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Disclaimer: While we do not believe that the books of the Maccabees are divinely inspired Scripture, and thus, were not included in the Canon of scripture, that is divinely inspired by God as the primary author and men were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the 66 books that are in the Canon of Scripture. However, we do recognize the books of the Maccabees as historically accurate. The best way to state our position, would be to say that we regard the books of the Maccabees as a book of history but not as Scripture.

Antiochus Epiphanes IV

Antiochus Epiphanes seized the throne in Israel after Seleucus died. Antiochus *Epiphanes* ("God manifest") was called *Epimanes* ("madman") by his enemies. He started to reign in Israel in 175 BC (1 Macc. 1:10).

Antiochus made it a capital crime to practice Temple offerings, Sabbaths, festivals, and circumcision (1 Macc. 1:50). Instead, the Jewish people had to sacrifice pigs and worship idols (1 Macc. 1:45-49). In 167 BC (1 Macc. 1:54), Antiochus offered the desolating sacrilege on the altar. His Greek soldiers collected and burned the Scriptures (1 Macc. 1:56), and killed anyone who possessed a Bible (1 Macc. 1:57). They even killed Jewish mothers who circumcised their boys (1 Macc. 1:60). 1 Maccabees states,

"Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king" (1 Macc. 1:57).

"According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks" (1 Macc. 1:60-61).

After hearing about a revolt from his subjects, Antiochus led an absolute slaughter in Israel (2 Macc. 5:11-12).

“He commanded his soldiers to cut down relentlessly everyone they met and to kill those who went into their houses. Then there was massacre of young and old, destruction of boys, women, and children, and slaughter of young girls and infants. Within the total of three days eighty thousand were destroyed, forty thousand in hand-to-hand fighting, and as many were sold into slavery as were killed” (2 Macc. 5:12-14).

Next, Antiochus (along with Menelaus) plundered the Temple (2 Macc. 5:15), killed all the men, and sold the women and children as slaves (2 Macc. 5:24). They did this on the Sabbath, so that the Jewish people wouldn't fight back (2 Macc. 5:25). 2 Maccabees records,

“Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors and no longer to live by the laws of God; also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and to call it the temple of Olympian Zeus, and to call the one in Gerizim the temple of Zeus-the-Friend-of-Strangers, as did the people who lived in that place” (2 Macc. 6:1-2).

“The temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with prostitutes and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts, and besides brought in things for sacrifice that were unfit” (2 Macc. 6:4).

Antiochus commanded the people to not keep the Sabbath or the festivals (2 Macc. 6:6); instead, he commanded them to make sacrifices to the Greek god Dionysus (2 Macc. 6:7). His men killed any Jewish people who refused to assimilate and apostatize (2 Macc. 6:9). 2 Maccabees records,

“For example, two women were brought in for having circumcised their children. They publicly paraded them around the city, with their babies hanging at their breasts, and then hurled them down headlong from the wall. Others who had assembled in the caves nearby, in order to observe the seventh day secretly, were betrayed to Philip and were all burned together, because their piety kept them from defending themselves, in view of their regard for that most holy day” (2 Macc. 6:10-11).

Eleazar—a 90 year old faithful scribe—refused to eat pig meat (2 Macc. 6:18). He told his persecutors that he would rather be sent to Hades! (2 Macc. 6:23). His last words were, “It is clear to the Lord in his holy knowledge that, though I might have been saved from death, I am enduring terrible sufferings in my body under this beating, but in my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear him” (2 Macc. 6:30).

A mother of seven boys also refused to eat pig meat (2 Macc. 7:1). Antiochus had the leader of the brothers tortured: The soldiers cut out his tongue, cut off his hands and feet, scalped him, and threw him alive onto a heated frying pan (2 Macc. 7:4-5). This all happened while his brothers and mother were watching!

After no one recanted their faith, the soldiers tortured the next brother, giving him an opportunity to recant and apostatize (2 Macc. 7:7). But he refused (2 Macc. 7:8). The second brother's last words were, “You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws” (2 Macc. 7:9). They continued to torture and killed each brother in turn, and all the brothers theologially spit in the face of Antiochus (2 Macc. 7:10-19).

One final brother remained with his mother. But both mother and son refused to apostatize, and they received an even worse torture and death (2 Macc. 7:39).

1 Maccabees records that Antiochus tried to plunder Persia, because he was short on money. But he was turned away in Elymais (1 Macc. 6:1-3). Messengers told Antiochus how badly things were going back in Israel, and it scared him (1 Macc. 6:8). He believed he was dying from his anxiety, and he thought that his poor fortune was because he went against Israel (1 Macc. 6:12-13). He gave his kingdom to Philip and died in 163 BC (1 Macc. 6:16).

2 Maccabees records that Antiochus Epiphanes heard about the events in Israel, and he set out to make "Jerusalem a cemetery of Jews" (2 Macc. 9:4). On his way to Israel, Antiochus received a bowel disease, and he fell out of his chariot being horribly and mortally wounded (2 Macc. 9:5-7). His body was infested with worms (2 Macc. 9:9). He couldn't endure his own stench (2 Macc. 9:12). He declared Jerusalem free, issued a restoration of the Temple, and even said he would become a Jewish evangelist (2 Macc. 9:14-17). But he didn't get healed (2 Macc. 9:18). Antiochus bequeathed his kingdom to his son (also named Antiochus) before he died (2 Macc. 9:28).