

# The Intertestamental Period



An Open Seminar  
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# Structure of Daniel, Chapter 3

- Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Children goes between vs. 23 and 24
- Found in Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles
- Song of the Three Children sung in Matins in Eastern Orthodox liturgy
- Part of the Apocrypha in other non-Protestant bibles

# The (Other) Great Statue

- 90 feet tall
- 9 feet wide (1 cubit is roughly 18")
- Giant statues were not unknown; cf. The Colossus of Rhodes, height: 72 feet.



# The Maccabees Parallel

54 Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege on the altar of burnt-offering. They also built altars in the surrounding towns of Judah, 55 and offered incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. 56 The books of the law that they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. 57 Anyone found possessing the book of the covenant, or anyone who adhered to the law, was condemned to death by decree of the king. 58 They kept using violence against Israel, against those who were found month after month in the towns. 59 On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar that was on top of the altar of burnt-offering

# The Maccabees Parallel, continued

60 In accordance with the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, 61 and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks.

62 But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. 63 They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. 64 Very great wrath came upon Israel.

1 Maccabees, 1

# Two Major Themes:

- Abomination
  - Abomination of Desolation
  - Desolating Sacrilege
- Idolatry
  - Worship of foreign gods

**What is an Abomination?**

# Abomination and Impurity

- Israelites allowed into the Holy Land so long as they did not defile it
- Previous inhabitants driven out for desecrating the land





# Pollution of the Land

- Impurity was not a sin, but introducing impurity into the sancta was.
- Three schools of thought:
  - “Holy ground” was restricted to the Temple precinct
  - “Holy ground” was restricted to the city of Jerusalem
  - “Holy ground” was restricted to the land of Canaan

# Abomination: Definition

An abomination is an act which pollutes the holiness of the temple/city/land and, thus puts the people living in the land at risk of destruction.

# Leviticus 18:24-30

24 Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. 25 Thus the land became defiled; and I punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. 26 But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and commit none of these abominations, either the citizen or the alien who resides among you 27 (for the inhabitants of the land, who were before you, committed all of these abominations, and the land became defiled);

# Leviticus 18:24-30, continued

28 otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. 29 For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people. 30 So keep my charge not to commit any of these abominations that were done before you, and not to defile yourselves by them: I am the Lord your God.

# Evolution of “Abomination of Desolation”

“Abomination of Desolation” in Matthew and Mark:

In the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark, the term is used by Jesus in the Olivet discourse. In the Matthean account, Jesus is presented as quoting Daniel explicitly. In the Gospel of Mark, the phrase "spoken of by Daniel the prophet" is absent in the Codex Sinaiticus.[5]

- Matthew 24:15-16 “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”
- Mark 13:14 "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

# Evolution of “Abomination of Desolation”

In Luke's version of Jesus' warning, the abomination is not mentioned, and the sign that it is time to flee Jerusalem is explicitly said to be that Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies.

- Luke 21:20-21 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the town depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it"

**What is Idolatry?**

# Exodus Defines Idolatry

- Exodus 20:3 *“You shall have no other gods before me.”*  
[First Commandment]
- Exodus 20:23 *“You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold.”*
- Exodus 23:24 *“you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do [...]”*



# Isaiah 44 on Idols

13 The carpenter measures with a line  
and makes an outline with a marker;  
he roughs it out with chisels  
and marks it with compasses.

He shapes it in human form,  
human form in all its glory,  
that it may dwell in a shrine.

14 He cut down cedars,  
or perhaps took a cypress or oak.

He let it grow among the trees of the forest,  
or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow.

# Isaiah 44 on Idols, continued

15 It is used as fuel for burning;

some of it he takes and warms himself,  
he kindles a fire and bakes bread.

But he also fashions a god and worships it;

he makes an idol and bows down to it.

16 Half of the wood he burns in the fire;

over it he prepares his meal,

he roasts his meat and eats his fill.

He also warms himself and says,

“Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.”

# Isaiah 44 on Idols, continued

17 From the rest he makes a god, his idol;  
he bows down to it and worships.

He prays to it and says,

“Save me! You are my god!”

18 They know nothing, they understand nothing;  
their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see,  
and their minds closed so they cannot understand.

19 No one stops to think,  
no one has the knowledge or understanding to say,  
“Half of it I used for fuel;  
I even baked bread over its coals,  
I roasted meat and I ate.

# Isaiah 44 on Idols, continued

Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left?

Shall I bow down to a block of wood?”

20 Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him;

he cannot save himself, or say,

“Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?”

# Actual Idol Worship

- “Sympathetic magic”
- The object was not literally the god
- The image was a means of accessing an serving the god
- Damage or neglect of the image could injure the god



