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22. Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Desolating Sacrilege (Daniel 11:21-35)

(continued from last month)

A study of desolating sacrileges, or abominations of desolation, in the Bible will show that they are committed by God's people, not by aliens. They are committed by priests, those who have special access to God. Desolating sacrileges are acts of defiance and rebellion, that is, idolatry, committed by God's priests right before His face. Such acts provoke God to desolate His sanctuary and bring in an army to waste it.

We can look first at Exodus 32, where we see Aaron make the golden calf. The result is judgment upon the people, and God moves outside the camp (Ex. 33). Moses has to woo Him back, and finally He returns to the midst of Israel when the Tabernacle is set up in Exodus 40.

1 Samuel 2-4 record the first full example of the desolating sacrilege. The two evil sons of Eli steal God's sacrificial food for themselves and fornicate with the deaconesses at the Tabernacle. God lets the Philistines take the Ark into captivity, and brings the Philistines upon the people. When the Ark is returned, it is not put back into the Tabernacle. Although the people continue to offer sacrifices at the Tabernacle, and also at the Ark, the Tabernacle system is never restored. Not until Solomon's Temple is consecrated a century later does God actually return in the full sense to His temple.

The desolating sacrileges and God's departure from Solomon's Temple are described in Ezekiel 8-11. Notice that the destruction of Jerusalem happens almost immediately after this event. There is no continuance of sacrifice at any lingering semi-Temple.

Thus, we have two desolating sacrileges. The first

comes toward the end of the priestly period, but after it the people still worship in a semi-desolated Tabernacle. The second comes right at the end of the kingly period.

When we move to the latter days, we have the same pattern. The period when Israel serves as priests to the nations runs from Cyrus to Jesus. The desolating sacrilege committed by Menelaus, supported by many of the Jews, results in God's abandoning the temple and bringing in Antiochus to punish the Jews. All of this was punishment for the transgressors who had filled up their cup of wrath (Dan. 8:23). After that time, though the Maccabees restore the Temple, yet a full restoration never takes place. No Zadokite is installed as high priest. It should be clear that the Temple is not really restored until the King comes, Jesus the greater Solomon, and builds a new Temple by completely cleansing the old.

Daniel 8:14 says that the holy place will be vindicated or justified after 2300 evenings/mornings, but it does not say that it will be cleansed (contrast Ezekiel 43:26). A full restoration would require cleansing; in fact, after a desolation by God, we would have to have a prophetic vision showing God's return to the Temple, such as we have in Ezekiel 43 and Zechariah 1-6. The holy place was justified or "made right" at the end of the 2300 days, but this did not completely end the desolation, any more than the Tabernacle service from Samuel to the fourth year of Solomon was the same as what it had been before.

The Law requires that the high priest officiate at the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Other occasions, including the annual festivals, might be conducted by other priests. Since there was no legitimate high priest in office from the time of Menelaus forward, there was never a legitimate Day of Atonement. The sins of Israel, and of the world, thus symbolically accumulated year after year until the coming of the True High Priest finally removed them.

The desolation, in the fullest sense, did not end until Jesus came to the Temple.

The last desolating sacrilege was committed in the years preceding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Daniel 9:24-27). For the sake of completeness, I can briefly state what seems to me to be the case. Jesus was accepted as king of the Jews on Palm Sunday, and recognized as such by Pilate; thus replacing Herod as David replaced Saul. Jesus entered the Temple, thus fully reconsecrating it. More so, Jesus entered Heaven, and created the new Temple of the Church. Jesus became both King of the world and King of the Jews, the last of the Davidic/Solomonic kings.

Since the vessels of the Temple are merely symbols of God's people, the murder of the saints by priests will constitute a desolating sacrilege. The sacrilegious murder of Jesus and of Stephen were forgiven. The book of Revelation, however, shows us that in the AD 60s there was a great massacre of believing Jews. Their blood filled the land, calling up the Avenger of Blood. Their blood was poured out upon Jerusalem, who herself had drunk their blood (Rev. 7, 14-17). Though this event is not corroborated in any secular history, Josephus tells us that in AD 62, the high priest Annas the Younger had James and some other Christians put to death, probably in revenge for their protecting the offensive Paul when he was in Jerusalem a few years earlier. The Church Father Hegesippus regarded this ending of James's ministry of intercession as the desolating sacrilege that spelled Jerusalem's doom (according to Eusebius, *Church History* 2:23:18 & 20). Thus, Jerusalem was destroyed by the army sent by God, the army of Titus.

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In 164 BC Judas Hashmon (of the Hasmonean or Asmonean family), called Maccabaeus ("The Hammerer") entered Jerusalem with his Jewish army and reinstituted the sacrifices in the Temple. The Feast of Hanukkah or Rededication took place on the 25th of the 9th month (roughly December). With the restoration of worship, the Hasidim or Pharisees quit the war, believing that the political judgments that had come upon Judea were sent by God and that continued political revolt would be out of keeping with the teachings of Jeremiah and Daniel, that the Jews would be ruled by world empires until the coming of Messiah. Meanwhile, Menelaus was put to death and was succeeded by a priest named Jakim or Alcimus. Alcimus was of the priestly line, but not of the house of Zadok. Rejected, the son of Onias III, Onias IV, removed to Egypt. Evidently the Maccabees decided to keep control for themselves, and appointed Alcimus, thinking he would do what they wanted. Alcimus, however, turned out to be a liberal (a Hellenizer) who shortly turned against both the Hasidim and the proto-Zealot Maccabees.

Thus begins a time of trouble for the faithful among

the Jews. From this time on most of the high priests were basically unfaithful men who persecuted the true believers (Hasidim, Pharisees) and favored the apostate liberals (Hellenizers, Sadducees).

Jonathan Hashmon, brother of the by now slain Judas, managed with Syrian help to retake Jerusalem from Alcimus and his friends in 153 BC. Jonathan was made high priest by the renegade Syrian king Alexander Balas. Since the Asmoneans were of priestly ancestry, though not Zadokite, this was not completely illegal, though it surely shocked and dismayed the faithful to see the high priesthood bestowed as a political office by the ruler of another nation! Such events as this make it clear that there was no real cleansing or restoration of the Temple after the desolating sacrilege of Menelaus's day. In fact, the Hashmons were employing the same sinful methods as Menelaus, acquiring the office of high priest from the pagan rulers of the Syrian empire. Thus, in a real sense the desolating sacrilege was confirmed and extended by them.

Jonathan was succeeded by Simon, another brother, after his death in 142. Both Jonathan and Simon treated the orthodox party well, and Simon secured Jewish liberty by entering into a mutual defense pact with Rome. The Senate of Rome sent letters to Syria and Egypt telling them to leave Judea alone. Simon was murdered by an ambitious son-in-law in 134.

Simon's son John Hyrcanus escaped. With the support of Syria he became high priest (134-104 BC). At this point, the Sadducees realized that further opposition to the house of Hashmon was pointless and, being given to devious behavior anyway, began to support the Asmoneans, in fulfillment of Daniel 11:34. John Hyrcanus was gradually won over by them, and became antagonistic toward the orthodox, the Pharisees. Additionally, it seems that Hyrcanus also assumed the title of king. From the standpoint of the Pharisees it was bad enough that he, as a non-Zadokite, was officiating as high priest. But to claim the title of king when he was not of the house of David, and clearly was not the Messiah, was an even greater blasphemy. Thus the Pharisees forsook him.

Another feature of John Hyrcanus's reign that is important for future history is that he conquered Edom (Idumea) and forced the Idumeans to accept the Jewish religion and become circumcised.

Upon Hyrcanus's death, his son Aristobulus I became high priest and also called himself king. He was ruthless and cruel and a vigorous Hellenizer. He died after only one year and was succeeded by his brother Alexander Jannaeus, or Jannai, in 103 BC.

Jannaeus was a thoroughgoing Hellenist and ruled as an oriental despot. He offended the orthodox by marrying the widow of his brother Aristobulus I, in violation of Leviticus 21:13 & 14 and Ezekiel 44:22. So unpopular was he that once in 90 BC, while he was preparing to officiate

at the altar during the Feast of Tabernacles, the worshipers pelted him with citrons and shouted insults. Josephus says that he turned his guards on the pilgrims and murdered about 6000 of them. During his reign, many dropped out of Judea altogether and became anabaptistic communalists, forming the Essenes. Eventually the zealot wing of the Pharisees revolted, but eventually were suppressed. After this, Jannaeus's persecution of the Pharisees intensified. On one occasion he crucified 800 of his orthodox opponents in the sight of a banquet party given by Jannaeus for his followers and concubines. While the men died on the cross, Jannaeus had their wives and children brought in and butchered before their eyes. This was done not by Nero but by the high priest of Israel. Alexander Jannaeus died in 76 BC and left his wife Alexandra to rule in his place.

Salome (Shalom-Zion) Alexandra (76-67 BC) ruled wisely and favored the Pharisees. Her brother was a prominent Pharisee leader and theologian. Her son Hyrcanus II, a Pharisee disciple by his uncle and a man without ambition other than service, was as high priest. The Sadducees were in disfavor, and some of those involved in murdering Pharisees during the reign of Jannaeus were themselves put to death. As soon as Alexandra died, however, the Sadducees joined with Hyrcanus's brother Aristobulus II, a military commander, and moved against Hyrcanus and the Pharisees. Since the Pharisees did not believe in political action and were not well equipped for combat, Aristobulus readily became high priest (67-63 BC).

Hyrcanus eventually began to fear that Aristobulus would move to have him killed and removed himself to Petra in the kingdom of the Nabataeans. At this time Antipater, father of Herod the Great, was governor of Idumea and Aretas III was king of the Nabataeans. Both men disliked having a strong military commander as ruler of Judea. Thus, they importuned and finally prevailed upon Hyrcanus to accept their help and attack Jerusalem. The result was a bloody civil war between the forces of Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II. Both sides appealed to Rome, with whom Judea had been engaged off and on since the time of Simon Hashmon, and in 63 BC, Pompey arrived to take charge. Pompey decided in favor of Hyrcanus and he became high priest again (63-40 BC), while Antipater of Idumea was made governor of Judea.

Once Antipater took over, he and Herod after him appointed high priests at will. With the death of Herod, appointment of high priests fell to the Roman governors. After the death of Herod Agrippa I, in AD 44, appointment of high priests was given by the emperor Claudius to Herod king of Chalcis, who passed it to his son Herod Agrippa II, who maintained the right until AD 66, when Jerusalem was invested. In these events, the high priesthood came to its ultimate external degradation. The venality of the men holding this office, including those who put Jesus and James to death, displayed its even greater moral

degradation.

23. Herod, the Willful King (Daniel 11:36-45)

Daniel 11:36-45 has long been a puzzle for commentators. It speaks of "the king," his character and his doings. The events described here don't fit the life of Antiochus, and thus few have tried to make it out to be him. Also, v. 21 says that the honor of kingship did not really belong to him, and except for v. 27, he is not referred to by that title. Additionally, Antiochus was, if anything, the king of the North, but the Willful King winds up in conflict with the king of the North in v. 40 and troubled by rumors from the North in v. 44.

Naturally, the anti-Roman interpreters applied these verses to Roman Catholicism, taking their cue from verse 37, which says that the king does not regard the desire of women, which they referred to clerical celibacy. Futurists feel comfortable popping these verses to the end of history, which goes along with their misinterpretation of 12:1-3, which they also refer to the end of history. Others have said that at this point Daniel 11 simply moves into generalities that do not involve specific predictions, but this hardly fits the detailed character of the statements found here.

For Calvin, the king here is the succession of Roman emperors, who as the Second Little Horn, usurped some of the ten-fold power of Rome. Calvin makes a good stab at it, but I think his view ultimately founders on Daniel 7:23-25. The ten horns of the Roman beast are not the various powers of Rome but ten (or many) provinces/kingdoms of the Roman empire. The Second Little Horn is different from the others and winds up ruling three (a few) of the ten areas. This sounds very much like a non-Roman power within the Roman empire. Moreover, Rome would, if anything, be the king of the North, but as mentioned above, the Willful King is clearly not the same as the King of the North.

In fact, the Willful King seems rather clearly to be positioned between the North and the South. Philip Mauro, and before him the Scottish exegete James Farquharson, urged that this person is Herod the Great, and possibly the line of Herods thereafter. Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* (Swengel, PA: Reiner Pubs., 1944). Mauro's exegesis makes far more sense than anyone else's, and thus I present a refinement of it here.

Ultimately, the question boils down to what fits best. We take this passage and the description of the Second Little Horn, and we compare them with the Caesars and with Herod. We also compare the general redemptive-historical context with each. Then we see which fits the best. I submit that Herod fits the best.

Our procedure will be as before, to take up these verses seriatim and then comment on the meaning of the passage as a whole.

v. 36. The king will prosper until the indignation is finished. The indignation apparently begins with the desolating sacrilege (compare Daniel 8:19), and clearly ends with the coming of Jesus. Thus, we have moved forward to the time just before Christ.

The king: Virtually the only persons ever called kings in the New Testament are the Herods, and all four of them are routinely called by that title:

Herod the Great, Matthew 2:2-9, Luke 1:5

Herod Antipas, Mark 6:14-27

Herod Agrippa I, Acts 12:1, 20

Herod Agrippa II, Acts 25:13-26:30

Though all are called kings, the only Herods who were officially named kings of the Jews were Herod the Great and Herod Agrippa I. Herod Antipas was technically only a tetrarch, and Herod Agrippa II was king of Chalcis. Thus, the use of the title "king of the Jews" for Jesus by Pilate, highlighted in all four gospels, shows Christ as the replacement for Herod.

I mentioned in our discussion of Daniel 7 that Herod the Great was the "face" of Rome to the Jews, thus the primary face that the fourth beast shows is that of the Second Little Horn. Herod had been made "king of the Jews" by the Roman Senate in 39 BC.

The king exalts himself above every god and speaks great things against the God of gods. There are three different words for "god" used in verses 36-39, for a total of eight references. The word 'el, used here, basically means "power." The king sought to exalt himself above every other institutional power in Judea, and spoke "against" the Supreme Power. This "speaking" connects the king with the Second Little Horn, who is pictured as continually making great boasts (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 25).

Since Herod always played the religious game, even restoring the Temple at Jerusalem, is it correct to identify him as someone who spoke out against God Most High? Making allowances for the theological character of prophecy, which exposes the full meaning of events, I believe Herod does fit the description. Though he fixed up the Temple, he also put a Roman eagle on it! And his massacre of the infants of Bethlehem was a self-conscious assault on the Messiah of God. Herod knew full well who it was who had been born. The combination of prophecies and signs in the heavens could leave him in no doubt. The fact that he tried to kill the Messiah is a much a fulfillment of "speaking monstrous things against the God of gods" as we could ever wish to see.

v. 37. The word for God here is 'elohim, the Creator, the Supreme Being. Regarding the "God of his fathers,"

Young points out (Young, *Daniel*, p. 249) that "the phrase has a Jewish emphasis and has reference to the Jewish religion." This, Young thinks, excludes Herod. The Idumeans, however, had been impressed into Judaism by John Hyrcanus, as we have already seen. Moreover, the Edomites were sons of Abraham and Isaac, and brothers of Jacob. Thus, both as an Edomite by race and as a Jew by religion, Herod had the God of Israel as his God.

"The desire of women" might mean that the king is a homosexual, or at least has no sexual interest. It is more likely that the "desire of women" is a reference to the Messiah. Haggai 2:7 calls the Messiah the "Desire of nations," and in the light of Genesis 3:15, the Messiah could properly be called the "Desire of women." A third possibility, which does not exclude the second just mentioned, is that the desire of women is children. "Give me children or I die" was the prayer of more than one woman in the history of Israel. Herod's slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem showed that he had no regard for the desire of women. Mauro points to Rachel's weeping for her children (Jeremiah 31:51 and Matthew 2:17, 18) in this connection.

No regard for other gods: the word for god here, and in verses 38 & 39, is 'eloah, which carries the connotation of an object of fear or honor. The king does not respect any religious object, because he honors himself above all.

v. 38. The king honors a "god of fortresses." This odd phrase seems to mean that the king does not honor and fear any personal god at all, but rather honors power itself. A culture that deified raw power, or at least functioned as if raw power were its ultimate deity, is a good description of Rome. It is true of Herod that he gave homage and lavish gifts to whichever Roman power confronted him. Herod had access to great wealth, both inherited and gained by heavy taxation policies.

v. 39. "Thus he will do to the strongholds of the fortresses." This cryptic phrase seems to refer to Herod's program of building various public works, including the fortress Antonia, fortifications for Jerusalem and Jericho, including fortifying the Temple, the fortresses at Masada, Machaerus, Herodeion near Jerusalem, Herodeion near the Nabataean border, and Alexandreion, as well as new cities: Antipatris, Phasaelis, Agrippeion, Sebaste (formerly Samaria), and Caesarea. Herod also built temples and public buildings in Athens, Sparta, Rhodes, and other cities. The pagan temples he built were naturally adorned with pagan statues. Herod also had a policy of parcelling out land to those loyal to him.

(chapter 23 will be concluded in the next issue)