

PRELUDE TO THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

188 In the “Treaty of Apamea,” imposed by the expanding Roman Republic upon the Seleucid Empire, King Antiochus III was evicted from his western-most territories; was barred from having high-tech military equipment, such as war elephants; and was required to pay huge war reparations to Rome. In addition, one of his sons, Mithridates (later known as Antiochus IV), was sent to live in Rome as a “hostage,” guaranteeing his father’s compliance with the treaty.



"Of King Antiochus"

187 Desperate for funds, Antiochus III was killed while trying to plunder a pagan temple in Persia.¹ His eldest son, Seleucus IV, became the new king of the Seleucid Empire.

c. 185 Seleucus’ son & heir, Demetrius, was born. Shortly thereafter, Demetrius was sent to Rome to replace his uncle as the treaty “hostage”.

c. 178 According to 2 Maccabees 3, a disgruntled Benjamite named Simon falsely reported to the Seleucid authorities that the Jewish Temple was overflowing with hoarded wealth. Seleucus IV, who had apparently been subsidizing the Jewish sacrificial system, dispatched his finance minister, Heliodorus, with orders to confiscate any funds not being used for sacrifices.² Heliodorus was told by the High Priest Onias III that there were 400 talents of silver³ & another 200 talents of gold⁴ on deposit in the temple, but that these were funds being held in trust for the care of widows & orphans, plus some private monies being stored on behalf of one prominent citizen. According to the Jewish account, when Heliodorus attempted to confiscate the funds, the High Priest & the people began pleading for God’s intervention. Heliodorus was supernaturally prevented and returned to Seleucus IV empty-handed, warning the king against any future attempts at appropriating these Temple deposits, since they were being divinely guarded.



"Of the King of the Seleukoi"

175 Heliodorus assassinated Seleucus IV, trying to usurp the throne for himself.⁵ Seleucus’ brother, Antiochus IV, killed the usurper, but since his 10-year old nephew & the true heir was living as a “hostage” in Rome, Antiochus declared himself to be the new king of the Seleucid Empire.⁶



"Of King Antiochus"
"God Illumined"
"Victory Bearer"

¹ As was predicted in Daniel 11:19.

² As was predicted in Daniel 11:20a.

³ 400 x 57 pounds = 22,800 pounds @ \$528 per pound = \$12,038,400.

⁴ 100 x 57 pounds = 5,700 @ \$27,200 per pound = \$155,040,000.

⁵ As was predicted in Daniel 11:20b.

⁶ As was predicted in Daniel 11:21.

c. 174 Jason, the brother of Onias III, used the promise of several hundreds of talents of silver to bribe Antiochus IV into appointing him as the new High Priest, replacing his brother. For obvious financial reasons, the king agreed to this arrangement. Jason seems to have been at the forefront of a popular movement among the Jews of Jerusalem & Judea to fully “Hellenize”⁷ – to basically become Greeks.

"In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, “Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us.” This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil."
1 Maccabees 1:11-15

"...he [Jason] destroyed the lawful ways of living and introduced new customs contrary to the law. He took delight in establishing a gymnasium right under the citadel, and he induced the noblest of the young men to wear the Greek hat. There was such an extreme of Hellenization and increase in the adoption of foreign ways because of the surpassing wickedness of Jason, who was ungodly and no true high priest, that the priests were no longer intent upon their service at the altar. Despising the sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices, they hurried to take part in the unlawful proceedings in the wrestling arena after the signal for the discus-throwing, disdainful of the honors prized by their ancestors and putting the highest value upon Greek forms of prestige."
2 Maccabees 4:11b-14

171 When dispatched by the High Priest Jason with the annual tribute, Menelaus - the brother of Simon, the man who had exaggerated the Temple’s wealth several years earlier – bribed Antiochus IV into appointing him as the new High Priest, promising to pay an addition 300 talents of silver beyond Jason’s tribute. Again, for obvious reasons, Antiochus agreed to the new arrangement, despite the fact that Menelaus was not from the family of Aaron. Jason fled to the country of Ammon.

170 Antiochus IV invaded Egypt & forced Ptolemy VI to act as his puppet ruler.

c. 169 After the former High Priest, Onias III, complained about the illicit High Priest Menelaus selling off Temple vessels to raise cash, Menelaus arranged for his murder by a high official in the city of Antioch. Despite widespread outrage over the actions of Menelaus, he was able to bribe his way out of any charges and to remain in office as High Priest.

⁷ The Greeks call themselves the “Hellenoi.”

169 Antiochus IV felt the need to strengthen his hold on Egypt by a second invasion. The Roman historian Livy wrote:

“...about four miles from Alexandria, he was met by the Roman commissioners, to whom he gave a friendly greeting and held out his hand to Popilius. Popilius, however, placed in his hand the tablets on which was written the decree of the senate and told him first of all to read that. After reading it through he said he would call his friends into council and consider what he ought to do. Popilius, stern and imperious as ever, drew a circle round the king with the stick he was carrying and said, "Before you step out of that circle give me a reply to lay before the senate."

For a few moments he hesitated, astounded at such a peremptory order, and at last replied, "I will do what the senate thinks right." Not till then did Popilius extend his hand to the king as to a friend and ally. Antiochus evacuated Egypt at the appointed date..." *Ab Urbe Condita*, xlv.12

According to 2 Maccabees 5:1-4, right around this same time, there were 40 days of miraculous signs in the skies above Jerusalem. Perhaps because of these displays, a rumor arose that Antiochus IV was dead. The former High Priest Jason returned from Ammon and tried to take the city by force from Menelaus. He failed and returned to Ammon leaving in his wake many Jewish casualties.

"When news of what had happened reached the king, he took it to mean that Judea was in revolt. So, raging inwardly, he left Egypt and took the city by storm.

"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. Not content with this, Antiochus dared to enter the most holy temple in all the world, guided by Menelaus, who had become a traitor both to the laws and to his country." 2 Maccabees 5:11-15

"After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred forty-third year.⁸ He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force.

"He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures that he found." 1 Maccabees 1:20-23

"So Antiochus carried off eighteen hundred talents from the temple, and hurried away to Antioch, thinking in his arrogance that he could sail on the land and walk on the sea, because his mind was elated." 2 Maccabees 5:21

⁸ The Jews counted the 143rd Seleucid Year as Spring 169 BC to Spring 168 BC.

167 By now, Antiochus IV was far along in the development of his strategy for eradicating monotheistic Judaism, leaving behind only Hellenized Jews within the Judea province of his kingdom.

“In his malice toward the Jewish citizens, Antiochus sent Apollonius, the captain of the Mysians, with an army of twenty-two thousand, and commanded him to kill all the grown men and to sell the women and boys as slaves.” 2 Maccabees 5:23b-24

“Two years later the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force.” 1 Maccabees 1:29

“Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him;” 1 Maccabees 1:30a

“When this man arrived in Jerusalem, he pretended to be peaceably disposed and waited until the holy sabbath day; then, finding the Jews not at work, he ordered his troops to parade under arms. He put to the sword all those who came out to see them, then rushed into the city with his armed warriors and killed great numbers of people.” 2 Maccabees 5:25-26

“He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. They took captive the women and children, and seized the livestock.” 1 Maccabees 1:31

“Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. They stationed there a sinful people, men who were renegades. These strengthened their position; they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great menace, for the citadel became an ambush against the sanctuary, an evil adversary of Israel at all times.” 1 Maccabees 1:32-36

Probably right around Pentecost (early summer),⁹ Antiochus IV issued a decree which made Judaism completely illegal & required all Jews to prove they had adopted the Greek religion.

“Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that all should give up their particular customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath.

“And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they would forget the law and change all the ordinances. He added, “And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.” In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom.

“He appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the towns of Judah to offer sacrifice, town by town. Many of the people, everyone who forsook the law, joined them, and they did evil in the land; they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had.” 1 Maccabees 1:41-53

These actions indicate that Antiochus IV was the “little horn” of Daniel 8:9-11 & there was much worse yet to come.

⁹ Approximately 1,290 days prior to the 164 BC rededication of the Temple, as was predicted by Daniel 12:11.