early Church when he said, "...the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."¹

This has been true all through the centuries, and it is still true today. Our hope lies not in the extended life of the spirit, but in the resurrection of the body. Examples of this can still be found in the modern Church. E. Stanley Jones tells as gruesome a story as 2 Maccabees:

A missionary in China was taken out to be beheaded. When she got to the place of beheading, she burst out laughing. Her captors asked her why—it was no laughing matter! She replied, "I was just thinking how funny it would be to see my own head rolling down the hill, for as my head would roll down the hill I'd be on my way to Glory. That makes me laugh with joy." "Well," said the bandits, "If it's going to make her happier, why should we please her that way?" And they let her go!¹

Of course, this missionary avoided martyrdom, but many Christians have had to face it, even in our own time. Their hope is not derived from the Greek philosophers, or any Greek idea of the spirit surviving the body. It all comes from Jesus' missing body and the Hebrew and Christian concept of resurrection. We may look at the resurrection through Greek eyes, but the source of its power is not Greek.

We struggle today to explain that new hope of resurrection and because we are so thoroughly Hellenized, it is difficult; but we must look for ways of bridging the cultures so that we can understand that hope that drove the early Church and lies at the foundation of Christian Faith. Jürgen Moltmann has tried to explain the meaning of the resurrection for us in the following excerpt from his book, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*:

The symbol of resurrection from the dead allows us to take Jesus' death seriously. It excludes every notion that Jesus revived after death, or that his soul went on living. ...The symbol of raising, of being wakened, allows the Easter appearance and seeing of Jesus to stand in its full dignity and significance; for it excludes all notions of a projection.²

The idea of projection needs to be explained. Projection means that we base our hope on what we would like to believe or what makes the most sense to us. Resurrection of the

¹ Quoted in Eerdmans' *Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Lion Publishing: Herts, England, 1977) p. xiii.

¹ E. Stanley Jones, *The Way* (Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1946), p. 261.

² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Harper and Row, Publishers, San Francisco, 1980), pp. 85-86.

body does not make logical sense. That is precisely why the disciples were so crushed by the death of Jesus. They were not looking to Greek beliefs in the immortality of the soul; rather, it was the reality of Jesus' resurrection that inspired hope in them. The nature of that resurrection is such a mystery to us, that we have resorted to Greek ideas in order to explain it. We stand in need of someone who can explain it in Hebrew terms. Paul tried to bridge the gap in 1 Corinthians 15. No one has improved on that explanation. It is worth reading and studying in great depth because it is new hope for us all and it differs radically from earlier explanations.

22. EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE REBELLION (2 Maccabees 1:1 – 7:42)	
THE PREFACE (1:1 – 2:32)	
<p>First Letter to the Egyptian Jews (1:1-9) Keep the Feast of Hanukkah</p> <p>25th of Chislev (1:9)</p>	<p>Second Letter to the Egyptian Jews (1:10 – 2:18) From Judas to Aristobulus (1:10) Antiochus in Persia (1:13-14, 16) Rededication of the Temple (164 B.C.) (1:18) Nehemiah and the Sacrificial Fires (1:21-23) Jeremiah hides the Ark in a Cave (2:5) The Sacred Books (2:13-14)</p>
The Preface	
<p>First mention of Judaism (2:21) Five Volumes of Jason (2:23)</p>	<p>Easy to Memorize (2:25) Keep the Preface Short (2:32)</p>
THE INTERVENTION OF ANGELS (3:1-40)	
<p>Seleucus IV and Onias III Simon and Onias Disagree (3:4) Simon went to Apollonius (Coelesyria/Phoenicia) (3:5) Apollonius told Seleucus (3:7)</p>	<p>Heliodorus sent to get the money (3:7) The money belonged to widows, orphans, & Hyrcanus (3:10) The Priests and the People pray (3:15 & 18) The Angels Intervened (3:25-26)</p>
THE STRUGGLE FOR THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD (4:1-50)	
Simon accuses Onias of inciting Heliodorus (4:1)	
<p>Jason (4:7-22) (Brother of Onias)</p> <p>Antiochus IV replaced Seleucus IV (4:7) Jason purchased the High Priesthood (4:7) Jason led people into the Greek way of life (4:10, 12, 14) Jason purchased sacrifices to Hercules (4:18-19) Jason welcomed Antiochus (4:21-22)</p>	<p>Menelaus (4:23-50)</p> <p>Menelaus purchased the High Priesthood (4:23-24) Menelaus did not keep up his payments (4:27) Sostratus was the bill collector (4:28) Sostratus and Menelaus summoned by the King (4:28) Andronicus left to represent the King (4:31) Menelaus stole gold vessels to bribe Andronicus (4:32) Onias exposed him (4:33) Andronicus murdered Onias (4:34-35) Antiochus stripped Andronicus and executed him (4:37-38) The Violence in Jerusalem led by Lysimachus (4:40-41) The charges brought against Menelaus (4:43) Menelaus bribed Ptolemy to win over the King (4:45-46)</p>
BACKGROUND OF THE REVOLT (5:1-27)	
<p>Antiochus' Second Invasion of Egypt (5:1) The Rumor of Antiochus' Death (5:5) Jason assaulted Jerusalem (5:5) Jason killed his own people (5:6) Jason exiled to Egypt and Sparta (5:8-10)</p>	<p>Antiochus returned to take Jerusalem (5:14) Antiochus and Menelaus desecrated the Temple (5:15 & 21) Antiochus left Philip & Andronicus to afflict the people (5:22) Appolonius slayed men and enslaved women boys (5:24) Judas and nine others escaped (5:27)</p>
THE MARTYR STORIES (6:1 – 7:42)	
<p>Forcing Greek Religion and Culture on the Jews (6:1-11)</p> <p>Forbidden (6:6) Required (6:4-7) Two Women disobeyed (6:10)</p>	<p>The Martyrdom of Eleazar (6:18-31)</p> <p>A 90 Year old Man faithful to God (6:24, 26, 30) He refused to eat swine as an example to all (6:30-31)</p>
<p>A Theological Interpretation (6:12-17)</p> <p>Corrective Punishment (6:12, 14, 16)</p>	<p>The Martyrdom of a Mother and her Seven Sons (7:1-42)</p> <p>An example of the Torture (7:4-5) Affirmations of Resurrection (7:9, 11, 14) Affirmations of Judgment (7:17, 19, 35) The Seventh Son (7:24-40) Creation out of Nothing (7:28-29) The Mother dies (7:41)</p>

23. THE REBELLION FOR PURIFYING THE TEMPLE

2 Maccabees 8:1—15:39

ASSIGNMENTS		
B The Revolt against Antiochus IV 8:1—10:9	Warfare under the Reign of Antiochus IV 10:10—13:26	Victory over Nicanor 14:1—15:39

THE REVOLT (8:1—10:9)

Judas' First Victory over Nicanor (8:1-36)

The story resumes from where it left off in 2 Maccabees 5:27. After having gathered an army of about 6,000 men, Judas prayed to God for divine help; having thus prepared himself, he engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Gentiles, who could not resist him. Philip, governor of Jerusalem, sent a report of Judas' successes to Ptolemy, the provincial Governor of Coelesyria, and Phoenicia. Ptolemy promptly appointed Nicanor to command an army of 20,000 Gentiles from all nations. Gorgias, a man of military experience, was associated with him. According to 1 Maccabees 3:38—4:25 Gorgias seems to be the principal commander. The intent was to pay the King the unpaid tribute by selling captured Jews into slavery.

Judas tried to encourage his 6,000 troops by reminding them that God was on their side and that he had acted in their history against the Assyrians under Sennacherib and again in the battle of the Galatians. Much is known about the former but almost nothing is known about the latter. It is even difficult to discern what happened in the Battle of the Galatians from this account.

The strategy of Judas was to divide his army into four divisions, three being led by his brothers, Simon, Joseph, and Jonathan. In 1 Maccabees Joseph is called John (1 Maccabees 2:2; 9:36). Eleazar was given the task of reading aloud from the holy book and to lift up their watchword, which was "God's Help." Judas led the first division in the attack on Nicanor, who was quickly put to flight. With the help of God, they killed 9,000 of Nicanor's men and captured the money of those who had come to buy them as slaves. They then stopped the pursuit in order to observe the Sabbath. In 1 Maccabees they stopped because Gorgias was nearby with more troops (1 Maccabees 4:16-18).

Another 20,000 Gentiles were killed in additional attacks on the forces of Timothy and Bacchides. Nicanor was humiliated and forced to return to Antioch, where he acknowledged that the Jews had a divine Defender. They were invulnerable because they followed God's laws. While Nicanor had been defeated, he would resume the fight at another time.

The Death of Antiochus Epiphanes (9:1-29)

We come now to the major problem with 2 Maccabees—the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In 1 Maccabees 6:1-7 he died following the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, but here he dies prior to that event. Scholars differ over which they think is correct, but there does seem to be a consensus agreeing with 1 Maccabees. It has been suggested that 2 Maccabees 9 should follow 10:1-8.

Antiochus went into Persia to strengthen his authority and to increase his finances. When he entered the city of Persepolis, he attempted to rob some temples; but there was a revolt against him, and he was forced to make a shameful retreat to Ecbatana. It was in Ecbatana that he received the news of Nicanor's defeat. This so enraged him that he decided to go straight to Jerusalem and make a cemetery of the Jews. Enroute he was struck with a horrible disease and suffered a fall from his chariot. Hoping to be cured, he repented and vowed to free Jerusalem, make every Jew a citizen equal to the citizens of Athens, and to become a Jew himself. This vow is not to be taken too seriously, but it is symbolic of his recognition of the power of Israel's God.

Finally Antiochus IV gave up all hope for himself and wrote a letter to the Jews, probably those who had been supportive of his hellenization policies. In his letter he commends his son, Antiochus V Epator (163/4-162 B.C.E.) to be his successor and calls upon the Jews to support him. According to Polybius, Antiochus IV died a miserable death in either Tabae (Gabae) or Isfahan. One of his courtiers named Philip took his body home. There is some question as to whether Philip was also the guardian of the King's son, or whether that task was assigned to Lysias (1 Maccabees 3:32-37), but on his deathbed, he appears to have given this task to Philip. At any rate, Philip could hardly have been afraid of Antiochus V, for he was but a young child. That which drove Philip to Ptolemy in Egypt must have been a fear of Lysias. Josephus says that Philip took over the Seleucid government and was eventually killed by Lysias.

The Purification of the Temple (10:1-9)

Although Judas and his men managed to retake the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, they were not able to retake the Citadel. The Temple was then purified on the precise day that it had been desecrated two years earlier—the twenty-fifth day of Chislev (November/December). According to 1 Maccabees 4:52 there was a three-year gap (167 to 164 B.C.E.). Whether it was two or three years, the event was so significant that they waved ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful fronds of palms, which symbolize victory. The celebration lasted for eight days, modeling itself after one of Israel's other major holy

days, the Feast of Booths. The purification of the Temple is the climax of the book and marks the end of Jason's third volume.

WARFARE UNDER THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS V (10:10—13:26)

Following the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, his son, nicknamed Eupator, took over as a child. Lysias was his guardian and regent and chief governor of Coelestria and Phoenicia. Ptolemy (Macron) fell out of favor with Lysias and the King when he followed a pro-Jewish policy and tried to show justice to them. After losing support from his own people, he ended his life with poison.

The Attack on the Idumeans (10:14-23)

While the text seems to imply that Gorgias replaced Ptolemy, he in fact became the governor of Idumea and took up an aggressive anti-Jewish stance. The Idumeans (or Edomites) were hellenizers, who had moved into southern Palestine during the exile, where they continued to fight against the Jews. Judas and his army asked God to fight on their side and then attacked the strongholds of the Idumeans, killing no less than 20,000.

When 9,000 Idumeans took refuge in two towers, Judas left Simon, Joseph, and Zacchaeus with a sufficient force to take them and went where he was more urgently needed. The men with Simon were bribed to let some of them slip away and so Judas returned and had them executed and killed another 20,000 Idumeans in the two strongholds. This number is greater than the number that took refuge, but then there might have been others already there.

The Defeat of Timothy (10:24-38)

Timothy had been defeated earlier, but he gathered a new army together, including cavalry from Asia. He intended to take Judea by storm, but he did not anticipate having to face angels. Just as the battle became fierce, five resplendent men on horses with golden bridles, probably angels, surrounded him, protecting him with their armor and weapons. Timothy lost 20,500 men and 600 horsemen, forcing him to flee to a stronghold called Gazara (Gezer), which was well fortified. Chaereas was its commander.

At dawn of the fifth day, 20 young men from the army of Maccabeus (Judas), bravely stormed the wall and cut down every one they met. They killed Timothy, Chaereas and Apollophanes, all of whom had hidden themselves in a cistern.

The Defeat of Lysias (11:1-15)

Determined to make Jerusalem a city for the Greeks and to extract tribute from the Temple, Lysias took an army of 80,000 men and all his cavalry to Beth-zur to fight Judas and his men. He took no account of the power of God, but went up against the Jews with his infantry, cavalry, and 80 elephants. This was a formidable army, and so Judas and his men prayed to God for a good angel to save Israel. The angel appeared and led them into

battle, where they killed 11,000 of Lysias' infantry and 1,600 horsemen in his cavalry. Having pondered his losses, Lysias made peace with Judas.

Two problems exist with this battle. The first is its chronology. In 1 Maccabees 4:26-35, the battle takes place prior to the rededication of the Temple, but here it follows. The second problem is the peace treaty. In 1 Maccabees 4:35, there is no peace treaty. Lysias simply returned to Antioch for reinforcements.

The Four Letters (11:16-38)

Four letters follow the defeat of Lysias that have to do with the peace treaty. All of these letters propose to have been written prior to the rededication of the Temple, but here in 2 Maccabees, they appear after the Temple has been rededicated. Some of them contain dates, which have to be translated into our own dating system.

The Letter of Lysias to the Jews (11:16-21)

The first letter is dated in the one hundred and forty-eighth year, Dioscorinthius twenty-fourth (Early December of 165 B.C.E., prior to the rededication of the Temple, which would have been done on the twenty-fifth of Chislev in 164 B.C.E. The letter was delivered by John and Abslom and offered freedom to practice the Jewish faith in turn for cooperation with the government.

The Letter of Antiochus Eupator to Lysias (11:22-26)

Although no date is given in this second letter, it approves of the restoration of the Temple to the Jews and the freedom to live according to the customs of their ancestors. They may practice their religion.

The Letter of Antiochus Eupator to the Jewish Senate (11:27-33)

In this letter, dated on the one hundred and forty-eight year, Xanthicus fifteenth, which would have been in March/April of 164 B.C.E., the Jews are given permission to return to their homes in the countryside. They must do so however by the thirtieth day of Xanthicus (March/April). They will be given the freedom to enjoy their own food and laws. It was Menelaus who had informed the King that this was their desire.

The Letter from Rome to the Jews (11:34-38)

Two members of the Roman envoy, Quintus Memmius and Titus Manius, wrote a letter agreeing with the permission granted by Lysias to allow the Jews to practice their faith and culture. That this letter was written indicates the growing power of Rome, which within one hundred years would incorporate Judea into the Roman Empire. These two Romans are on their way to Antioch, where Roman power would soon be felt. The letter carries the same date as the Letter of Antiochus Eupator to the Jewish Senate.

Judas Mops Up (12:1-45)

Although an agreement was made with the central government, there were still many local governors and old enemies who continued to make war on the Jews.

Attacks on Joppa and Jamnia (12:3-9)

Two of these cities along the coast were Joppa (Jaffa) and Jamnia (Yabneh). With the public vote of the city, they took Jewish families out in boats and drowned them. Judas attacked both cities, setting fire to their boats and harbors. The fires could be seen in Jerusalem, some thirty miles away.

Attacks in the Northeast (12:10-31)

Judas and his army went in pursuit of Timothy, who had 120,000 infantry and 2,500 cavalry (12:20). The following cities were attacked in the northern part of the Transjordan:

2 Maccabees Name	1 Maccabees Name	Old Testament Name
Caspin	Caspho/Chaspho	
Charax		
Tob		
Carnaim		
Ephron		
Scythopolis		Beth-shan

At various points Timothy left men in strongholds. Two captains of Judas' army, named Dositheus and Sosipater, destroyed some of those strongholds and captured Timothy himself. Since Timothy held hostage many of their relatives, with a promise from him to return them, Timothy was set free.

Timothy's army preferred Carnaim because it was easy to defend due to the narrowness of the approaches. It was also the location of the temple of Atargatis, a Syrian goddess to whom fish were sacred. Judas marched against Carnaim and slaughtered 25,000 people.

When they came to Scythopolis, they found people who had shown kindness to the Jews and so they thanked them and went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

The Attack on Gorgias (12:32-45)

Gorgias was the governor of Idumea. As the battle began, Captain Dositheus caught hold of Gorgias and tried to capture him alive, but had his arm cut off in the process by one of the enemy horsemen. Judas raised the battle cry with hymns and charged against Gorgias' men, putting them to flight. When they arrived in Adullam, they observed the Sabbath.

On the next day they gathered up their fallen comrades, only to discover sacred tokens of the idols of Jamnia under their tunics. They assumed that these men had been killed in battle because they had disobeyed the Law of Moses. Deuteronomy 7:25-26 is the law to which they were referring.

Judas took up an offering to make a sacrifice on their behalf. His purpose was to atone for their sins so that they might rise in the resurrection. 2 Maccabees 12:44 gave support for their praying for the dead. It also states clearly their belief in the resurrection from the dead.

Lysias' Second Invasion (13:1-26)

The date was 163 B.C.E., and Lysias and Antiochus V Eupator decided to invade. Each one of them had a force of 110,000 infantry, 5,300 cavalry, 22 elephants, and 300 chariots. Menelaus wanted to join them for selfish reasons, but the King of Kings (God) angered Antiochus, and with Lysias' support, had Menelaus put to death in Beroea (Aleppo).

When Judas heard of the invasion, he urged his men to pray for three days without ceasing, and then they went out to meet the enemy. He pitched his camp at Modein, where the original revolution began. With a core of hand picked men, they attacked the king's army at night and killed 2,000 men in the camp. Although 2 Maccabees 13:15 says that Judas stabbed the leading elephant and its rider, 1 Maccabees says that it was Eleazar who did this at the cost of his own life, for he was crushed beneath the elephant (1 Maccabees 6:43-46).

According to 1 Maccabees 6:32-47, the first real battle took place at Beth-zachariah, but then shifted to Beth-zur, where the Jews suffered some setbacks. Rhodocus was caught passing secret information to the enemy, an act of treason for which he was imprisoned. At about the same time that Eupator and Lysias were finally defeated, they received news that Philip, who had been left in charge of the government back in Antioch, revolted against them. Philip swore to observe all the rights of the Jews, permitting them to practice their culture and religion. Judas received control of an area that extended from Ptolemais (Acco) in the north near Mount Carmel all the way down to Gerar deep in Philistine territory in the south. This gave Judas control over most of Palestine.

This also marks the end of Jason's fourth volume.

THE VICTORY OVER NICANOR (14:1—15:36)

The Accession of Demetrius I (14:1-10)

Seleucus IV died in 175 B.C.E. At that time, his son Demetrius was being held hostage in Rome and so he was unable to succeed his father. The next in line for the throne was Seleucus' brother, Antiochus who reigned under the name of Antiochus Epiphanes. When he died, his son took over and ruled under the name Antiochus Eupator, but he was only a

child. Lysias was his governor and ruled for him. It says here that Eupator ruled for three years. This is an error, for he ruled less than two.

When Demetrius escaped from Rome, he returned to take the throne that he believed to be rightfully his. He sailed into the harbor of Tripolis with a strong army and fleet and captured Antiochus and his guardian Lysias. While it does not say this in 2 Maccabees, he had both of them executed. See 1 Maccabees 7:1-4 for another account of the same story.

Another error in these opening verses is the claim that Alcimus had been the High Priest. He may have had ambitions to become the high priest, but he was not the High Priest. He welcomed the accession of Demetrius and presented him with the symbols of his crown and victory, which were a crown of gold, palm, and olive branches. Demetrius invited him to a meeting of the council, where he was asked about the Jews. His advice was that peace was impossible as long as Judas Maccabeus lived. Demetrius seems to have taken this advice seriously.

The Appointment of Nicanor (14:11-36)

The first step was to appoint Nicanor as the governor of Judea. According to Josephus, Nicanor accompanied Demetrius from Rome, which means that he must have gone to Rome after his defeat at the hands of Judas, a battle described in 1 Maccabees 8:9-36. This assumes that we are talking about the same Nicanor. When the Jews heard that he was coming, they sprinkled dust on their heads and prayed to God for help.

Following an initial skirmish at Dessau, an unknown place, Nicanor sought to avoid bloodshed.¹ He did this by sending three men, Posidonius, Theodotus, and Mattathias to gain pledges of friendship with Judas. This seemed to be working, and Nicanor took a liking to Judas; but Alcimus, probably driven by his own ambition to become High Priest, complained to Demetrius. The King was provoked by Alcimus' false accusations and ordered Nicanor to arrest Judas and send him back to Antioch immediately. Noticing that something was wrong with their relationship, Judas went into hiding with a few of his men and Nicanor was not able to fulfill the order given by Demetrius. In anger he went to the Temple and pledged to tear down the altar and build a new one to Dionysus, if Judas was not turned over to him. The priests then called out for divine help.

The Suicide of Razis (14:37-46)

Because Razis was a popular Jew, known as the father of the Jews, he was singled out for arrest. Nicanor wanted to exhibit his hostility towards the Jews and so he sent 500 soldiers in to arrest Razis. Rather than to fall into the hands of Gentiles, Razis decided to commit suicide with his own sword. He was not very good at this, but he did kill himself, which was very rare among Jews. The death of Razis is gruesome, but it is described here in vivid detail. In the end he tore out his entrails and with both hands and threw them at

¹ Dessau might be the Adasa mentioned in 1 Maccabees 7:40, but we cannot be sure.

the crowd, calling upon the Lord to give them back to him in the resurrection. This is similar to the faith expressed by the third son (2 Maccabees 7:11) of the seven martyrs.

The Defeat and Death of Nicanor (15:1-36)

Both sides finally prepared for battle, Nicanor in Beth-horon and Judas in Adasa (1 Maccabees 7:39-40). Nicanor's intention was to attack on the Sabbath, thinking that this would give him an advantage. There were Jews in his army, however, who recommended that he not do this, but he ignored their advice. In his own preparations, Judas encouraged his men with Scripture, a vision, and prayer. The Scriptures mentioned are the Law and the Prophets. The Writings had not yet been canonized. The vision was like a dream of two heroes of the faith, Onias, a martyred priest, and Jeremiah, gray but distinguished in appearance. Onias is envisioned as one who was praying with outstretched arms, and Jeremiah as one who was handing Judas a golden sword. This sword was a gift from God, approving of their resistance of Nicanor and his army, even if that resistance took place on the Sabbath.

The author however was unwilling to admit that there was any resistance on the Sabbath and does not mention it directly. In 1 Maccabees 2:41 there is an open admission that it was sometimes necessary to fight on the Sabbath. In 2 Maccabees 8:26-27, there is a refusal to fight on the Sabbath, but in all of 2 Maccabees, there is no direct justification for fighting on the Sabbath.

The purpose of the battle was to protect the Sanctuary from the possible desecration of it by the Gentiles. This concern was greater than the protection of their wives and children (2 Maccabees 15:18). Prior to engaging in the battle, Judas called upon the Lord to give them the kind of victory he gave to Hezekiah, when angels interceded to help him resist the invasion of Sennacherib. When the battle was over, no less than 35,000 of Nicanor's men lay dead, including Nicanor himself, in full armor. Judas ordered his men to cut off Nicanor's head and arms and carry them to Jerusalem. There they also cut out his tongue and fed it piecemeal to the birds. Nicanor's head was hung up in the citadel as a sign that the Lord had given the victory to Judas and his men. This victory was to be observed annually on the thirteenth day of Adar (the twelfth month), which would have been the day before Mordecai's day and the observance of Purim.

There is one problem with this account. The citadel would not be in Jewish hands for another 20 years. See 1 Maccabees 13:49-52 for another account of this victory.

THE EPILOGUE (15:37-39)

The final epilogue seems to indicate that the author wrote prior to the Jewish war in which Jerusalem was finally taken. He does not know about another attack, which would be made on the Holy City from 66 to 70 C.E., which the Jews would lose. He is still optimistic and tells the story as best he can.

THE FIRST PURITANS

What can we make of all this violence? What caused it? One could say that the cause of it was the attempt to Hellenize the Jews by force. The reaction was to call upon God to help the Jews resist. In that resistance thousands of people died on both sides. Was it just a clash between two very different cultures, or was more involved? One of the issues had to do with the Sabbath: Can Jews engage in battle on the Sabbath? The Sabbath was one of the commandments that had to do with their relationship with God. In fact it was the defining symbol of their faithfulness to God. We may not take the Sabbath seriously, but they did.

What about all the violence on the other six days? How can that be justified in the name of God? The goal was to keep their faith and culture free of Hellenistic influences, to purify both their religion and their culture. The Temple lay at the center of their life, and they could not stand to see its desecration. The purification of the Temple justified everything, including fighting on the Sabbath.

All of this is difficult for us to understand. We are already Hellenized. Greek culture influences us much more than Jewish culture, particularly when it comes to religion. The Immortality of the Soul makes more sense to us than the Resurrection of the Body. We don't have to find reasons for not fighting on the Sabbath. In fact we don't have to find reasons for not observing the Sabbath at all. Violating the Sabbath is what we do all the time.

For us religion is a matter of choice. We are free to choose what we want and we are free to set aside what is inconvenient. We don't seek right over wrong. We seek the golden mean. We are good little Greeks. Don't talk to us about Laws. We live by principles, which can be set aside when they get in our way. Don't limit us to the worship of one God. We make our gods in our own image. We may not affirm polytheism, but we practice it. We have as many gods as did the Greeks. We just don't name them with male and female names.

If the Jews tried to force their religion and culture on us, we would fight back too. We want our freedom more than we want true religion. After all, religion is relative. Everyone should have the right to worship as he or she pleases. There are no absolutes, not even when it comes to God. We're not even trying to purify our religion and culture. Why should we? Freedom is our god. For all their faults, at least they wanted the freedom to live within their Covenant with God, as they understood it. They were indeed the first puritans, willing to pay whatever price it took. As much as they hated suicide, Razi was willing to take his own life rather than to submit to Greek religion and culture. He believed that God would give him back his life in the future.

23. THE REBELLION FOR PURIFYING THE TEMPLE (2 Maccabees 8:1 – 15:39)

THE REVOLT (8:1 – 10:9)

Judas' First Victory over Nicanor (8:1-36)

Judas gathered 6,000 for the Revolt (8:1)
Philip warned Ptolemy (Coelesyria/Phoenicia) (8:8)
Ptolemy appointed Nicanor & Gorgias (20,000 Gentiles) (8:9)
Judas encouraged his men to trust in God (8:16 & 18)
Examples of Sennacherib & Galatians (8:17-20)
Judas divided his men into four divisions (8:21-22)
(Judas, Simon, Joseph (John), and Jonathan) (8:22)
Eleazar read the Holy Book (8:23)
They killed 9,000 & captured slave money (8:24-25)
They killed 20,000 of Timonhy & Bacchides' Men (8:30)
Nicanor fled to Antioch (8:34-35)

The Death of Antiochus IV (9:1-29)

Antiochus robs temples in Persepolis (9:1-2)
Antiochus retreats to Ecbatana & hears of Nicanor (9:2-3)
Antiochus heads straight for Jerusalem (9:4)
God strikes Antiochus down (9:5, 7, 9)
Antiochus repents...to free Jerusalem
..to make Jews equal to Athenians...to become Jewish
(9:13-17)
Antiochus writes to the Jews
Antiochus names his son as successor (9:25)
Philip takes Antiochus' body to Antioch (9:29)
Conflict between Philip & Lysias (9:29b)

The Purification of the Temple (10:1-9)

Judas recovers Jerusalem, the Temple, but not the Citadel (10:1)
There was a two year lapse (10:3) (Three years in 1 Maccabees 4:52)

WARFARE UNDER THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS V (10:10 – 13:26)

The Attack on the Idumeans (10:14-23)

Gorgias became Governor of Idumea (10:14)
Judas and his men killed 20,000 Idumeans (10:17)
9,000 Idumeans seek refuge in two towers (10:18)
Simon gives in to bribery (10:20)
Judas kills 20,000 in the strongholds (10:23)

The Defeat of Timothy (10:24-38)

Timothy decides to take Judea by Storm (10:24)
Five Angels kill 20,500 men & 600 horsemen (10:29-31)
Timothy flees to Gazara (10:32)
20 young Jews storm the wall (10:35)
Timothy is killed in the cistern with Chaereas & Apollophanes

The Defeat of Lysias in Beth-zur (11:1-15)

Lysias attacks men (80,000), cavalry, & 80 elephants (11:2,4)
Judas asks for an angel (11:6)
The angel appears (11:8)
They kill 11,000 men and 1,600 cavalry (11:11)
Lysias makes Peace (11:14-15)

The Four Letters (11:16-38)

Lysias to the Jews (11:16-21) (11:19) (Dec. 165 B.C. E.)
Eupator to Lysias (11:22-26) (11:25)
Eupator to Jewish Senate (11:27-33) (11:29 & 31)
(March/April 165 B.C.E.)
Rome to Jews (11:34-38) (11:35) (March/April 164 B.C.E.)

Judas Mops Up (12:1-45)

EAST: Joppa and Jamnia drowned Jews (12:3-9) (12:6 & 9)
NORTHEAST: Timothy's Army & Cavalry
(12:10-31) (12:24)
SOUTH: Gorgias' Army & Cavalry (12:32-45) (12:35)
The Sacred Tokens (12:40)
The Prayer for the Dead (12:44)

Lysias' Second Invasion (13:1-26) (163 B.C.E.)

Eupator & Lysias attack Judas (13:1-2)
(110,000 men, 5,300 cavalry, 22 elephants, & 300 chariots)
God caused Antiochus to kill Menelaus (13:4)
Judas led a three day fast and prayer (13:12)
Judas led an attack at Modein & killed 2,000 (13:14 & 15)
Judas stabbed the lead elephant (13:15) (1 Macc. 6:43-46)
Lysias & Antiochus attack Beth-zechariah & Beth-zur (13:19)
Rhodocus' betrayal & imprisonment (13:21)
Philip revolts in Antioch and grants Jewish freedom (13:23)

THE VICTORY OVER NICANOR (14:1 – 15:36)

The Accession of Demetrius I (14:1-10)

Demetrius sails into Tripolis & captures Antioch (14:1)
Antiochus and Lysias are killed (See 1 Maccabees 7:1-4)
Alcimus presents Demetrius with symbols of victory (14:4)
Alcimus advises Demetrius to defeat Judas (14:6 & 10)

The Appointment of Nicanor (14:11-36)

Antiochus chooses Nicanor as governor of Judea (14:12)
The Jews sprinkle dust on their heads & pray (14:15)
Nicanor sends Posidonius, Theodotus, & Mattathias
To make peace (14:18-19)
Alcimus complains to Antiochus (14:26)
Antiochus tells Nicanor to bring Judas to Antioch (14:27)

The Suicide of Razis (14:37-46)

Nicanor sent 500 soldiers to arrest Razis (14:39)
Razis' gruesome suicide (14:41-46)
Resurrection (14:46)

The Defeat and Death of Nicanor (15:1-36)

Nicanor attacks Judas on the Sabbath (15:1)
Judas inspires with scripture, visions, & prayer (15:9,11-16, 21)
35,000 men & Nicanor are killed (15:27-28, 30, 33, 34)

THE EPILOGUE (15:37-39) (15:38)

24. FROM JOSIAH TO EZRA

1 Esdras 1:1—9:55

ASSIGNMENTS			
Josiah from the Fall to Rebuilding Jerusalem 1:1—2:30	The Contest under King Darius 3:1—5:6	Rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple 5:7—7:15	The Role of Ezra 8:1—9:54

INTRODUCTION TO I ESDRAS

The Name

The name “Esdras” is the Greek word for “Ezra.” 1 Esdras is actually 3 Esdras in the Latin Vulgate, where it has been placed in an appendix following the New Testament. It was placed there following the Council of Trent because it was considered inferior to the other Old Testament Books, but they did not want to lose it.

The Author

Although the author is unknown, he is considered more of a compiler than an author.

The Date

Because of its style, 1 Esdras was written after Daniel (165 B.C.E.), but prior to Josephus. Although we cannot give it a precise date, we know that it had to be written prior to 93-94 C.E. when Josephus wrote his *Antiquities of the Jewish People*. We know this because Josephus quotes from 1 Esdras. An educated guess on the date of the book might be approximately 150 to 100 B.C.E.

The Setting

The setting is easy to determine, since the book begins with the Great Passover in the time of Josiah (621 B.C.E.) and ends with Ezra reading the Law to the returned Exiles. Dating of the latter event is more difficult. The traditional date for Ezra’s return was 458 B.C.E., but there are many scholars who would place his return around 397 B.C.E.

The Purpose

1 Esdras was written to emphasize the contribution made by Josiah, Zerubbabel, and Ezra to the reform of worship in Judah. It reproduces 2 Chronicles 35:1—36:23, all of Ezra, and Nehemiah 7:38—8:12. While there are discrepancies between the apocryphal and canonical accounts, they are only minor.

The Outline

- A. Josiah's Passover (1:1-24)
- B. The Death of Josiah (1:25-33)
- C. The Fall of Jerusalem (1:39-58)
- D. Cyrus' Proclamation to Rebuild (2:1-15)
- E. Opposition to the Rebuilding Effort (2:16-30)
- F. Three Bodyguards in the Court of Dairus (3:1—5:6)
 - 1. The Planning of the Contest (3:1-17a)
 - 2. The Strength of the Wine (3:17b-24)
 - 3. The Strength of Kings (4:1-12)]
 - 4. The Strength of Women (4:13-32)
 - 5. The Strength of Truth (4:33-41)
 - 6. Zerubbabel's Reward (4:42-57)
 - 7. Zerubbabel's Prayer (4:58-60)
 - 8. Preparation for the Return (4:61—5:6)
- G. The Returning Exiles (5:7-46)
- H. Beginning Work on the Temple (5:47-73)
 - I. The Completion of the Temple (6:1—7:15)
 - J. The Role of Ezra (8:1—9:55)

JOSIAH FROM THE FALL TO REBUILDING JERUSALEM (1:1—2:30)

Josiah's Passover in his 18th Year (1:1-24)

Following the discovery of the Law (Deuteronomy) in Josiah's time, Josiah called for the observance of Passover. The Passover Lamb was killed on the fourteenth day of the first month and the Ark was placed in the Temple.

Josiah's gift consisted of 30,000 lambs and kids and 3,000 calves. The chief officers of the Temple, Hilkiyah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, gave 2,600 sheep and 300 calves; the captains of thousands, Jeconiah, Shemaiah, Nethanel, Hashabiah, Ochiel, and Joram, gave 5,000 sheep and 700 (500) calves. There are only slight discrepancies between this account and the one found in 2 Chronicles 35:7-9. The numbers in parenthesis are taken from Chronicles. Other discrepancies are found in the inclusion of names and some spellings of them.

The Passover Feast was followed by a seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread and all of the above was done during the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign.

The Death of Josiah (1:25-33)

For some unexplained reason, Josiah tried to prevent the Pharaoh of Egypt from fighting against the Assyrians at Carchemish. Although the Pharaoh is not named here, we know that he was Neco. Josiah engaged Neco in battle at Megiddo, against Jeremiah's advice, and was mortally wounded there. He was quickly taken to Jerusalem, where he died

The Fall of Jerusalem (1:39-58)

The last four kings of Judah are named. They were Jeconiah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. The following statistics are given:

King	Age	Years of Reign
Jeconiah	23	3 Months
Jehoiakim	25	Taken to Babylon
Jehoiachin	18	3 Months 10 Days [Jehoiakim in Greek] ⁵
Zedekiah	21	11 Years

In spite of the warnings of prophets like Jeremiah, these kings resisted God, so God through Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, brought Judah down. The House of the Lord was burned to the ground and the valuables and survivors were taken to Babylon for a sabbath of seventy years.

Cyrus' Proclamation to Rebuild (2:1-15)

This section is almost identical to that found in Ezra 1:1-11, but there is an improvement in the inventory of the sacred vessels. In his first year, that is 539 B.C.E., Cyrus proclaimed a willingness to allow the Temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. He attributes the proclamation to Yahweh, but in the Cyrus Cylinder, credit is given to Marduk, his own god. In a text to Ur, he ascribes his victories to Sin, the moon god.

Cyrus then encouraged "all whose spirit the Lord had stirred to go up to build the house in Jerusalem" (2:8) to return home to do it. This is in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, the specific reference being Jeremiah 29:10. Those who responded were from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, along with some Priests and Levites.

The Persian Treasurer, Mithridates, turned over the vessels to Sheshbazzar, the governor of Judea, who carried them back or at least oversaw their return. The following list of vessels was recorded:

⁵ See 2 Chronicles 36:9, where this king is described as being 8 years old.

1,000	gold cups
1,000	silver cups
29	silver censers
30	gold bowls
2,410	silver bowls
<u>1,000</u>	other vessels
5,469	Total Vessels

The Opposition (2:16-30)

In the time of Artaxerxes (465-424 B.C.E.), there arose an opposition to the rebuilding effort in Jerusalem, which included the rebuilding of the city, its walls, and the temple. Some question is raised over whether it was during the time of Artaxerxes. Ezra 4:7-24 also names him, but Josephus attempted to correct what he considered to be a mistake by substituting Cambyses (530-522) for Artaxerxes. This whole section is similar to Ezra 4:7-24 and really belongs chronologically between Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 1.

Those objecting to the rebuilding effort are Bishlam, Mithridates, Tabeel, Rehum, and Shimshai. Rehum is named as the recorder, but the word “Beltethmus” is a transliteration of “Chancellor” and since it appears both in verse 16 and 25 with Rehum, one might assume that Rehum is really the chancellor. Shimshai is the scribe. At any rate, Rehum and Shimshai seem to come across as the leaders of those who oppose the rebuilding effort and they are the ones involved in writing the letter and then carrying out the King’s reply to stop the rebuilding.

The main reason for putting a halt to rebuilding Jerusalem is that its former kings have been rebellious leaders who exacted tribute from Coele-syria and Phoenicia in the past. They can be expected to do the same in the future. This would cut off Persia’s access to these important regions in Palestine. Rebuilding stops until the reign of Darius I (522-486).

THE CONTEST UNDER KING DARIUS (3:1—5:6)

The Contest (3:1-17a)

The story is told only in 1 Esdras and provided sufficient reason for the preservation of the book. The story begins with the planning of a great banquet by Darius, probably in Susa, but the place itself is not named. Reference is made to the inclusion of all 127 Satraps (provinces), but this must be a mistake. At the time of Darius there were only 20 Satraps; the well known number of 127 did not become a reality until after 312 B.C.E. The banquet was large and included much eating and drinking. At the end Darius went into his bedroom to sleep.

His three bodyguards then planned a contest for the King that would bring riches and honor to one of them. Josephus claims that it was the king himself who planned the contest (Antiquities XI iii.2). When the King woke up from his sleep, he seemed to go

along with the contest. The key question was, “What is the strongest?” Each of the young men proposed a different answer, the original order of the answers was probably: Kings, Wine, and Women. The entire court was then assembled and each of the young men was to defend his answer.

The Strength of Wine (3:17b-24)

The first young man insisted that wine was the strongest, for it was the great leveler of king and servant and of poor and rich. It overwhelms everyone and brings them down. It interferes both with their discernment and memory and causes people to focus on mirth and feasting. In the end it results in conflict and alienation and death. It is the most dangerous of all the drugs, because it is the most subtle.

The Strength of Kings (4:1-12)

The strength of kings, said the second young man, is the strongest, for the king has the power to send his people off to war to obtain spoil and to collect taxes from those who till the soil. Although he is but one man, the spoils of war and all the taxes collected are under his direction. He reclines, eats and drinks, and sleeps, while others keep watch around him. No one has the courage to disobey such a powerful person as a king; therefore, kings are the strongest.

The Strength of Women (4:13-32)

While the first two young men are not named, the third one is. His name is Zerubbabel and he suggests women as stronger than both kings and wine. After all, women give birth to kings and to those who make wine. Men cannot exist without women. Women take the treasures won in warfare and they can humiliate kings. Men are willing to give anything up for women; they even seek those who humiliate them. Can anything be stronger than a woman?

The Strength of Truth (4:33-41)

No young man represents the strength of truth, so we must conclude that this answer has been added to the original story. Wine, kings, and women can be unrighteous, but truth endures and is strong forever (4:38). Truth is to be equated with the Will of God himself, so we can only conclude: “Great is truth, and strongest of all!” (4:41) This final verse is the greatest and best known line out of 1 Esdras. It also lies behind the famous Latin Proverb: “Magna est Veritas et Praevalet,” which comes directly from this verse in the Latin Vulgate.

Zerubbabel’s Reward (4:42-57)

It sounds as if Zerubbabel was granted a wish for winning the contest and that his wish was to return to Jerusalem to build the Temple. Although Cyrus’ original proclamation is mentioned, nothing is said about any interruption of the work on the Temple. The

Edomites are credited with burning the original Temple in 1 Esdras 4:45, which is contrary to what we read in 1 Esdras 1:55. Darius commits 20 talents a year for the building of the Temple and an additional 10 talents a year to pay for the daily burnt offerings.

Zerubbabel's Prayer (4:58-60)

The prayer is essentially an expression of thanks for wisdom and bears a strange resemblance to a prayer found in Daniel 2:20-23. Although it may indeed be dependent on this prayer, Zerubbabel thanks God for the wisdom he needed to win the contest. This will enable him to go to Jerusalem to build the Temple

Preparations for the Return (4:61—5:6)

Zerubbabel returned to Babylon to recruit more leaders for the returning exiles. The list of leaders is confused. Zerubbabel and Jeshua are the primary leaders, with the rest being secondary. Some confusion exists over Joakim. Here he is the son of Zerubbabel, but in Nehemiah 12:10 and 26, he is the son of Jeshua. 1 Chronicles 3:17-19 gives a completely different genealogy for Zerubbabel, where he is also identified as the grandson of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah).

REBUILDING JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE (5:7—7:15)

The Returning Exiles (5:7-46)

The primary leaders were twelve in number, being: Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Resaiah, Bigvai, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Reeliah, Rehum, and Baanah. This list has many similarities to the lists in Ezra and Nehemiah, but they are not identical. The same is true for the list of Exiles getting ready to return. What is the same is the total number of returning exiles, which is 42,360 in 1 Esdras 5:41, Ezra 2:64, and Nehemiah 7:66. There are similarities in the numbering of the menservants and maidservants, musicians and singers, camels, horses, mules, and asses; but when the numbers are compared within the three accounts, differences begin to emerge. In spite of the differences, the total number of returning exiles is the same. That is the most important fact in the chapter.

Beginning the Work (5:47-73)

This part of the story is hopelessly confused. It treats the two returns, one under Sheshbazzar and the other under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, as one return. What actually happened following the return under Sheshbazzar in about 538 B.C.E. is the restoration of the altar, the renewal of sacrifice, and the laying of the foundation. Work was then stopped until it was begun again after Zerubbabel and Jeshua returned with a large group around 525 B.C.E. The time between Cyrus (539-530) and Darius I (522-486) has to be longer than the two years mentioned in 5:73. The Samaritan interest in helping, its rejection, and finally their opposition to the project, are all mentioned.

Completing the Work (6:1—7:15)

Haggai and Zechariah encouraged them to get on with the project and, finally, the Temple was completed on the twenty-third day of Adar or the sixth year of Darius. The Temple was completed in February/March of 515 B.C.E., a full sabbath of years following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.

THE ROLE OF EZRA (8:1—9:55)

The 4 Month Trip to Jerusalem. (8:1-67)

The Identity and Date of Ezra (8:1-7)

Ezra is the central character of this book, so he is now identified and brought into the story. He is a teacher of the Law who can trace his ancestry back to Aaron. The major problem for us is to date his trip to Jerusalem. All that is known for sure is that Artaxerxes was the reigning King of Persia, but there were two Kings who went by that name. Artaxerxes I ruled from 465 to 424 and Artaxerxes II ruled from 404 to 358 B.C.E. 1 Esdras 8:6 tells us that Ezra took a group to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign. The traditional date has been established as 458 B.C.E., but recent scholars have favored 397 B.C.E. There is no way of knowing for sure.

The Letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra (8:8-24)

Artaxerxes and his seven counselors authorized Ezra to take to Jerusalem all those “who freely choose” to go and that whatever financial resources they needed would be provided from the royal treasury. There was however a limit of 100 talents of silver, 100 cors of wheat, and 100 baths of wine. A talent is equal to 75.5 U.S. pounds, a cor is 6.5 bushels, and a bath is 6 U.S. gallons. Salt was to be given in abundance, without any restrictions. No tribute or tax was to be laid on any of the priests or Levites or anyone else connected with the operation of the Temple. Ezra was to appoint judges who knew the Law; if they did not know it, he was responsible for teaching it to them.

The List of Returnees and the Trip to Jerusalem (8:25-67)

The group departed from the river called Theras. At first no priests or Levites volunteered, so they had to be recruited. The list is similar to, but differs in a few particulars with, the list given in Ezra 8:1-14. No total number is given, but it has been estimated to be about 1,690 people. As they left Ezra proclaimed a fast. This was considered necessary in light of their reluctance to ask the king for military protection for the journey. How could they do such a thing when they had boldly proclaimed that the Lord was with them? They took with them some of the vessels which the priests and Levites were to deliver to the Temple. According to 1 Esdras 8:6, the trip took four months. They left on the new moon of the first month and arrived in Jerusalem on the new moon of the fifth month.

The Problem of Mixed Marriages (8:68—9:55)

Ezra's Response (8:68-73)

The problem of mixed marriages, as described in the Law, has to do not only with the prohibition against marrying foreigners in Deuteronomy 7:3, but also with the immoral behavior that might result from such marriages as described in Leviticus 18:24-30. The Israelites were “vomited” out of the land for the same reasons as the Canaanites; if they want to avoid it in the future, they will have to avoid the repetition of the kind of behavior that caused it in the first place. Intermarriage itself was not so bad, but intermarriage with a people whose religion promotes immorality could not be tolerated. Ruth, the Moabite girl, gave up her old religion and its immoral behavior and, for that reason, was acceptable as the new wife of Boaz. Ezra knows however that this is not the case in these present marriages, so he responds by rending his garments, pulling out his hair from his head and beard, and expressing tremendous grief over what he has observed.

Ezra's Prayer (8:74-90)

Ezra was a religious, not a political authority, so he sought the solution from God in prayer. The answer came to him clearly. They as a people could not mix with the foreigners, especially in the intimate relationship of marriage.

Shecaniah's Solution (8:91—9:36)

The solution put forth by Shecaniah was to put away, that is to divorce, the foreign wives, including any children who were born in such marriages. This was an awesome task, which could not be done in one or even two days in the middle of winter, so an arrangement was made to organize the task over a period of three months. It would not be easy, for a number of priests had taken foreign wives as well. It seemed like the right thing to do in light of what happened to Israel as a nation. Their leaders wanted to make sure that it would not happen again, so Shecaniah's solution seemed right for their time. Even if it does not seem right to us, there is still a vital lesson to be learned from it. But we do not seem to be learning it.

Ezra's Reading of the Law (9:37-55)

It was necessary to make clear the reasons for asking the people to divorce their foreign wives, so Ezra read the Law in the open square from early morning until midday, where everyone had to pay attention. Beside him stood other leaders, who explained what he was reading. Apparently some of them were not familiar with Hebrew anymore, so translators had to explain things in Aramaic. Ezra concluded by telling them that this was a holy day. They were not to weep, but to rejoice.

This passage seems to end abruptly. Many have concluded that it may have originally ended with the celebration of the Feast of Booths (Nehemiah 8:13-18), which would have

been consistent with the beginning of the Book of 1 Esdras with its celebration of the Great Passover under Josiah.

TRUTH ENDURES FOREVER

What is the strongest force on earth? Is it wine, the king, or women? Truth is the strongest force on earth, because “truth endures and is strong forever, and lives and prevails forever and ever.” (1 Esdras 4:38)

No one can define truth in absolute terms. What is the strongest force in the world is the everlasting search for truth. No one ever finds the whole truth. It must be sought, but never found. The moment we think we have found it, we are in grave danger. Samuel Taylor Coleridge describes the essence of that danger: “He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all.”

What must be sought is God himself, who is the author of all truth. Jesus described the path to truth in John 8:31-32, where he said: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” If fearing God is the beginning of wisdom, then becoming a disciple of Jesus is the beginning of truth. This is true, because God was incarnate in Christ. This is the heart of Christian faith and no one can be a Christian without believing it.

This was what was at issue in the confrontation between Jesus and Pilate. In John 18:33-38, Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” After they exchanged a few more words, Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” Pilate then asked, “So you are a king?” Jesus replied, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate then scorns, “What is truth?” No answer is given, but the answer has been implied in their entire conversation. Jesus has come into this world to reveal divine truth, but humanity has rejected it.

While Jesus had the whole truth, we as human beings only have glimpses of the truth. The closer we get to him, the more we will be set free by truth, the most powerful force in the world. When we talk about scripture being revealed truth, we mean that it contains the truth. It is the cradle in which the truth has been placed. “It is not true because it is biblical,” said Dr. Harrell Beck, “it is biblical because it’s true.”¹

In claiming that there is truth in scripture, we are not saying that every word and concept in the Bible is historically and scientifically accurate. To say that, would be to place Christianity on a collision course with Science; this is something that we do not want to

¹ Quoted from a speech, which Dr. Beck made at the 1985 Wisconsin Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

do. Christianity has been embarrassed in the past with such claims and we do not need to continue making ourselves look ridiculous. This is not to say that secular historians and scientists have any more of a grasp of truth. In fact, if they reject God, they have less of the truth. They too must not take their grasp of the truth too seriously. All of us are searching for the truth and any claim to be in total possession of it, must be doubted. We must all be ready to change our conception of the truth as new insight is discovered or revealed.

The number of people claiming a certain truth has little to do with truth. One person standing alone can have a better comprehension of truth than a million placing social pressure on one another, reinforcing an illusion. This was illustrated recently in a story about Einstein's comprehension of truth. An anti-Einstein organization was set up to refute Einstein's ideas. In fact one man was convicted of inciting others to murder Einstein for a mere six dollars. When a book was published with the title, *100 Authors Against Einstein*, Einstein replied, "If I were wrong, then one would have been enough!"¹ Is this not what we learn from the Gospels? Why not apply it in other fields, such as history and science? All of us are in a common search for the truth and the result of that search should not put the various disciplines in conflict with one another. Truth itself is the most powerful force on earth; our lifelong task is to discover every dimension of truth—spiritual, historical, and scientific. The search for truth is a cooperative effort.

¹ Stephen Hawkins, *A Brief History of Time*, p. 178.

24. 1 ESDRAS 1:1—9:55

JOSIAH'S PASSOVER IN HIS 18TH YEAR (1:1-24)

JOSIAH'S GIFT (1:7) 30,000 Lambs & Kids 3,000 Calves	CHIEF OFFICERS (1:8) 2,600 Sheep 300 Calves	CAPTAINS OF 1,000 (1:9) 5,000 Sheep 700 [500] Calves	JOSIAH'S DEATH (1:25-33) Neco to Carchemish (1:25) Warning of Jeremiah (1:28) Battle of Negiddo (1:29)
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THE FALL OF JERUSALEM (1:39-58)

THE KINGS	KINGS	AGE	LENGTH OF REIGN	THE FALL	
	Jeconiah	23	3 Months (1:34-35)		Destruction (1:54-55)
	Jehoiakim	25	Taken to Babylon (1:37-39)		
	Jehoiachin	18	3 Months, 10 Days (1:43-44)		
	Zedekiah	21	11 Years (1:46b)		70 Year Sabbath (1:58)

CYRUS' PROCLAMATION TO REBUILD (2:1-15)

When? "In the first year, or 539 B.C.E."	Responsible? "The Lord, Marduk, or Sin" (2:3-4)	
GIVEN THE RESPONSIBILITY (2:11-14) Methridates, Treasurer Sheshbazzar, Governor	OPPOSED TO REBUILDING (2:16)	
	When?	Who?
	Bible: Artaxerxes (465-424) Josephus: Cambyses (530-522)	Bishlam Mithridates Tabeel *Rehum, Recorder *Shimshai, Scribe
Why? The Kings Rebel (2:19)		

THE CONTEST UNDER KING DARIUS (3:1—5:6)

Key Question: "What is the strongest?"

WINE (3:17b-24) Bodyguard One	KINGS (4:1-12) Bodyguard Two	WOMEN (4:13-32) Zerubbabel (4:13)	TRUTH (4:33-41) Zerubbabel (4:13)
Commitment to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (4:43 & 45) 20 Talents a year (4:51) and 10 talents a year for Offerings (4:52) Primary Leaders: Zerubbabel and Jeshua (5:5)			

REBUILDING JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE (5:7—7:15)

Returning Exiles (5:7-46) The Leaders (5:8) The People (5:41) 42,360	Beginning the Work (5:47-73) Sheshbazzar (538) Zerubbabel & Jeshua (525)	Completing the Work (7:5) 6th Year of Darius 23rd of Adar (Feb/Mar 515)	A Sabbath of Years Destruction: 586 B.C. Construction: 515 B.C.
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THE ROLE OF EZRA (8:1—9:55)

THE 4 MONTH TRIP TO JERUSALEM (8:1-67) Artaxerxes I or II? (458 or 397 B.C.) 1,690 Return with him	MIXED MARRIAGES (8:68—9:55) The Problem: (8:69-70) Shecaniah's Solution: (8:92-94)
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25. GOD'S DELIVERANCE OF THE JEWS IN EGYPT

3 Maccabees 1:1—7:23

ASSIGNMENTS				
Ptolemy's Threat to desecrate the Temple 1:1-29	Simon's Prayer of Intercession 2:1-24	Ptolemy's Decision to kill the Jews 2:25—4:20	The Preparation of the Elephants 5:1-51	God's Deliverance of the Jews 6:1—7:23

INTRODUCTION

The Name

The title is misleading. 3 Maccabees is not about the Maccabean heroes of 1 and 2 Maccabees; rather, it is about the struggles of Egyptian Jews, who must deal with persecution under the Egyptian ruler, Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204 B.C.E.). This persecution takes place some time before the events of 1 and 2 Maccabees. The Maccabean period, deals primarily with the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.E.).

The Author

All that can be said about the author of 3 Maccabees is that he was an unknown Alexandrian Jew.

The Date

While we cannot be specific about the date, we can determine that the book was written between the Battle of Raphia in 217 B.C.E. and the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The best estimate would be to place the date somewhere in the first century C.E.

The Place in the Canon

The Book of 3 Maccabees can be found in some manuscripts of the Greek Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Armenian Bible. Since it cannot be found in the Latin Vulgate, Roman Catholics, along with the Reformed Churches, consider it Apocryphal. Eastern Christianity regards it as deuterocanonical (of lesser value than the canonical books).

The Purpose

The purpose of the book is to inspire and encourage Egyptian Jews to keep their faith in God in the midst of some terrifying experiences.

Ptolemy tried to enter the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple. Through the prayers of Simon, the High Priest, divine intervention prevented him from doing so. Upon returning home to Egypt Ptolemy decided to humiliate the Jews by forcing them to worship Dionysus. He did promise them equal citizenship with all Alexandrians if they would comply. They resisted. He then herded them together to be registered, tortured, and killed. A second divine intervention prevented him from accomplishing his humiliation of the Jews. Through the prayer of Eleazar, the Jews were finally spared from being trampled to death by a great herd of elephants. This is the third and final divine intervention, which caused Ptolemy to repent and put an end to his persecution of the Jews.

The Outline

- A. Ptolemy threatens to desecrate the Temple (1:1-29)
- B. Simon's Prayer of Intercession (2:1-24)
- C. Ptolemy's cruel treatment of the Jews (2:25—5:51)
- D. God's Deliverance of the Jews (6:1—7:23)

PTOLEMY'S THREAT TO DESECRATE THE TEMPLE (1:1-29)

The Battle of Raphia (1:1-7)

Since the story begins so abruptly, some scholars believe that there was originally some other introductory material, which is now lost. There seems to be a skirmish at the border, taking place between the armies of Ptolemy IV (221-204) and Antiochus III (223-187). The scene of the skirmish is Raphia, a city in Palestine located three miles from Gaza, very close to the Egyptian border.

Theodotus (1:2-3), the chief commander of the Egyptian forces, has deserted to Antiochus III, and has arranged to have Ptolemy killed in his bed. He was not aware of Dosithetus, who arranged to have an insignificant person sleep in Ptolemy's bed. Hence, the assassination of Ptolemy was avoided.

Arsinoe, who was Ptolemy's sister and wife, encouraged the Egyptian troops by offering every soldier two minas of gold if they could win the battle. This seems to have turned the tide, for victory went to Ptolemy and his men. Polybius tells us that while Syria lost 10,000 men, 300 cavalry, and 4,000 prisoners, Egypt lost only 1,500 men and 700 cavalry.

Ptolemy's Desire to enter the Sanctuary (1:8-15)

At first Ptolemy only wanted to visit some of the Jewish cities and the Jews welcomed him with open arms. The problem developed when he decided to enter into the Holy of Holies, the Inner Sanctuary, where only the High Priest was allowed to enter once a year. They warned him that no one was permitted entry, but he insisted that he had a right to enter. He may have only been curious about the architecture, but as King, he believed that he had the right to enter into any Temple. He had done so many times before, and he could not understand why he was not allowed to enter this one.

The Jewish Reaction to Ptolemy (1:16-29)

The reaction to Ptolemy's desire to enter the Sanctuary was resisted first by the priests, but the rest of the population quickly joined in the resistance. The priests prostrated themselves in prayer, and weddings were even interrupted as everyone expressed their solidarity against what Ptolemy intended to do. Even the walls and the whole earth joined in the resistance.

SIMON'S PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (2:1-24)

The Prayer of Simon (2:1-20)

The Simon mentioned here was Simon II, who served as High Priest from 219 to 196 B.C.E. He was the son of Onias II. His prayer follows the classical Jewish pattern and is similar to that of Eleazar's in 3 Maccabees 6:1-15. Psalms 105 and 106 are examples of this kind of praying.

The prayer begins with a doxology of praise to God, followed by thanksgiving for earlier interventions. Simon reminded God of what he did at Sodom (2:5) to the Egyptian Pharaoh (2:6) and that the Jerusalem Temple was his idea (2:9). Having reminded God of his previous action in history, Simon asked him for a new miracle (2:20) so that they might continue to praise Him.

The Punishment of Ptolemy (2:21-24)

Even though God seemed to act quickly by striking Ptolemy with paralysis of limbs and loss of speech, the affliction was only temporary. After Ptolemy recovered, he proceeded to carry out hostile measures against the Jews. Another example of God punishing a ruler more effectively can be seen in 2 Maccabees 9:4-7, where he took Antiochus out of commission for good. The punishment of Heliodorus in 2 Maccabees 3:22-30 is interesting in that God punished him through one of his angels. We might ask the question: If God was really answering Simon's prayer, why did he not finish off Ptolemy and put an end to the persecution of his chosen people?

PTOLEMY'S CRUEL TREATMENT OF THE JEWS (2:25—5:51)

Hostile Measures against the Jews (2:25-33)

Ptolemy gave the Jews two choices: give in to Greek culture and religion, or suffer persecution, slavery, and death. Some of them gave in, but the majority of them resisted Ptolemy's hostile measures.

The Jews and Their Neighbors (3:1-10)

Although the Jews in Alexandria, and in the countryside, tried their best to be patriotic, they were under constant suspicion because they were different. While there were many differences, the one that distinguished them the most was their diet. Many friends and business associates knew that they were patriotic and promised to help them privately, but this put them at risk as well. Ptolemy was determined to persecute the Jews and all those who helped them.

Ptolemy's Order to destroy the Jews (3:11-30)

Ptolemy's real hostility towards the Jews was their refusal to allow him to enter their Temple in Jerusalem. He was used to entering any Temple in the world and their refusal angered him. He perceived their action as disloyalty to his authority as a ruler and this caused him to give an order to his generals and soldiers to kill Jews. Any Alexandrians who aided the Jews were to be punished and any who turned them in would receive their property plus a reward of 2,000 drachmas.

The Imprisonment in Alexandria (4:1-21)

As Egyptian officials tried to carry out Ptolemy's order, Jews from all over Egypt were taken to Alexandria for imprisonment, torture, and destruction. Old and young alike experienced the disruption of their lives. Jews taken in from outlying areas were shuttled through the Schedia, a kind of island of rock three miles from Alexandria. Finally they were taken to the Hippodrome, where they were imprisoned.

The entire race was to be registered within 40 days and then systematically taken to the Hippodrome, where they were to be destroyed. There were so many Jews to be registered that the job could not be done within 40 days. Paper and pen ran out as the scribes struggled to carry out the order. In the end, the writer declares that all this confusion was the result of providence. God had his hand in it.

The Preparation of the Elephants (5:1-51)

While Ptolemy partied with his friends and officials, Hermon led 500 elephants into the Hippodrome in order to destroy the Jews. Hermon prepares his elephants by drugging them with wine and frankincense. The Jews were to be bound up again. Apparently, because of the security within the Hippodrome, they were unbound.

The Jews prayed for deliverance, and God responded by putting Ptolemy into a deep sleep (5:11). When Hermon came to inform Ptolemy that he was ready, Ptolemy could not give the final order. When he woke up, he returned to his partying and wondered why the Jews had not been destroyed. He summoned Hermon and ordered him to prepare the elephants a second time. Hermon led the elephants in the great colonade, and the Jews prayed a second time. God intervened and Ptolemy went mad. Hermon was afraid to carry out the order to destroy the Jews. Out of fear for their lives, the guests left the banquet.

Ptolemy called his guests back again to resume his partying. Hermon was called in again, and this time the king swore an irrevocable oath to not only destroy the Jews, but to invade Judea and burn down Jerusalem and its Temple. The Jews were afraid that their end was in sight and so they tried to comfort one another. As they awaited the onslaught of the elephants, they turned to God in prayer.

GOD'S DELIVERANCE OF THE JEWS (6:1—7:23)

The Prayer of Eleazar (6:1-15)

Eleazar's Prayer follows the same pattern as that of Simon. There is a doxology of praise, a thanksgiving for earlier interventions, and a petition for a new miracle. The earlier interventions focus on the way in which God dealt with Pharaoh and Sennacherib, and how he delivered such people as the three companions in Babylon, Daniel, and Jonah. These examples are not meant to be comprehensive; they are simply reminders of the way in which God has worked in history.

The Deliverance of the Jews (6:16-29)

When the elephants were finally brought to the Hippodrome, they turned on their masters. Recognizing God's hand in all of this, Ptolemy quickly ordered the release of the Jews.

The Celebration of Deliverance (6:30-41)

Ptolemy ordered everything needed by the Jews to properly celebrate their deliverance in a seven-day festival. The Jews formed choral groups to celebrate their deliverance and praised God. The people then petitioned the king to allow them to return to their homes.

Ptolemy's Second Letter (7:1-9)

In this letter Ptolemy stated that the Jews were to be acquitted of any accusations made against them. He had come to recognize that he could not go against them without going against their God, who was and is the Ruler over every power.

The Punishment of the Lawless Ones (7:10-23)

The Jews then asked permission to deal with those who had transgressed the law. Ptolemy granted permission and 300 violators were killed. Those who had remained faithful were honored with all sorts of flowers. Their deliverance was celebrated in Ptolemais, a city located about 12 miles from modern Cairo, which according to the text means “rose-bearing.” This cannot be confirmed from any other sources, but it seems to relate to the use of flowers in praising the faithful. The book ends with a final benediction to God.

ANGELIC WARRIORS

There are two very difficult ideas presented in 3 Maccabees. The first one is the appearance of two angels to help the Jews fight against the armed forces of Ptolemy. We find this in 3 Maccabees 6:18-21. Right after Eleazar ended his prayer and the Jews cried out to heaven.

Then the most glorious, almighty, and true God revealed his holy face and opened the heavenly gates, from which two glorious angels of fearful aspect descended, visible to all but the Jews. They opposed the forces of the enemy and filled them with confusion and terror, binding them with immovable shackles. Even the king began to shudder bodily, and he forgot his sullen insolence. The animals turned back upon the armed forces following them and began trampling and destroying them.

What’s interesting about this story is that the Jews, who prayed for divine intervention, were not able to see the angels, but everyone else could see them. In Ptolemy’s letter on behalf of the Jews, he wrote, “Since we have come to realize that the God of heaven surely defends the Jews, always taking their part as a father does for his children...we justly have acquitted them of every charge of whatever kind.” (3 Maccabees 7:5b and 7b) A similar thing happened in 2 Chronicles 32:21-22 when Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed for divine help to defend Jerusalem from Sennacherib and his armed forces.

And the LORD sent an angel who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned in disgrace to his own land. When he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword. So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of King Sennacherib of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies; he gave them rest on every side.

It only took one angel to stop Sennacherib while it took two glorious angels to stop Ptolemy. A lot of people in our time believe in angels, but they do not think of angels as warriors. It is not only in the Old Testament and the Apocrypha where we such angels, but we also find them in the New Testament. As history moves towards its end, seven angels will blow their trumpets. We tend to view angels as females whereas I cannot think of one feminine angel in the entire Bible, including the Apocrypha.

I have no desire to defend the idea of angelic warriors, for I have great difficulty with the idea of angelic warriors. If there are such angels, I'd like to think that they only intervene on the side of righteousness and justice; but then, it dawns on me that Satan is thought of as a fallen angel.

What kind of a conclusion can I draw? Does God take our side in the battle against evil, or our enemies? I like how Abraham Lincoln put it: "We know that the Lord is always on the side of the righteous. But it is my constant concern and my prayer that I and the nation might be on the side of the Lord." If we're on the right side, we won't have to call for divine intervention in the form of angels.

25. DELIVERANCE OF THE FAITHFUL IN EGYPT (3 Maccabees 1:1 – 7:22)	
PTOLEMY’S THREAT TO ENTER THE SANCTUARY (1:1-29)	
The Battle of Raphia (1:1-7) (217 B.C.) Theodotus (1:2-3) (The Traitor) Dosithetus Arsinoe (1:4) (Sister)	
Ptolemy’s Desire to enter the Sanctuary (1:8-15) (1:10)	The Jewish Reaction to Ptolemy (1:16-29) (1:21 & 1:29)
SIMON’S PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (2:1-24)	
The Prayer of Simon (2:1-20) The Intent (2:1-2)	The Punishment of Ptolemy (2:21-24) The Temporary Paralysis and loss of speech (2:22)
PTOLEMY’S CRUEL TREATMENT OF THE JEWS (2:25 – 5:51)	
The Twofold Choice (2:25-33)	
Accept Greek Culture and Religion	Suffer Persecution, Slavery, & death (2:27-30)
The Jews and their Neighbors (3:1-10) Suspicious because of strange dietary customs (3:2-5) Alexandrians offer help (3:10)	Ptolemy’s Order concerning the Jews (3:11-30) The Problem (3:17-18) Jews are to be killed (3:25) Those who help the Jews will be killed (3:27) Those who turn in the Jews will be rewarded (3:28)
The Jews Imprisonment in Alexandria (4:1-21) 4:5-10 - Suffering 4:11 - The Hippodrome 4:21 - God helps	The Preparation of the Elephants (5:1-51) Hermon and 500 Elephants (5:1-2) God puts Ptolemy to sleep (5:11) God makes Ptolemy mad (5:30-34) The Jews pray for deliverance (5:48-51)
GOD’S DELIVERANCE OF THE JEWS (6:1 – 7:23)	
Doxology (6:2)	Thanksgiving (6:2-3ff) (Pharaoh, Sennacherib, 3 Companions, Daniel, and Jonah)
Petition (6:15)	
The Deliverance of the Jews (6:16-29) The Animals (6:16 & 21) The Release Order (6:28)	The Celebration of Deliverance (6:30-41) The Seven Day Festival (6:30) The Choral Group (6:32) Request to go Home (6:37)
Ptolemy’s Second Letter (7:1-9) The Problem (7:6b-7) Can’t go against God (7:8-9)	The Punishment of the Lawless Ones (7:10-23) Permission to punish Traitors (7:12 & 14) (300) Honor the Faithful (7:16) Property Returned (7:22)

26. VISIONS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM I

2 Esdras 1:1—9:25

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Selection of the New Israel 1:1—2:48	The Revelation of Israel's Suffering 3:1—5:20	The Revelation of the Coming New Age 5:21—6:34	The Righteous and the Wicked 6:35—9:25

INTRODUCTION TO 2 ESDRAS

The Name

The name *Esdras* is the Greek word for “Ezra.” 2 Esdras is actually 4 Esdras in the Latin Vulgate, where it has been placed in an appendix following the New Testament. It was placed there following the Council of Trent, because it was considered inferior to the other Old Testament Books, they did not want to lose it.

The Authors

An unknown Palestinian Jew wrote the main central section consisting of chapters 3 to 14 (4 Esdras). A century later an unknown Christian added chapters 1 to 2 (5 Esdras) as an introduction to it and a century after that, another unknown Christian added chapters 15 to 16 (5 Esdras) as an appendix.

The Dates

Chapters 3 to 14 of 2 Esdras were written at the close of the First Century, following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The introduction was written in the Second Century and the appendix in the Third Century.

The Style

The long central section, consisting of chapters 3 to 14, is apocalyptic. These chapters make up a series of seven revelations in which the seer is taught the great mysteries of the moral world by the angel Uriel.

While only 2 Esdras 15:57-59 survives in its semetic original on a scrap of Greek papyrus, the central apocalyptic chapters survived through several language translations of the original. In the East those language translations include Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian; in the West the entire book of 2 Esdras can be found in the Old Latin Version of the Bible. Since the Council of Trent, 2 Esdras has been placed in the Appendix to the New Testament and called 4 Esdras.

The Purpose

The authors of 2 Esdras deal with the theodicy question, that is, “How can we reconcile God’s wisdom, justice, power, and goodness with the presence of evil in the world?” As in the Book of Revelation, Babylon is the image of ancient evil used to denounce Rome as the source of contemporary evil. As Babylon destroyed the first Jerusalem, Rome destroyed the present Jerusalem. 2 Esdras laments this loss and tries to bring hope where it has been lost.

The Outline

- A. Introduction. (1-2)
- B. The Seven Revelations. (3:1 — 14:48)
 - 1. (3:1 — 5:20)
 - 2. (5:21 — 6:34)
 - 3. (6:35 — 9:25)
 - 4. (9:26 — 10:59)
 - 5. (11:1 — 12:51)
 - 6. (13:1-58)
 - 7. (14:1-48)
- C. The Appendix. (15-16)

THE SELECTION OF THE NEW ISRAEL (1:1 — 2:48)

The Prophets Call (1:1-11)

In the Old Testament, Ezra is thought of as a priest and scribe; here, he is a prophet. After accepting that call, he uses the traditional prophet’s formula: “Thus says the Lord” (1:12, 15, 22, 33, etc.). God has told him to “pull out his hair” and “hurl all evils” upon those who have rebelled against the Old Covenant. To “pull out one’s hair” is to give up. Ezra’s task as a prophet then is to announce the rejection of the Old Israel, because of its unfaithfulness and to proclaim God’s choice of the New Israel, which this writer sees as the Christian Church.

The Rejection of the Old Israel (1:12-32)

Following a description of all of God's mercies extended to Israel the decision is given in 1:24-25 finally to reject the Old Israel in favor of a New Israel. The faithfulness of God to the Covenant that has been promised is now negated. This is inconsistent with both the Old and New Testaments, where God does not reject Israel. Even Paul sees Israel's special place in Romans 9-11.

The Selection of the New Israel (1:33-40)

Not only will a New Israel be chosen, but that New Israel will also look upon the Patriarchs and Prophets as their ancestors. The New Israel, the people from the East, will be Gentiles. Although the author may be a Jewish Christian, he is thinking of Gentile Christians as the newly chosen Israel. Why only the 12 Minor Prophets are named is not clear.

The Lord's Anger (2:1-9)

The reason for God's rejection of the Old Israel is its violation of the Covenant. The mother who bore Israel, that is Jerusalem, has now become a widow; Assyria, that is Rome, has tolerated the unrighteousness. There is nothing left to do but destroy the Old Israel as God finally had to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Lord's Exhortation to the New Israel (2:10-32)

A New Covenant is being established with a New Israel and the New Jerusalem will be its mother. This New Israel must learn the lessons from the past and aim at righteousness. Those whose graves are marked, as belonging to this New Israel, will be given first place in the resurrection (2:20-23).

Ezra's Vision of a Great Multitude (2:33-48)

Ezra had two visions, one from Mount Horeb, where he saw the Old Israel's disobedience, and one from Mount Zion, where he saw the Great Multitude of Martyrs (witnesses). Much of this imagery is very similar to what can be found in Revelation 4, 7, and 14:1-5. The Son of God placed crowns on the heads of the marked, that is, on those who confessed the name of God (2:45). Confession with the lips implies obedience of the will, which was not true for the Old Israel. Jerusalem has given birth to a New People.

THE SEVEN REVELATIONS (3:1—14:48)

The First Revelation (3:1—5:20)

[Israel's Suffering]

The Question (3:1-36)

Since we are dealing with apocalyptic literature, we must be prepared to interpret what is being said. Although the writer is discussing the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 or 586 B.C.E., he is really talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. When he mentions the thirtieth year after the destruction he is dating his writing. The insertion of “am also called Ezra” is considered an addition, which does not make any sense. Ezra lived more than 30 years after the destruction of Israel and the use of his name cannot be understood in this context. Salathiel, which would be the Greek form of Shealtiel, does make some sense. He was the son of King Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), who was taken captive in 597 B.C.E. and would have had a claim to the throne. Salathiel was also the father or uncle of Zerubbabel, who led a group back to the restored Jerusalem.

The question being raised has to do with how God has called his people. Stories illustrating his method include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and (Moses). What is truly difficult to understand is why God uses people less righteous than those he has called to destroy them. This has happened with the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. and now again with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. “Are the deeds of Babylon,” he asks in 3:31-32, “better than those of Zion? Or has another nation known you besides Israel?” Try as he might, the author cannot find another nation that has obeyed the Lord’s commandments better than has Israel, imperfect as that might have been (3:35-36).

The Reply (4:1-52)

Two archangels reply to the question above. *Uriel*, which means “God is my light” or “fire of God” asks the writer a few questions, very similar to the questions God asks of Job. If he cannot understand things, with which he is familiar, how can he expect to comprehend things with which he is not familiar? How can he expect to understand the ways of God? This satisfied him no more than it would satisfy us. If we have been given a mind with which to think, why can we not understand the ways of God? The reason of course is that we have been corrupted by sin (4:10).

The reply gives rise to another question and that is: When will the new age come? This time Jeremiel (Remiel) replies, “When the number of those like yourselves is completed....” (4:36) This sounds very similar to what we find in Revelation 6:11. No specific number is required. It is like a woman with child, when her nine months are up, the womb will no longer be able to contain the child; it must be born (4:40). More parables are told to illustrate the inevitability of the birth of a new age. The author wants

to know if he will live until those days arrive, but Jeremiel cannot answer, for he was not sent to tell him (4:51-52).

The Signs (5:1-20)

History is about to enter its third period (5:4). According to 2 Esdras 14:11-12, history contains 12 periods and we are in the middle of the 10th period. That is to say, we are entering the fourth quarter. Signs of the end are already beginning to appear, so we should take note the end is not far off. More signs can be seen, but fasting will be required (5:13). Nothing is known of Phaltiel, who seems to be present as the writer wakes up from the first Revelation.

The Second Revelation (5:21—6:34)

[The Coming of the New Age]

The second Revelation begins with common Old Testament images of Israel, which include such word pictures as one vine, one lily, Zion, one dove, one sheep, and one root. God is calling all of his people into one Covenant. This raises a question.

The Question (5:41)

The heart of the question is: “What will happen to those who do not live until the new age arrives? Buried within this question is another: “Will there be some kind of Messianic Age on earth?”

The Answer (5:42)

The answer to the first question is: It shall arrive at the same time for everyone. This is followed up with another question: Then why could not all be born at the same time? (5:43) The answer is simple. As a woman bears children, one after another, so must generations follow one another (5:44-47). Creation does not have enough room to contain everyone at the same time, but the end of the age will come for everyone at the same time (6:20). All of this seems to indicate that the Present Age will be followed by an Ideal Age, without an intervening Messianic Age.

The Third Revelation (6:35—9:25)

[The Righteous and the Wicked]

The third Revelation is long and complex, but its message is simple. God had a purpose in creation, which was rejected. In his great mercy and love, he created us with freedom to obey or disobey; we must all live with our choice. For those who have chosen him, he has created a second world for them to enjoy. Those who have made such a choice should not concern themselves about those who have made the opposite choice.

Ezra asks several questions. The first can be summarized as follows: If God made the world for Israel, why then do the pagans seem to dominate it? (6:55-57) The idea that God made the world for the sake of Israel (6:55 and 7:11) is not found in the canonical Old Testament, nor is it an acceptable concept in the New Testament. If anything, it is totally rejected in passages like Galatians 3:28.

The Old and New Testaments do however agree with the concept that the Kingdom of God is made for those who choose it, that the way into it is narrow and that many will miss it. 2 Esdras 7:3-8 offers two parables about the narrow path, one leading to the sea and the other to a city. What those who have chosen the narrow path are to do is to concentrate on the glories of the coming age. They are not to worry about the miseries of the present age, which have been brought on by Adam's sin.

Prior to its full establishment, there will be a Messianic Age lasting for 400 years on earth. This age is known in Rabbinic Sources, but nothing can be found there which predicts the death of the Messiah at the end of the Messianic Age. In 2 Esdras 7:29 the Messiah's death is predicted. The Latin Version inserts the word "Jesus" in place of "Messiah" in 2 Esdras 7:28. In the New Testament the Messianic Age on earth is described as the Millennium, which is 1000 years; but nothing is known of the Messiah dying at the end of this period. This is not a prediction of the death of Jesus in the New Testament and should not be confused with that.

There is some confusion in regard to the final Judgment. Does it take place at one's own death or is it delayed until the end of the Messianic Age? 2 Esdras 7:32 seems to favor the latter and so does much of the New Testament. Ezra complains about this, because it seems to go against the purpose of creation. If the majority of people will be punished in the end, then God would have been wiser not to create us, or having created us, prevented us from sinning (7:46). This is Ezra's second major question. The angel answers him by comparing God to a farmer who rejoices over those seeds that grow and does not concern himself with those that do not (8:38-41). We should do the same. God is more just and loving than we are; we should trust his great wisdom (8:47). Focus on the world he has prepared for those who choose to obey him and do not worry about those who have rejected him (8:52-56). Everyone was created with "freedom" (free will), which is the very essence of our humanity (8:56); it was not God who wanted us to reject life (8:59b-60). It is unfortunate that more will perish than will be saved, but even God cannot prevent that, nor should we concern ourselves with it. We simply have to accept, along with God, the choices that are made; but that should not keep us from inviting people to accept Him while there is yet time to make a decision.

Ezra rejoices that with great difficulty God's grace has saved the remnant, that is, the few; if he wants to know more, then he is to enter a field and eat the flowers and pray to the Most High continually. Then more will be revealed. This is in contrast to what he did prior to the first two Revelations, which was to Fast for seven days. The reason for eating the flowers is unclear, but it must have something to do with preparing oneself for another encounter.

26. VISIONS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM (2 Esdras 1:1—9:25)

THE SELECTION OF THE NEW ISRAEL (1:1—2:48)

The Prophet's Call (1:1-11) (1:4-6, 8)	Rejection of the Old Israel (1:12-32) (1:24-25, 31)	Selection of the New Israel (1:33-40) (1:35, 38-40)	The Lord's Anger (2:1-9) (2:8-9)	The Lord's Exhortation (2:10-32) (2:20-23)	Ezra's Vision (2:33-48) (2:42 & 45-47)
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THE SEVEN REVELATIONS (3:1—14:48)

1. Israel's Suffering (3:1—5:20)

The Question: (3:1-36) “Why use the unrighteous to punish Israel?” (3:29,31b-32,33,35-36)	The Answer: (4:1-52) <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Uriel: (4:1-2,5) 1. Weigh Fire 2. Measure wind 3. Call back past (4:10-11) </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Jeremiel: (4:35-37,40) 1. Flaming Furnace 2. Cloud of Smoke (4:48-52) </td> </tr> </table>	Uriel: (4:1-2,5) 1. Weigh Fire 2. Measure wind 3. Call back past (4:10-11)	Jeremiel: (4:35-37,40) 1. Flaming Furnace 2. Cloud of Smoke (4:48-52)	The Signs: (5:1-20) Third Period (5:4-5) Sun, Moon, Stars Uriel commands Fasting (5:20)
Uriel: (4:1-2,5) 1. Weigh Fire 2. Measure wind 3. Call back past (4:10-11)	Jeremiel: (4:35-37,40) 1. Flaming Furnace 2. Cloud of Smoke (4:48-52)			

2. The Coming of the New Age (5:21—6:34)

Word Pictures of the Covenant (5:23-28) <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Vine</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Dove</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Region</td> <td>Sheep</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lily</td> <td>People</td> </tr> <tr> <td>River</td> <td>Law</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Zion</td> <td>Root</td> </tr> </table>	Vine	Dove	Region	Sheep	Lily	People	River	Law	Zion	Root	The Question: (5:41) What about those before and after us? The Answer: (5:42) It arrives at one time for all (5:42) Why are we not all born at once? (5:43) There isn't room (5:44,46-47)	We will all see it together (6:20) Present Age—Ideal Age Is there no Messianic Age? Pray for more Insight (6:30-31)
Vine	Dove											
Region	Sheep											
Lily	People											
River	Law											
Zion	Root											

3. The Righteous and the Wicked (6:35—9:25)

Question 1: If the world was created for Israel, then why do other nations dominate it? (6:55, 59 and 7:11)	Message: God made us with a free will, and created a second world for the righteous	Narrow Path (7:3-8) Sea (7:3-5) City (7:6-8) Few Saved (8:3 & 9:14-16)	Messianic Reign and Judgment (7:28-32) 400 Years Death of Messiah (7:28-29)	Question 2: If most people will be punished, why did you create us? (7:49-51) Precious Stones (7:52) Seeds (8:38-41)	Judgment Decisive Relatives (7:102-105) Condemned (7:43-45[113-115]) Everyone has a Free Will (7:59(129)8:52-56) Rejoice over the Saved (7:61(131))
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Let 7 Days Pass and then eat the flowers in the field (9:23-25)

27. VISIONS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM II

2 Esdras 9:26—16:78

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Woman 9:26—10:59	The Eagle 11:1—12:51	The Man 13:1-58	The Law 14:1-48	The Appendix 15:1—16:78

The Fourth Revelation (9:26—10:59)

[The Mourning and Transfigured Woman]

Sitting in a field at Ardat, an unknown place, Ezra eats the flowers and has his fourth vision. The first thing that he becomes aware of is the failure of the Law to save Israel (9:32). This does not mean that the Law must be cast aside. The Law is divine and needs fulfillment. Jesus did not come to do away with the Law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17).

The next thing Ezra sees is a woman in mourning over the death of her son (9:38). When asked why she was mourning, she said that after having been barren for 30 years, she bore a son; then, on his wedding night, he died. The heart of this story can be found in 2 Esdras 9:43—10:4. All of this imagery was confusing to Ezra, just as it is confusing to us. It is not immediately explained to him. The vision continues.

As the conversation continues, we hear about the total destruction of Jerusalem (10:21-23); then in the midst of their conversation, Ezra beholds the transfiguration of the woman's face (10:25-27). Not understanding what was going on, Ezra cried out for guidance from the angel Uriel, who seems to have disappeared (10:28). The angel returns to interpret the meaning of the vision (10:44-48), which is that the woman represents Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, and her son represents the earthly Jerusalem, which has been destroyed. The 30 years of barrenness symbolizes the 3,000 years prior to Jerusalem's becoming a truly Holy City in which offerings were made. Solomon's construction of the building is the conception of the Holy City. The transfiguration of the woman's face is an indication that while the earthly Jerusalem has been lost, the heavenly Jerusalem is in the process of being established by God.

The Fifth Revelation (11:1—12:51)

[The Eagle]

The main image in this fifth revelation is that of an Eagle. The Eagle has 12 wings and three heads and rises from the sea (the Mediterranean) to rule the earth. There were also eight opposing wings. Suddenly a creature, like a lion, came out of the forest, roaring. He announced the doom of the Eagle, which then is fulfilled as the Eagle burns to death.

The above imagery is very similar to imagery found in Daniel 7-12 and in the Book of Revelation. It might have been written about the same time as Revelation. What does all this imagery mean? Like most apocalyptic literature, it is difficult to interpret everything, but some things can be seen clearly. The Eagle, for example, symbolizes the Roman Empire. Although the Eagle is the fourth beast in Daniel's vision, Daniel understood it to symbolize the Greek or Macedonian (Northern Greek) Empire, while this Seer interprets the Eagle to be the Roman Empire, as does John in the Book of Revelation. The first three beasts would have been the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek Empires.

Both the 12 wings and the three heads symbolize the successive Roman Emperors. The eight opposing wings symbolize those who rebelled against Rome, but were kept under control. They might be rebellious army officers, who got too ambitious for their own good. The 12 wings are the twelve Roman Emperors, beginning with Julius Caesar and Augustus, and the three heads would refer to the Flavian Emperors: Vespasian (69-79 C.E.), Titus (79-81 C.E.), and Domitian (81-96 C.E.). Vespasian was the first commander against the Jewish nation, and Titus was the one who led the capture and destruction of Jerusalem. Domitian was the oppressor of both Jews and Christians when the Book of Revelation, and this section of 2 Esdras, was written.

Who was the Messiah? He is described as being pre-existent and from the posterity of David. Can we relate this Messiah to Jesus Christ? Certainly Jewish theologians would not do so, but one can see some Christian theology surfacing here. Historically speaking, Jesus did not put an end to the Roman Empire; but then, history is not yet over.

The vision ends with concern over the Seer spending all of his time in the field, so he assures the people that he will return to the city. What city? No name is given. He has prayed for Zion, that is Jerusalem, but he is not talking about returning to Jerusalem, which had been destroyed. He then gets ready for the next vision.

The Sixth Vision (13:1-58)

[The Man from the Sea]

In this vision, a man arises from out of the sea, whose voice caused everyone to tremble. It was as if everyone was melted as wax melts under fire. An innumerable multitude of men gathered from all over the earth (the four winds) to make war against him. He carved out for himself a great mountain (Zion) and from out of his mouth he sent forth a stream

of fire, from his lips a flaming breath, and from his tongue sparks of fire. He destroyed the whole multitude, came down from the mountain and called forth a peaceable multitude.

This story contains traditional apocalyptic material. The man arising from the sea is the Messiah, who takes on the wicked in a final battle. He destroys them with his flaming breath (13:38 and 2 Thessalonians 2:8). The flame from his mouth is certainly the Law, which is more powerful than the world's greatest weapon.

After destroying the wicked, the Messiah then calls together the righteous. The righteous here are described in terms of the ten lost tribes of Israel, who had been led into captivity in the days of Hoshea (2 Kings 17:1-6). While the subject of the ten lost tribes of Israel may fascinate some people, history does not support the idea that they maintained their identity as the people of God and obeyed the Law in their captivity. This happened in the case of Judah, but it did not happen to the Northern Kingdom, which these ten tribes represent. If anything, these ten tribes were less faithful. They certainly should not be glorified as they are here.

Since the Jews are described as living in Palestine, this must have been written prior to 70 C.E., when most of Palestine was destroyed, by the Romans or else the Seer is projecting a time in the future after Palestine had been restored. Although he uses historical material from 2 Kings, everything else is legendary or apocalyptic. This should not be construed as a criticism.

The Seventh Vision (14:1-48)

[The Restoration of the Law]

Following another three days in the field, the Seer, named as Ezra, has his final vision. In this vision Ezra is more in character than he has been in the first six visions. His profession is that of a Scribe and God calls him, in a similar manner to the way in which he called Moses, to restore the same Law. Having heard God speak out of the bush, Ezra prepared himself for 40 days by gathering together writing materials and five scribes, who are named. They are Sarea, Dabria, Selemia, Ethanus, and Asiel. They were chosen because they could write rapidly.

Prior to beginning the work of rewriting the Law, Ezra was given a drink of something that looked like water, but was the color of fire. It gave wisdom and understanding for the task ahead. For the next 40 days Ezra's scribes worked by day and ate their bread by night. Ezra however spoke both day and night. He was never silent. During those 40 days, the 24 books were rewritten for the benefit of the worthy and the unworthy. These are the books of the Hebrew Scriptures approved at the Council of Jamnia in 85-90 C.E. They do include the 39 books of Our Old Testament, but they are counted differently. There are as follows:

TORAH: 5 Books	PROPHETS: 8 Books	WRITINGS: 11 Books
Genesis	Joshua	Psalms
Exodus	1 & 2 Samuel	Proverbs
Leviticus	1 & 2 Kings	Job
Numbers	Isaiah	Songs of Solomon
Deuteronomy	Jeremiah	Ruth
	Ezekiel	Lamentations
	12 Minor Prophets	Ecclesiastes
		Esther
		Daniel
		Ezra-Nehemiah
		1 & 2 Chronicles

In addition to the 24 canonical books, Ezra mentions the 70 additional books reserved only for the wise. In them is the Spring of understanding and the fountain of wisdom. These 70 books are esoteric, apocalyptic books, which have never been included among the 24 canonical books. The Apocrypha itself derives its name from this description of books in 2 Esdras 14:46-47 and from 12:37, where we find the word “hidden place.” The word *Apocrypha* means “hidden away.”

THE APPENDIX (15:1—16:78)

The Appendix comes from Christian sources in the third century. While one cannot find any distinctive Christian ideas in these two chapters, the focus is on the redemption of the persecuted Christians of that era. That redemption begins with apocalyptic announcements of the destruction of the enemies of Christianity. The purpose of this imagery is to give the persecuted Christians hope and encouragement in terrible times.

It is too bad that God’s people can only be delivered by destroying their enemies, but that is what must happen. It happened first with Egypt and it will happen again (15:10-11). There may be an allusion here to the famine in the time of Gallienus (260-268 C.E.) which destroyed two-thirds of the population of Alexandria in Egypt. Apocalyptic writers, such as this Seer, did believe that famine was one of the weapons God used against the wicked oppressors of his people. It is not as if God wants to see people starve. Plenty of warnings have gone out, but they have not been taken seriously. Nation fights against nation and the result is misery. Arrogance brings confusion. These are simply signs of the end times, when God’s patience finally wears thin.

Rome is the contemporary oppressor. As is the case in most Apocalyptic Literature, the enemy is given another name, which is used symbolically to contrast the present situation with the past. As Babylon destroyed the first Jerusalem, Rome destroyed the second

Jerusalem; hence, Rome is referred to as Babylon. The nations of the world will rise up against this proud aggressor. This too is the work of God. The Dragons of Arabia (15:29) are the armies of the Palmyrene Empire of Odenthus and Zenobia, which was a buffer between Rome and Persia. The Wild Boars of the Forest, that is the Carmonians, are the Sassnid Persians from Armania (modern Kirman), which was one of the ancient Persian Provinces. These descriptions may be of an actual incident, which took place during the time of King Sapor I (240-273 C.E.) of Persia, when the Persians attacked the Roman Province of Syria. What is interesting here is that it was Persia who finally destroyed Babylon. The imagery here is that Persia is attacking the New Babylon.

What is clear is that “They shall go on steadily to Babylon and blot it out.” (15:43) Revelation 18:10 makes a similar statement. When destruction finally comes to Babylon, that is Rome, it will be quick. Rome has not acted alone. It seems as if Asia, that is the Arabs of Palmyra, have acted with her, so she will suffer the same fate. The reason for this devastation is that these oppressors have killed God’s chosen people (the Christian martyrs) and God will now kill them (15:52-53 & 56).

Once God has decided to punish the Church’s enemies, described in traditional terms as Babylon, Asia, Egypt, and Syria (16:1), his wrath cannot be stopped: “For his right hand that bends the bow is strong, and his arrows that he shoots are sharp and when they are shot to the ends of the world will not miss once.” (16:13) The end will come through famine and sword (16:22) and is as inevitable as a pregnant woman giving birth (16:38-39). The hour will finally come, even if it seems slow in coming to those who are suffering.

Let no one say that they have not sinned (16:53), for God knows everything; in the end, he will make a public spectacle of all who deny their sins (16:64-65).

These two chapters have been written for the purpose of encouraging those Christians who have been suffering under the Decian Persecution (249-251 C.E.). This persecution is described in 2 Esdras 16:70-73). Those who endure it will be refined like gold that has been tested by fire. The Seer wants his readers to know that even though the days of the Tribulation are at hand, so is their deliverance (16:74). They are to be encouraged and filled with hope.

THE NEW ISRAEL AND THE NARROW WAY

Apocalyptic Literature seems vindictive, with its imagery of condemnation and punishment. How can anyone like this kind of writing? The positive aspect of this kind of literature is the hope it holds out for those who are experiencing hell on earth. Their hope does not lie primarily in seeing God punish their enemies; their hope lies in the vision that Apocalyptic Literature gives them of the Kingdom of God. This vision informs them that they are to become the New Israel. The images of judgment are necessary because the depth of God’s love requires the power of his judgment, but this is not what gives hope to persecuted and oppressed people.

The most difficult thing to accept in Apocalyptic Literature is the punishment leveled at God's own people. Because you have forsaken me," says 2 Esdras 1:25, "I also will forsake you. When you beg mercy of me, I will show you no mercy." It hardly seems fair that a New Israel might replace the Old Israel and this is undoubtedly one of the reasons why 2 Esdras is objectionable as Sacred Scripture. Even the Apostle Paul struggles to find a place for the Old Israel in Romans 9-11; any suggestion that God no longer has a place for the Jews would be considered anti-Semitic. The point of the seven revelations, written by a Palestinian Jew, is that God is trying his best to provide a way into his Kingdom for all. The difficulty is that the way in is so narrow and so many people, Jews, Christians, and adherents of other religions too, make the mistake of thinking that the way in is broad.

The Kingdom is like "...a sea set in a wide expanse so that it is deep and vast, but it has an entrance set in a narrow place...." (2 Esdras 7:3) It is also like "...a city built and set on a plain, and it is full of all good things; but the entrance to it is narrow...." (2 Esdras 7:6-7) Jesus said essentially the same thing in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it." This is not God's will, why he called forth the Old Israel to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6), and now calls forth the New Israel to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). Anyone, Jew or Christian, responding to God's invitation must take the narrow way if they are to enter into the Kingdom. This is very encouraging to people being persecuted for their faith. They are the last to delight over the downfall of their enemies, for like Jesus, they sincerely pray for those who persecute them.

The emphases of these revelations are on those who take the narrow path that leads to life, not on those who take the broad path that leads to destruction. This is the point of the angel's message in 2 Esdras 8:38-41:

For indeed I will not concern myself about the fashioning of those who have sinned, or about their death, their judgment, or their destruction; but I will rejoice over the creation of the righteous, over their pilgrimage also, and their salvation, and their receiving their reward. As I have spoken, therefore, so it shall be. For just as the farmer sows many seeds upon the ground and plants a multitude of seedlings, and yet not all that have been sown will come up in due season, and not all that were planted will take root; so also those who have been sown in the world will not all be saved.

The imagery of seeds being sown reminds us of Jesus' Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:1-9, where he ends by saying, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" In exercising judgment, God is not unfair. This was certainly the message of the Old Testament. "Choose life for yourself, so that you may live!" (2 Esdras 7:129[59]) His judgment may not be a popular theme to us today, because we know all too well how unfair or inaccurate our own exercising of judgment is; but that God would be unfair in his judgment is unthinkable.

One question remains for us and that is how any of us can enjoy living in the Kingdom without the presence of a loved one who has not been willing to respond positively to God's invitation to take the narrow path or gate into his Kingdom? If anything is clear in Apocalyptic Literature, it is the decisiveness of judgment and the uselessness of praying for the condemned (7:104-105); in fact, the saved are not to pray for the lost, because it will be too late. This requires the utmost confidence in God's fairness and accuracy in passing judgment. There are two ways of looking at having to live in the Kingdom without a loved one. The first is to at least cherish their memory and the second is that our memory of them will be burned away.

Although Apocalyptic Literature seems to suggest salvation by works of the Law, there is a sense in which it too is salvation by God's grace through a response of faith. The narrow way is not something we can construct. It is something God has put in place for our salvation. Jesus refuses to reject the Law, but wants to see it fulfilled; so he interprets it as God intended it to be—to liberate us. It helps us to see how dependent we are upon God's grace and calls for a response to follow the path that God has set down. To exercise faith is to acknowledge that God knows best the way into his own Kingdom.

27. VISIONS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM (2 Esdras 9:26—16:78)

4. The Mourning and Transfigured Woman 9:26—10:59

Failure of the Law (9:32) We will Perish but the Law will Survive (9:37)	Vision of the Woman who's Son dies on his Wedding Day (9:38, 9:43—10:4)	End of Jerusalem (10:21-23) and Transfiguring of the Woman;s Face (10:25)	Interpretation Woman=Zion (10:44) 30 Years=3,000 Years (10:45-46) Death of Son=Jerusalem (10:48)
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5. The Eagle (11:1—12:51)

4. Roman Empire (11:1, 36-39 and 12:10-11) 1. Babylonia 2. Persia 3. Greece	12 Wings (12:13-15) Successive Emperors Begins with Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar	3 Heads (12:22-24) Vespasian (69-79 C.E.) Against Jews Titus (79-81 C.E.) Destroyed Jerusalem Domitian (81-96 C.E.) Persecuted Jews and Christians	8 Opposing Wings (11:3 & 11; 12:19-20) The Lion [Messiah] (12:31-32)
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The Flowers in the Field (12:51): Ezra's Vegetarian Diet is linked with his Visions.

6. The Man from the Sea (13:1-58)

The Messiah (13:1-4)	The Flame (Law) (13:10 & 38) (2 Thessalonians 2:8)	Two Multitudes Hostile (13:5) Peaceable (13:12-13a)	The 10 Lost Tribes (13:40)
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Three More Days in the Field of Flowers (13:58)

7. The Restoration of the Law (14:1-48)

Three Days in the Field of Flowers (14:1)

The Final Quarter (14:11)	Rewrite History (14:20b-22)	Assisting Scribes (14:24-25) Sarea Dabria Selemia Ethanus Asiel	Took 40 Days (14:42b-44)
			24 Canonical Books 14:45b) 70 Additional Books (14:46-48)

APPENDIX (15:1—16:78)

Encouragement (15:10-11; 16:70-74)	Attack on Babylon (15:29-30, 43)	Famine and Sword (15:46-49; 16:20-22)	Certainty of Victory (15:52-53) (16:35-39)
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28. THE EXAMPLE OF ELEAZAR’S REASONING POWERS

4 Maccabees 1:1—7:23

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Main Principle Stated 1:1-35	The Main Principle Illustrated 2:1—3:18	The Attempt on the Temple Treasury 3:19—4:14	Antiochus’ Persecution of the Jews 4:15—5:38	The Martyrdom of Eleazar 6:1—7:23

INTRODUCTION TO 4 MACCABEES

The Name

Since the martyrdoms in this book are from the Maccabean period, the name seems to apply, even though the book was written later.

The Author

At one time authorship was attributed to Josephus, but it cannot be proven. Connected with Josephus’ authorship is the title once given to the work: *On the Supremacy of Reason*. Whoever the author is, he approaches his subject from the perspective of Greek philosophy.

Three cities can be suggested as possible locations for the writing of 4 Maccabees. They are Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. Antioch has the best claim. The stories of the martyrs in 4 Maccabees remind us of the tradition to take rebellious people to the capital city, Antioch, where they could be dealt with properly (5:1). Another reason for suggesting Antioch is because of the practice there of referring to the Jews as Hebrews. This is done consistently throughout the book.

The Date

The book had to be written between 63 B.C.E., the end of the Hasmonean era and 70 C.E., when the Romans destroyed the Temple. Some scholars try to be more specific and suggest that it was written between 20 to 54 C.E., when Cilicia was joined to Syria and Phoenicia into a single province (4:2), and others see similar attitudes of Antiochus in Caligula (37-41 C.E.), who also desired to profane the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Place in the Canon

Although 4 Maccabees has never been canonized, it was included in some important manuscripts of Greek Bibles and it was translated into Syriac as well. It is important to the Eastern Churches and has deeply influenced their preaching and piety.

The Purpose

4 Maccabees is a philosophical treatise. Originally, it was a lecture given at a festival commemorating the Maccabean martyrs, or on the Feast of Rededication (1:10; 3:19; 14:9; and John 10:22). The point of the lecture is that reason can control our emotions. This is illustrated by the martyrdoms of Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother. 4 Maccabees is an expansion of the same martyrdoms we read about in 2 Maccabees 6:12—7:42. In 4 Maccabees we get some philosophical interpretation.

We not only discover philosophical interpretation of how reason can control human emotions, but we also find a classic example of Greek interpretation of Judaism. In 2 Maccabees the martyrs look to the resurrection of the body, but in 4 Maccabees they look to the immortality of the soul (14:5-6; 16:13; 17:12; 18:23; and Luke 16:22). 2 Maccabees echoes the Persian belief in resurrection and 4 Maccabees echoes the Greek belief in immortality.

The Outline

- A. A Philosophical Introduction (1:1—3:18)
- B. The Attempt on the Temple Treasury (3:19—4:14)
- C. Antiochus' Persecution of the Jews (4:15-26)
- D. The Martyrdom of Eleazar (5:1—7:23)
- E. The Defiance of the Tyrant (8:1—9:9)
- F. The Martyrdom of the Seven Brothers (9:10—12:19)
- G. A Philosophical Interpretation (13:1—14:10)
- H. The Mother's Death (14:11—17:1)
- I. In Praise of a Devout Mother (17:2—18:5)
- J. The Mother's Last Words (18:6-19)

A PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION (1:1—3:18)

The Main Principle Stated (1:1-2)

The main issue is this: Can devout reason have sovereignty over human emotions? The author's answer is that it can. He begins by stating the cardinal virtues of the Platonic and Stoic traditions: Rational judgment (Reason), Self-control (over gluttony and lust), justice, and courage (over anger, fear, and pain).

The key verses however can be found in 4 Maccabees 1:7-8, where he affirms that reason can dominate human emotions. This thesis will be illustrated with the martyrdoms of Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother.

The Main Principle Defined and Explained (1:13-35)

The author begins by making the following definitions:

Reason: “...reason is the mind that with sound logic prefers the life of wisdom.” (1:15)

Wisdom: “Wisdom...is the knowledge of divine and human matters and the causes of these.” (1:16)

Education: Education is the process by which we learn about divine matters and human affairs to our advantage. (1:17)

After articulating the four cardinal virtues again, only in different order, the author defines two basic kinds of emotions—pleasure and pain (1:20). Both are connected with the body and soul. Desire precedes pleasure and delight follows it. Fear precedes pain and sorrow follows it. Pleasure and pain are two plants growing in both the body and the soul and there are many offshoots from these two plants. Reason can deal with all of them.

Reason operates through self-control. We have both physical and mental desires, but reason can rule them both. One example of this is our appetite for forbidden foods. These impulses of the body can be bridled by reason (1:33-35).

The Main Principle Illustrated (2:1—3:18)

Joseph (2:1-9a)

When Joseph was seduced, he overcame his sexual desire by mental effort. He knew what the law was concerning coveting his neighbor’s wife and he obeyed it. Other emotions, such as gluttony, drunkenness, and greed can also be controlled by mental effort.

Relationships (2:9b-14)

In one’s relationship with parents, spouse, children, and friends, there is a primary obligation to the law. It prevails over all affections one might have for relatives and friends. No one can live above the law. Relatives and friends who violate the law must be rebuked and punished in spite of one’s feelings for them.

The Violent Emotions (2:15-23)

Even the violent emotions, such as the lust for power, vainglory, boasting, arrogance, and malice can be controlled by the mind. Two examples can be given from Israel's history.

Moses. When Korah, the Levite, led a rebellion against Moses, Dathan and Abiram, both Reubenites, joined him. In dealing with them Moses did so with reason, not anger. These two young men thought they were justified in opposing Moses because they believed that leadership belonged to the tribe of Reuben, who was the first son of Jacob.

Jacob. When Jacob censured the households of Simeon and Levi for their irrational slaughter of the Shechemites, he did so under the guidance of reason. They were wrong and had to be censured. God enthroned the mind to control the emotions (2:22).

David's Thirst (3:6-18)

When David was fighting the Philistines, he became extremely thirsty for the water that could only be found in the enemy camp. Two of his soldiers crossed enemy lines to get the water that would quench his thirst. Though burning with thirst for the water that they delivered to him, he considered the water equivalent to blood. He could not drink that which had cost so much in effort and courage and so he poured it on the ground as an offering to God. He used his mind to overcome his irrational desire for the water.

THE ATTEMPT ON THE TEMPLE TREASURY (3:19—4:14)

What follows is a narrative demonstration of temperate reason. (3:19)

The story begins in a time of peace when Seleucus appropriated money to the Jews for their temple service and recognized their commonwealth as a people. Although the author clearly indicates that this king is Seleucus I Nicator (305/304-281/280 B.C.E.), he was clearly confused, for it was Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 B.C.E.)

It was a time of revolution and a man named Simon tried to incite a revolution against the Jews. He did this by informing Apollonius, governor of Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia that there was a great deal of money deposited in the Jerusalem Temple. One reason why some people think that this book was written between 20-54 C.E. is because this was the time when Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia united into one province. When Apollonius received Simon's information about the deposits, he went immediately to Seleucus, who sent him, along with Simon, into Jerusalem with a military force to seize the funds. In 2 Maccabees 3:7-8, the king sent Heliodorus to seize the funds.

Upon hearing that they were coming, Onias, the High Priest, the women, and children prayed to God for intervention. That intervention came in the form of angels who battled with the forces of Apollonius (or Heliodorus). When the angels defeated Apollonius, he called upon the Hebrews to pray for him. Against his better judgment, Onias prayed for Apollonius, who then returned to inform the King concerning their defeat.

ANTIOCHUS' PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS (4:15-26)

When Antiochus IV Epiphanes became King of Syria, he removed Onias and made his brother Jason the High Priest in Jerusalem. Jason agreed with Antiochus' hellenization of Palestine. He also offered to pay him 3,600 talents annually and to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem, which would encourage the hellenization of young Jews.

The rumor of Antiochus' death in Egypt became an occasion of celebration for the Jews. When Antiochus heard of it, he increased the pressure of hellenization. The Hebrews could no longer to observe their law. If any of them circumcised their sons or refused to eat certain foods, they would be executed.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ELEAZAR (5:1—7:23)

The Threats of Antiochus (5:1-38)

The author describes Antiochus as a tyrant. This carries a bad connotation in Greek and refers to a ruler who rules by brute force. This tyrant ordered his soldiers and guards to seize all the Jews and force them to eat pork and food sacrificed to idols. Both kinds of food were forbidden to the Jews by divine law. If they refused they were to be broken on the wheel, which was some kind of device used in torture (5:3 and 32). Aging Eleazar refused. He challenged the monarch's appeal to natural law with a conviction to obey divine law (5:8-9). The name *Eleazar* is the same as *Lazarus* and means "God has helped." This would be a name for a man of great piety. This adequately describes Eleazar, for he considered transgressions of small laws as serious as transgressions of great laws. He insisted that he would be faithful to the laws of God even if Antiochus gouged out his eyes and burned his entrails (5:30).

The Torture and Death of Eleazar (6:1-35)

The torture of the old man began slowly. First he was flogged and then his flesh was torn away by scourges, causing blood to flow as his sides were cut to pieces. Although his body faltered because it could not endure the agonies, he kept his reason upright and unswerving.

The guards so admired him that they promised to save him if he only pretended to eat the pork. Eleazar considered pretending to eat pork an irrational and cowardly act and refused to do it. Having no alternative left to them, the guards burned him to the bone with hot instruments and poured a stinking liquid down his nostrils. Eleazar resisted the agonies by devout reason and died offering a noble example of Jewish piety. The author ends by stating that this is a good example of how reason is sovereign over the emotions. It can control the agonies as well as the pleasures of life.

The death of Eleazar was expiation for other Jews. The idea of expiation is explained in Isaiah 53:5-12 and can also be found in the Qumran *Manual of Discipline*. What does it mean? Eleazar asked God in 6:29 to let his punishment suffice for other Jews, who may

not have exercised as much strength as did he. After all they may have been young, with their whole lives to live, while he was old and ready to die anyway. Certainly Eleazar's death could not atone for the sins of other Jews, whose reason could not control their emotions. What Eleazar was doing in his old age was setting an example for others to follow.

The Example of Eleazar (7:1-23)

Eleazar's example is compared to that of a captain piloting his ship through stormy seas. Age has nothing to do with his skill. Though he is old, his reason operates as if he were young. This may not be true for everyone, but it is true for those who hold on to religion. They are like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who die not to God, but live to God. This final image may imply the immortality of the soul, although it is not clearly stated as such.

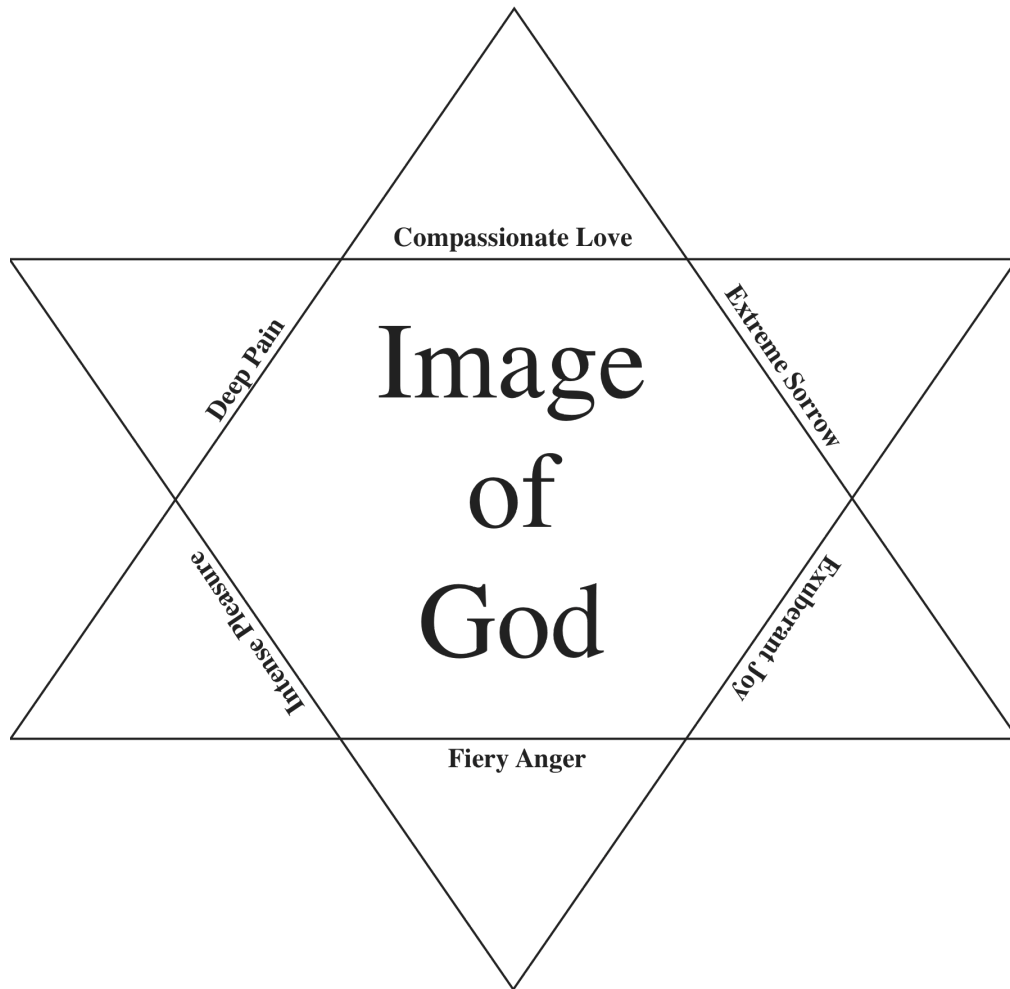
REASONING POWER

Two insights leap out at me. The first has to do with the power of reason over our emotions and our fear of death. I find it difficult to believe that anyone would be willing to die over whether or not to eat pork. At the same time I recognize that Eleazar viewed eating pork as being against the divine law of God, and as he said in 4 Maccabees 5:20, "to transgress the law in matters either small or great is of equal seriousness." That's not how most of us view the law today. We do make a difference between transgressing in matters small or great. Eleazar managed to face martyrdom by the power of reason over the fear of death so that he could remain faithful to God. According to 4 Maccabees 5:23-24, The Law:

...teaches us self-control, so that we master all pleasures and desires, and it also trains us in courage, so that we endure any suffering willingly; it instructs us in justice, so that in all our dealings we act impartially, and it teaches us piety, so that with proper reverence we worship the only living God.

The second has to do with the need to govern our emotions. God planted in us all of our emotions, but he also gave us a mind with the power to govern our emotions.

When I was in Jerusalem, I came across a picture of the Star of David, with six basic emotions that need to be controlled. 4 Maccabees 2:21-22 reminds me of that star and the emotions we need to govern.



Now when God fashioned human beings, he planted in them emotions and inclinations, but at the same time he enthroned the mind among the senses as a sacred governor over them all.

4 Maccabees 2:21-22

28. THE MARTYRDOM OF ELEAZAR (4 Maccabees 1:1—7:23)		
A PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION (1:1—3:18)		
The Main Principle Stated (1:1-12) (1:7-8)	The Principle Explained (1:13-35) (1:15-17)	
The Main Principle Illustrated (2:1—3:18)		
The Persons Joseph (2:2ff) Jacob (2:19ff) Moses (2:17ff David (3:6ff)	The Concepts Relationships (2:9bff) Violent Emotions (2:15ff)	
THE ATTEMPT ON THE TEMPLE TREASURY(3:19—4:14)		
Seleucus I Nicanor (305/304-281/280) or Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 B.C.) (3:20)		
Simon informs Apollonius (4:2-3) The Prayers (4:9)	Apollonius informs Seleucus (4:4) The Deliverance (4:10)	
ANTIOCHUS' PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS (4:15-26)		
The Removal of Onias by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (4:16)	The Installation of Jason (4:17 & 20) 3,600 talents a year Building of a Gymnasium	The Rumor of his Death (4:22-23) Jews cannot observe their Law Circumcision & Food Laws
THE MARTYRDOM OF ELEAZAR (5:1—7:23)		
The Threat to Eleazar (5:1-38) Antiochus forced all the Jews to eat pork (5:1-2) Eleazar refused, and appealed to divine law (5:8-9 & 16) Broken on the Wheel (5:3 & 32)	The Death of Eleazar (6:1-35) The Initial Torture (6:3, 6, & 25) The Offer of the Guards (6:15) The Expiation of Eleazar (6:29) The Death of Eleazar (6:30)	The Example of Eleazar (7:1-23) Compared to Piloting a Ship (7:1) Though he was old, his reason was young (7:13-14) The Religion of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob (7:17-18)

29. THE SEVEN BROTHERS

4 Maccabees 8:1—14:10

ASSIGNMENTS			
The Defiance of the Tyrant 8:1—9:9	The Martyrdom of the first four Brothers 9:10—10:21	The Martyrdom of the last three Brothers 11:1—12:19	A Philosophical Interpretation 13:1—14:10

THE DEFIANCE OF THE TYRANT (8:1—9:9)

The Pressure from Antiochus (8:1-29)

Having failed with the aging Eleazar, Antiochus turned to seven young brothers and offered them the same choice—eat the defiling food or be tortured (8:2). It was difficult for Antiochus to understand why the Jews did not want to adopt the “Greek way of life.” Jewish culture and religion appeared like “superstition” to him. What did not appear to him was the crude manner in which he tried to force his culture and religion on them. He was ready to use a number of instruments of torture, including wheels and joint-dislocators, rack and hooks and catapults and caldrons, braziers and thumbscrews and iron claws and wedges and bellows (8:13). The seven handsome and noble brothers could avoid these torturous instruments if they would yield to the king’s will. Antiochus offered them friendship for yielding and in Antiochus’ mind yielding was in their own interest. He could not understand why they would not yield. In his mind Greek religion and culture was superior to Jewish religion and culture.

There were plenty of other reasons for yielding to the King—the fear of torture (8:19), consideration for their aging mother (8:20), fear of their own death (8:21), and the king’s use of compulsion or force (8:22). Even God would understand why one might give in to such pressure.

The Response from the Seven Brothers (9:1-9)

The seven brothers were inspired by the martyrdom of Eleazar, an old man, and they were determined to follow his example. Their reason was very simple. Obedience takes one into the presence of God and torturing others threatens one with divine justice and

eternal torment (9:9). These seven brothers were using reason in their response to Antiochus.

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE SEVEN BROTHERS (9:10—12:19)

The First Brother (9:10-25)

The first brother's death is described in more detail than the other six, but the description varies from that found in 2 Maccabees 7:3-6. The pressure was to eat pork (9:16), though pork is not mentioned here by name. The response was that no torture could keep him from exercising reason (9:17) and that in martyrdom he would be transformed into immortality (9:22). Below is a comparison of the two different accounts of the torture of the first brother:

4 Maccabees 9:10-25

They tore off his tunic
They bound his hands
They beat and scourged him
They placed him on the wheel
They stretched him
They dislocated his limbs
They spread fire underneath him

2 Maccabees 7:3-6

They heated pans and caldrons
They cut out his tongue
They scalped him
They cut off his hands and feet
They fried him in a pan

The Second Brother (9:26-32)

When the second brother faced the same sort of punishment as the first, he affirmed the sweetness of death for the sake of religion (9:26). He then threatened his persecutors with divine wrath (9:32) and affirmed his hope in resurrection (2 Maccabees 7:9).

The details of his death are fewer and like those of the first brother, they vary from 2 Maccabees.

4 Maccabees 9:26-32

They bound him to the torture machine
They tore out his sinews
They tore away his scalp

2 Maccabees 7:7-9

They tore off his skin (scalped him)

The Third Brother (10:1-11)

In contrast to the description given in 2 Maccabees, there are more details here in 4 Maccabees. A comparison follows:

4 Maccabees 10:1-11

2 Maccabees 7:10-12

They disjointed his hands and feet
They pried his limbs from their sockets
They broke his fingers, arms, legs, elbows
They scalped him with their fingernails
They put him on the wheel
They dislocated his vertebrae
They tore away his flesh
Blood flowed from his entrails

They cut out his tongue
They stretched his hands

In 2 Maccabees he affirmed faith in the resurrection, but in 4 Maccabees he threatened those who were torturing him with unceasing torment (10:11)

The Fourth Brother (10:12-21)

4 Maccabees 10:12-21

2 Maccabees 7:13-14

They cut out his tongue

He died like all the others

The description of the martyrdom of the fourth brother is very brief in both accounts. In 2 Maccabees he expressed hope in the resurrection. In 4 Maccabees he affirmed that cutting out his tongue could not cut out his ability to reason (10:19), for his tongue had only been used for the melodious singing of divine hymns (10:21).

The Fifth Brother (11:1-12)

The fifth brother almost seems eager to be tortured for the sake of virtue (11:2). One explanation is that he believes his death will bring down more divine punishment upon the King. When he was asked why he was so willing, he replied that it was because he revered the Creator and lived according to his virtuous laws (11:5).

While there is no description of the fifth brother's death in 2 Maccabees 7:15-17, there is a description of his death in 4 Maccabees:

They tied him to the catapult
They twisted his back around the wedge on the wheel
They dismembered all of his joints

The Sixth Brother (11:13-27)

Being younger than the others, the sixth brother wanted to prove himself equal in mind (11:14), and so he offered to face the same kind of torture as his older brothers. No description is given of his torture in 2 Maccabees 7:18-19, but a graphic description is given here in 4 Maccabees:

They stretched him tightly on the wheel, breaking his back
They roasted him from underneath the wheel
They applied sharp spits to his back
They pierced his ribs
His entrails were burned through

In his dying words, this young boy cried out to the Tyrant, “We six boys have paralyzed your tyranny.” Then he concluded, because “...we hold fast to reason.” (11:24 & 27) This is the point that the author of 4 Maccabees is trying to make. Faithful Jews, not Greeks, are exercising reason and their willingness to die for their faith illustrates this.

The Seventh Brother (12:1-19)

Antiochus, feeling compassion for the seventh brother and his mother, offered him friendship and a position of leadership in government (12:5) if he would only eat. In 2 Maccabees he offered wealth as well (2 Maccabees 7:24) but his mother encouraged him in the Sacred Language of Hebrew to face martyrdom with the same courage as his brothers (12:7).

4 Maccabees 12:1-19

2 Maccabees 7:24-40

He flung himself into the braziers

His torture was the worst

Before dying, this last brother threatened the King with an eternal judgment that would never end (12:12 & 18). The same thing happened in the 2 Maccabees account, which is considerably longer than what we find in 4 Maccabees.

A PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION (13:1—14:10)

The conclusion is simple. It was the supremacy of devout reason over emotion and pain, which enabled these seven brothers to resist the tyrant King (13:1). If they had been enslaved to their emotions, they would have eaten the defiling food.

Devout reason can be compared to the towers jutting out over the harbor, which hold back the threatening waves (13:6-7). The harbor of religion is protected not by emotions, but by reason. Devout reason supports us with self-control (13:16) and moves us on the road towards immortality (4:5).

These seven brothers did a noble thing. They are referred to as the seven holy brothers and compared to the seven sacred days of creation. Their example stands for the salvation of the Jewish nation. Only through obeying the Law can the nation be saved.

THE POWER OF REASON

What do seven brothers giving up their lives have to do with illustrating the power of reason? Why did they not just eat the pork, although, in today’s lesson, pork is not even

mentioned? What is mentioned is food that is unlawful to eat. At issue is the keeping of the law when pressure is placed upon us to violate it. In these seven examples the pressure comes not from within, but from outside. Pressure came from the King who was trying to undermine their faith by forcing them to break the Law. Even a minor violation of the Law would be considered a victory for the King. Minor violations lead to major violations. A principle was at stake and these seven brothers refused to give in to the pressure.

29. THE SEVEN BROTHERS (4 Maccabees 8:1—14:10)		
THE DEFINANCE OF THE TYRANT (8:1—9:9)		
The Pressure from Antiochus (8:1-29) The Choice: Eat or be tortured (8:2) The Instruments of Torture (8:13)	The Response from the 7 Brothers (9:1-9) Inspired by Eleazar (9:5) Inspired by Religion (Reason) (9:6)	
THE MARTYRDOM OF THE SEVEN BROTHERS (9:10—12:19)		
1st Brother (9:10-25) Reason more powerful than torture (9:16-17)	2nd Brother (9:26-32) Death and Torture (9:29-30)	
3rd Brother (10:1-11) Virtue and Impiety (10:10-11)	4th Brother (10:12-21) Cannot cut reason out (10:19)	
5th Brother (11:1-12) Willing to die for virtue (11:2)	6th Brother (11:13-27) Virtue & reason paralyzes tyranny (11:24, 27)	
7th Brother (12:1-19)		
Friendship and leadership (12:5) Wealth (2 Maccabees 7:24)	The mother encourages him in Hebrew (12:7)	
A PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION (13:1—14:10)		
Reason is Supreme (13:1)	Reason is like a Tower (13:6-7)	The Sevenfold Chorus (13:24 & 14:7-8)

30. THE DEVOUT MOTHER

4 Maccabees 14:11—18:24

ASSIGNMENTS				
The Mother's Agony 14:11-20	The Mother's Choice 15:1-32	The Mother's Death 16:1—17:1	In Praise of a Devout Mother 17:2—18:5	The Mother's Last Words 18:6-24

THE MOTHER'S DEATH (14:11—17:1)

The Mother's Agony (14:11-20)

The agony and death of the mother gets only a brief notice in 2 Maccabees 7:41, but here it is treated in depth. It is the climax of the whole story.

Greeks were known for distinguishing between human beings and animals. Their conclusion was that while animals do not exercise reason, human beings do. Reason is what distinguishes human beings from animals.

This does not mean that animals do not care about their young. They do. Examples of this caring can be seen among the birds and the bees, but they are acting only out of natural instinct. They are not using reason.

If Eleazar and the seven brothers exercised reason, this mother is even a more noble illustration of the use of divine reason. She watched her seven sons die and that must have torn her apart inside. Animals would have let their natural instincts govern their actions, but this mother let reason govern hers. She must be compared to Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his own son. The difference between Abraham and this mother is that she had to see it through seven times. What an example of the ability of reason to control one's emotions.

The Mother's Choice (15:1-32)

Two courses were open to this mother—religion and expediency. She could either encourage her children to die for their faith and receive eternal life or she could attempt to preserve them for a brief time.

Involved in this choice was her love for her seven sons. A mother's love is very strong, much stronger than a father's. She gave birth to these seven sons and this gave her a biological attachment to them (15:4). In addition to that she loved them because of their faith and obedience (15:9).

The torture of watching her seven sons die was not strong enough to pervert her reason. Reason here can be defined as devout reason or as religion. It has to do with faith in God. Faith and reason strengthened her disregard for her maternal love. This does not mean that she overcame her love for her sons, but that she could not approve of the kind of deliverance that would be temporary. She wanted for them a deliverance that would be eternal. Reason helped her to discern the difference and make the right choice.

The Mother's Example and Death (16:1—17:1)

This mother's willingness to sacrifice all seven sons stands as a shining example of devout reason that is able to overcome human emotions. Her maternal love, inflamed by the torture of watching the martyrdom of her seven sons, was tested to the limits. The lions surrounding Daniel were not so savage, nor were the fires surrounding Mishael so hot as her inflamed maternal emotions and love for her sons; yet, she managed to quench those emotions with devout reason.

She did all these things knowing that she would be left alone, without any possibility of becoming a grandmother, and in the end have no one to bury her. This was a tremendous sacrifice. In the midst of such loss she encouraged her seven sons, who had watched the example of Eleazar's martyrdom, to be faithful unto death. If an aged man like Eleazar could resist, certainly young men should have the same stamina. God gave life, and because of that, his children should be willing to endure any kind of suffering for him.

In addition to Eleazar, there have been the examples of Abraham and Isaac, Daniel in the Lion's den, and Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael in the fiery furnace. It would be unreasonable for people who have been nurtured on such examples of faith not to be willing to withstand the pain of martyrdom. Those who die for the sake of God, live for the sake of God, as did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Such is the example of the superiority of devout reason over human emotion. This same reason enabled this mother to throw herself into the flames before the guards could even touch her.

IN PRAISE OF A DEVOUT MOTHER (17:2—18:5)

The mother's behavior is now praised. This is like a eulogy to her. Her example was more beautiful than the moon and the stars set in heaven. To Greeks these would have been living objects, but the author uses them as metaphors of comparison.

An inscription for the tombs of Eleazar, the seven brothers, and the mother is offered in 4 Maccabees 17:9-10. It is simple and to the point, describing briefly what happened.

The suffering and deaths of these martyrs was but a contest in which the prize was immortality itself. Eleazar was the first contestant, followed by the seven brothers, and finally their mother. The tyrant was the antagonist and the spectators consisted of the whole human race. These martyrs became a ransom for the sins of Israel. Through their blood the nation was saved from the destruction Antiochus intended for it. Their examples gave courage to others, who in turn resisted the pressure to turn to paganism. Even Antiochus himself marveled at their example.

The only conclusion that can be drawn is that devout reason is the master of all emotions (18:1-2). This devout mother proved this by resisting Antiochus and encouraging her seven sons to do the same. In the end Antiochus will experience punishment on earth and in the afterlife as well (18:5).

THE MOTHER'S LAST WORDS (18:6-24)

The mother is the real heroine. She grew up in a devout home and resisted all temptation, even the sexual. She was a virgin until marriage and then remained faithful to her husband. Nothing has been said about her husband up to this point. What we now discover is that he died prior to the persecution initiated by Antiochus. He did have a part in raising their seven sons. He taught them from the law and the prophets.

A summary of the heroes of the faith is given by the mother in 4 Maccabees 18:11-19. It is not meant to be complete, but it is intended to be inspirational. The heroes of the faith have contributed to the foundation of the faiths of this mother and her seven sons. They are true children of Abraham and that is what helped them to resist Antiochus. A quick summary of their tortures is given. One more method of torture turns up here that has not been mentioned before and that is the piercing of the pupils of their eyes.

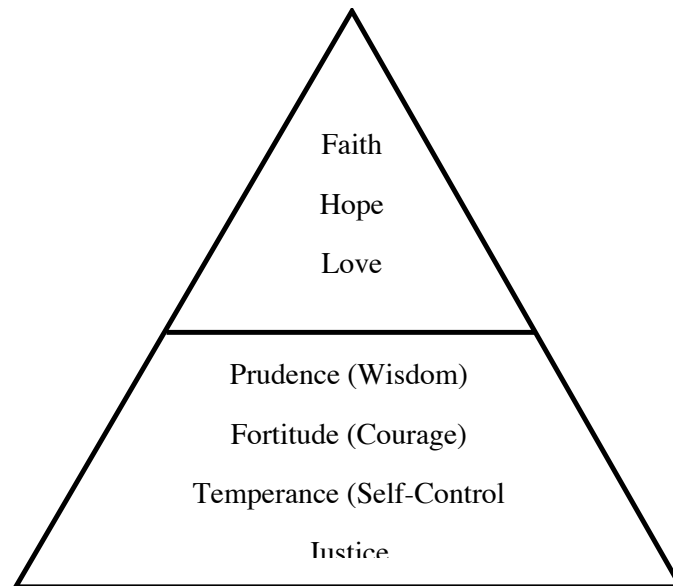
God knows what they have endured and he will reward them by gathering them together into the chorus of their fathers, where they will receive new and immortal souls. The imagery here differs from 2 Maccabees in that the emphasis is on the Immortality of the Soul rather than the Resurrection of the Body.

REASON AND VIRTUE

Eleazar, the seven brothers, and the mother all use reason to control their emotions as they face martyrdom. With the use of reason they manage to exercise their faithfulness to the Law. Occasionally virtue is mentioned, and all of them are described as virtuous. Obviously, the author is not talking about the Christian virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love, nor is he talking about the classical Greek virtues of Prudence (Wisdom), Fortitude (Courage), Temperance (Self-Control), and Justice. Virtue for him is faithfulness to the Law and reason enables Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother to control their very human emotions and face martyrdom. The reason is simple. There are two choices. They reject the choice of expediency, which would allow them to violate even a minor Law in order to survive and get along with the King, but it would mean the beginning of rejecting their own culture and religion to accommodate Greek culture. They are willing

to face martyrdom because the reward for their faithfulness will be in the case of 4 Maccabees, Immortality, and according to 2 Maccabees, Resurrection. Below I've attempted to describe the cardinal (Greek) virtues and the theological (Christian) virtues. Obviously, these martyrs are concerned about their own fate. Not only do we see the beginnings of a belief in eternal life, whether it is in terms of the Resurrection of the Body, or the Immortality of the Soul. We also see the beginnings of a concept of Hell. Those who are forcing them to eat forbidden foods will have to suffer in eternity for their misdeeds.

Reason and virtue are both important. Reason looks at choices that have eternal consequences, and chooses virtue over accommodation, even when virtue conflicts with culture and results in persecution and martyrdom. In the light of eternity it is the better choice. Christians are faced with similar choices, but in addition to reason, faith, hope, and love enable us to control our emotions in order to live virtuous lives. Our purpose in living such lives is not only so that we can obtain Immortality or Resurrection, but, so that we can lead others into eternal life within the Kingdom of God. As Tertullian put it, "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church (or should we say, the way into the Kingdom of God)." This, however, takes us into the New Testament.



THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

Aristotle talked about the moral or classical virtues, which were prudence (wisdom), fortitude (courage), temperance (self-control), and justice. These virtues can be known by reason.

THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

Thomas Aquinas added to Aristotle's virtues what he called the theological virtues, which he named as faith, hope, and love. These could be known only by revelation. He accepted Aristotle's virtues, but referred to them as "splendid vices." According to him these virtues needed to be transformed by Christian love and reoriented toward God.

THE DIFFERENCE

The difference between Christian and philosophical virtue can best be clarified by making a distinction between Christian and philosophical ethics. Two chief questions need to be raised. (1) What is the Good? and (2) Whose good shall it be?

The first question has been considered the main concern of philosophical ethics, and can be defined as Happiness. Philosophical ethics does not leave the second question out completely, but it does not give it the same emphasis, as does Christian ethics. Christians may define the Good as defined by the Philosopher, but the Christian always seeks that good for the sake of the neighbor. It can never be for the individual alone.

30. THE DEVOUT MOTHER (4 Maccabees 14:11 – 18:24)

THE MOTHER'S DEATH (14:11 – 17:1)

The Mother's Agony (14:11-20)	The Mother's Choice (15:1-32)
<p>The mother is contrasted to the birds and the bees and compared to Abraham (14:11-12 & 20)</p>	<p>The two choices (15:3) Maternal love: Biological (15:4), Spiritual (15:9) Devout reason made the choice (15:23) She desired eternal life for her sons (15:3, 27)</p>
Examples for the Mother (16:1-25)	The Mother's Death (17:1)
<p>Examples of reason over emotions (16:1)</p> <p>Daniel's lions (16:3) Mishael's fire (16:3)</p> <p>She faced the loss of her sons (16:5-11): She would not become a grandmother She would have no sons to bury her</p> <p>She follows the examples of... Eleazar (16:15) Abraham (16:20) Daniel (16:21a) Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael (16:21b)</p> <p>Those who die, live to God as did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (16:25)</p>	<p>Not wanting anyone to lay hands on her, this mother leapt into the fire</p>

IN PRAISE OF A DEVOUT MOTHER (17:2 – 18:5)

<p>The Inscription for the Temple (17:9-10) It was like a contest (17:11-16)</p>	<p>They became a blood sacrifice (17:21b-22) Devout reason masters the emotions (18:1-2)</p>
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THE MOTHER'S LAST WORDS (18:6-24)

<p>I was a Virgin (18:6) My Husband died (18:9)</p>	<p>My Husband taught our Sons the Law (18:10) They received Immortality (18:23)</p>
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31. A HALLELUJAH OF DAVID THE SON OF JESSE

Psalm 151:1-7

Most Greek manuscripts have contained 151 Psalms, but up to 1956, no Hebrew manuscript had been found, and so the Bible has not included Psalm 151. In 1956, Psalm 151 was found in Cave XI among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and is now contained in the Apocrypha.

The Psalm is ascribed to David, who wrote the Psalm following his combat with Goliath. The present text could not have been written later than the third century B.C.E. Although the Hebrew text was found in Qumran, it was not written there.

The Greek Version

- 1 I was small among my brothers,
and the youngest in my father's
house;
I tended my father's sheep.
- 2 My hands made a harp;
my fingers fashioned a lyre.
- 3 And who will tell my Lord?
The Lord himself; it is he who
hears.
- 4 It was he who sent his messenger
and took me from my father's
sheep,
and anointed me with his
anointing oil.
- 5 My brothers were handsome and
tall,
but the Lord was not pleased
with them.
- 6 I went out to meet the Philistine,
and he cursed me by his idols.
- 7 But I drew his own sword;
I beheaded him, and took away
disgrace from the people of
Israel.¹

¹ According to 1 Samuel 17:49-50, David killed Goliath with one stone.

Hebrew Version

- 1 Smaller was I than my brothers
 and the youngest of the sons of my father,
Yet he made me shepherd of his flock
 and ruler over his kids.
- 2 My hands have made an instrument
 and my fingers a lyre;
And [so] have I rendered glory to the Lord,
 thought I, within my soul.
- 3 The mountains do not witness to him,
 nor do the hills proclaim;
The trees have cherished my words
 and the flock my works.
- 4 For who can proclaim and who can bespeak
 and who can recount the deeds of the Lord?
Everything has God seen,
 everything has he heard and he has heeded.
- 5 He sent his prophet to anoint me,
 Samuel to make me great;
My brothers went out to meet him,
 handsome of figure and appearance.
- 6 Though they were tall of stature
 and handsome by their hair,
The Lord God chose
 them not.
- 7 But he sent and took me from behind the clock
 and anointed me with holy oil,
And he made me leader of his people
 and ruler over the people of his covenant.

At this point another psalm begins. The Greek Version seems to be a condensed version of what was originally two separate psalms in Hebrew. The second Hebrew Psalm is incomplete, but the following can be made out:

At the beginning of David's power after
the prophet of God had anointed him.

Then I [saw] a Philistine
uttering defiance's from the r[anks of the Philistines].

PSALM 151

The Hebrew Text

- (1)Smaller was I than my brothers
and the youngest of the sons of my father,
Yet he made me shepherd of his flock
and ruler over his kids.
- (2)My hands have made an instrument
and my fingers a lyre;
And [so] have I rendered glory to the Lord,
thought I, within my soul.
- (3)The mountains do not witness to him,
nor do the hills proclaim;
The trees have cherished my words
and the flock my works.
- (4)For who can proclaim and who can bespeak
and who can recount the deeds of the Lord?
Everything has God seen,
everything has he heard and he has heeded.
- (5)He sent his prophet to anoint me,
Samuel to make me great;
My brothers went out to meet him,
handsome of figure and appearance.
- (6)Though they were tall of stature
and handsome by their hair,
The Lord God chose
them not.
- (7)But he sent and took me from behind the
flock
and anointed me with holy oil,
And he made me leader of his people
and ruler over the people of his covenant.
- At the beginning of David's power after
the prophet of God had anointed him
- (1)Then I [saw] a Philistine
uttering defiances from
the ranks of the Philistines].

The Greek Text

- (1)I was small among my brothers
and the youngest in my father's
house;
I tended my father's sheep.
- (2)My hands made a harp;
my fingers fashioned a lyre.
- (3)And who will tell my Lord?
the Lord himself; it is he who
hears.
- (4)It was he who sent his messenger
and took me from my father's
sheep,
and anointed me with his
anointing oil.
- (5)My brothers were handsome and
tall,
but the Lord was not pleased
with them.
- (6)I went out to meet the Philistine,
and he cursed me by his idols.
- (7)But I drew his own sword;
I beheaded him, and took away
disgrace from the people of
Israel

AFTERWORD

I didn't become interested in the Apocrypha until after I had taught all the other books in the Bible. When I announced that I intended to work through the Apocryphal Books, I was surprised at the number of people who wanted to join me. The local Christian bookstore quickly ran out of their copies of the Apocrypha and asked me what had sparked all this interest in the Apocrypha. My answer was simply that some of us wanted to know what happened between the Hebrew Scriptures and the birth of Jesus. The Apocrypha may not tell the whole story, but it does tell some of the story. Are their mistakes in the Apocrypha? Sure, but then, there are some mistakes in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures too. There are probably some mistakes in my notes on the Apocryphal Books as well. If the reader sees some glaring mistakes, I'd like to know about it.

James T. Reuteler, Ph.D.
Jim@Reuteler.org
www.Jim.Reuteler.org
Covenant Bible Studies
Aurora, Colorado