

Lesson #39 *An OT Type Of Antichrist* Oct. 28, 2020

Ezra and Nehemiah, the last two historical books of the Old Testament, deal with the restoration of the remnant after the 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

Group One: Returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel Ezra 1-4

- Began to rebuild the temple: The altar was restored; foundations laid; Work stopped
- People rebuilt their own houses

About 16 years after the work had stopped, God sent 2 prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to get the people to resume work on their Temple.

- Temple was completed in 516 BC

Group Two: Returned to Jerusalem in 458 BC under leadership of Ezra.

Group Three: Returned to Jerusalem under Nehemiah who led the people to rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem. [~14 years after Ezra]

The Jews had returned to Israel from the Babylonian captivity (as merchants, not shepherds). They were a puppet nation under the domination of the great world power of that day,

The Medo-Persian Empire

In Jerusalem, the temple had been restored. Both the Law and the priesthood of Aaron's line had been restored, and the Jews had given up their worship of idols.

However, a century after the return of the 1<sup>st</sup> exiles, the people became indifferent to the moral and ceremonial aspects of the law. Both worship and morality were in a state of decay.

The priesthood had become compromised with the things of the world.

The priests were neglecting the temple and not teaching the people the ways of God.

The Jewish people were mistreating their wives, marrying pagans and not tithing.

God sent His final prophet of that era, Malachi [432 BC], with His final message for a long time.

The 400 years of silence refers to the time between the Old and New Testaments, during which God did not speak to the Jewish people. [Last recorded year = 425 BC]

It began with the warning: Mal. 4:5-6 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

It ended with the coming of John the Baptist, the Messiah's forerunner.

Consider: God used the silent years to prepare the perfect time and place for Jesus' arrival.

God always planned that Jesus would die on a Roman cross to pay the penalty for the sin of mankind. This plan was not set in motion at the birth of Jesus, but during the 400 silent years.

These 400 "silent years" are very important.

- It lasted longer than the Kingdom of Judah.
- It changed the entire stage for the Gospel and the entrance of the Messiah.

- Two trends during this time:
  - The world was quickly changing.
  - The Jews in Judah became entrenched in new leadership and religious organizations.

In the book of Matthew you discover an entirely different atmosphere -- almost a different world. During this time, God rearranged the scenes of history, much as a stage crew will rearrange the stage sets after the curtain has fallen, and when the curtain rises again there is an entirely new setting. The Roman legions have spread throughout the length and breadth of the civilized world. Rome is now the dominant power of the earth.

The Jews were under a vice king, Herod the Great, a descendant of Esau instead of Jacob. Furthermore, the high priests who now sit in the seat of religious authority in the nation are no longer from the line of Aaron. Rather, they are hired priests to whom the office is sold as political patronage. The temple is still the center of Jewish worship, but the synagogues that have sprung up in every Jewish city seem to be the center of Jewish life even more than the temple. Priests continue to provide leadership, but the people look to a new array of religious authorities as well. These include Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes.

A governing body, the council or Sanhedrin, sits over these as a religious Supreme Court.

History In Advance: God used a dream to communicate with King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Dan. 2:19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. God provided an image which illustrated an overview of world events in the millennia yet to come.

This image depicted what Jesus called "the times of the Gentiles."

Defined as: Long period of time from the Babylonian Empire to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming Of the Messiah. The Gentiles have dominance over the City of Jerusalem.

Luke 21:24 Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. The "times of the Gentiles" will end when Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom. [Luke 21:25-28]

1. Head of Gold = Nebuchadnezzar = Then > Current major world power [636 BC-539 BC]

2. Chest and arms of Silver = Medo-Persian Empire [539 BC - 330 BC]

Dan. 7:5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, [Persia was dominant] and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

Note: 3 ribs = Babylon, Egypt & Lydia were defeated to establish the Persian Empire

#### Jewish Life Under Persian Rule:

1. Pro-Israel policy: People who hindered the Israelites from rebuilding their Temple and resettling their land were threatened with capital punishment. [Ezra 6]

2. Jews began to worship in local synagogues. Priests served in the Temple and offered required sacrifices. Worship in the synagogue focused on the study of the Law.

Scribes became the influential preservers and interpreters of the Law.

3. Religious conflict with the Samaritans who had intermarried with other groups during the exile. Worship became syncretistic, incorporating elements of paganism with true worship.

4. Samaritans built a rival temple in the north on Mt. Gerazim.

3. Belly & Thighs of Brass = Grecian Empire = Alexander The Great [330 BC - 168 BC]

Dan. 7:6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

Daniel has another vision in chapter 8 which is: 2 years after his vision of Daniel 7 and 12 years before Belshazzar's feast. The vision in chapter 8 is of The Ram and the He-goat.

This vision focuses on the Persian and Greek Empires.

Dan. 8:3-4 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.

<sup>4</sup> I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. [3 ribs; devour much flesh]

Dan. 8:20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.

Dan. 8:5-6 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.

Dan. 8:21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

Dan. 8:7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

In 330 B.C. a tremendous battle between the Persians and the Greeks entirely altered the course of history. Alexander, as a young man only 20 years old, led the armies of Greece in victory over the Persians and completely demolished the power of Persia. The center of world power then shifted farther west into Greece, and the Grecian empire was born.

During the reign of Alexander the Great the whole world changed and became "Grecianized" or Hellenized [a system of ease and pleasure]. Grecian Influence Was Very Strong In Israel, especially the priesthood in Israel which became corrupt and power mad.

Note: A party arose among the Jews called the Hellenists who were eager to bring Grecian culture and thought into the nation and liberalize some of the Jewish laws.

Result: Split into 2 major parties

1. Strong Hebrew nationalist who wanted to preserve everything according to Mosaic order.
  - a. Resisted all foreign influence to disrupt the old Jewish ways
  - b. Became known as the PHARISEES ["to separate"] - insisted on preserving traditions.
  - c. Grew stronger, became more legalistic and rigid in their requirements until they became the target for some of the most scorching words of Jesus.
  - d. Became religious hypocrites - kept the outward form of the law but violated its spirit.
2. Hellenists became more influential in the politics.
  - a. Became known in NT days as the SADDUCEES or the liberals
  - b. Turned away from strict interpretation of the law
  - c. Rationalists who ceased to believe in the supernatural in any form
  - d. Did not believe in a resurrection

Note: The Pharisees & Sadducees are the main antagonists in the New Testament. [Never mentioned in OT] They hated each other, but they found a common enemy in Jesus.

Alexander's Conquests accomplished God's purposes in the world and helped to prepare the world for the coming of Christ and the spread of the gospel.

1. He put an end to the Oriental influence that threatened to take over the Western world.
2. He helped bring peoples together by extending Greek culture and language.

For the Jewish people, who were to be set apart, the coming of Greek culture represented a moral and spiritual crisis.

3. His policy of kindness toward conquered people introduced a powerful example of brotherhood into the world.

4. He literally "wedded East to West" when 9000 of his soldiers and officers married Eastern women in one mass wedding.

Dan. 8:8 Therefore the He Goat Waxed Very Great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

Alexander died in 323 B.C. when he was about 32 years old.

Dan. 8:22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

Cassander Greece & Macedonia

Lysimachus Thrace & Bithynia = Asia Minor

Seleucus Syria, Babylonia

Ptolemy Egypt, Israel, Arabia

During this time Israel was annexed by Egypt and suffered greatly at the hands of Ptolemy. In fact, for the next one hundred years, Israel was caught in the meat-grinder of the unending conflicts between Syria on the north and Egypt on the south.

1. Thousands of Jews were forcibly resettled in Alexandria. They began to speak Greek.

Their worship came to reflect a Greek preference for aesthetics over content.

2. In Egypt, the OT was translated into Greek. [Septuagint; ~284 BC] It came into widespread use and is frequently quoted in the New Testament.

3. The NT was written in Greek. When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, who spoke Latin, he still wrote in Greek.

Dan. 8:9-10 And Out Of One Of Them Came Forth A LITTLE HORN, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. [Israel]

<sup>10</sup> And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground and Stamped Upon Them.

- Starts small but gradually accumulated power as he magnified himself and dealt ruthlessly with the Jewish people.
- He attacked the Jews in their land and put a stop to their religious practices.

Dan. 8:23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.

Note: This horn of 8:9 is clearly different from the little horn that came up among the 10 horns on the 4<sup>th</sup> beast in Daniel's previous vision [Dan. 7:8] . . . This little horn arising from the 3<sup>rd</sup> kingdom [Greece] serves as a prototype of the little horn of the 4<sup>th</sup> kingdom [Roman].

Question: Did Daniel's prophecy come true? Did he write history in advance?

These specific details, prophesied ~350 years BEFORE they transpired, were fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes IV. The time and manner of his rise to power were foretold in Daniel.

- The Most High Rules The Kingdom Of Men.

This "little horn" is Antiochus IV, the 8<sup>th</sup> king of the Syrian Dynasty [Seleucid Empire] who reigned over Syria from 175 BC-164 BC. He was a vicious and violent persecutor of the Jews. He is often referred to as: The Antichrist of the OT since he fulfilled some of Daniel's predictions concerning the coming of one who would be "a contemptible person" and a "vile king." He called himself, Antiochus Epiphanes, "the Illustrious One" or "God manifest."

- the visible god > said he and Jupiter were identical
- had the word theos [god] put on the coins minted with his features on it.

His features on the coins came to look more and more like Zeus.

His narcissistic behavior earned him another nickname in Jewish sources: They called him, Antiochus Epimanes, "the Madman.," or "the wicked one."

He could captivate the common people with his appearance of geniality, but in reality he proved to be a forbidding despot with contempt for those who would not submit to his will.

Dan. 8:11-12 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered.

175 BC: Antiochus Epiphanes = King of Syria = 1<sup>st</sup> time: Israel came under a ruler who tried to stamp out Judaism completely. They were BRUTAL!

Dan. 11:21-35 provides more detail regarding Antiochus. the prophet reveals the rise and rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king who reigned from 175-164 B.C. Daniel's prediction involves the rise of Antiochus to power, the conflicts of Antiochus with Egypt [the king of the South], and his hostilities towards Israel.

- Dan. 11:21-35 = Near fulfillment with TYPE of The Antichrist [Antiochus Epiphanes]
- Dan. 11:36-45 = Future fulfillment with THE ANTICHRIST

<sup>21</sup>And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

1. He was not the heir to the throne. He obtained it by guile and seized the throne.
2. He was successful in his military endeavors and knew how to combine deceptive strategy with brute force.

Under Alexander the Great, hellenization had been a movement that still allowed room for cultural variation. Under Antiochus, hellenization was intended to take a big step further and become the agent of cultural totalitarianism. He aimed to rid the world of the annoying, exclusive, "nonconformist" religion of the Jewish people. In order to unify his vast and racially heterogeneous empire, which stretched as far as the Caspian Sea, he planned to create one religion for all.

- The Jews were clearly the targets of Antiochus's strategy of Hellenization.
- He was violently bitter against the Jews and was determined to exterminate them and their religion.

### 2 Groups Of Jews

- Hellenists = accepted pagan practices and the Greek culture
- Traditionalist = Hasidim, pious ones faithful to the Mosaic Law; forerunner of Pharisees

His first act was to dispose the high priest, Onias, in Jerusalem. He replaced him with Jason, a "Hellenizer" who started turning Jerusalem into a Greek city and helped implement the new totalitarian doctrine. I Macc. 1:41ff

- Set up a Greek Constitution and coin Greek money.
- The traditionalists were outraged. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> time since the Babylonian Captivity a non-Jewish government had interfered with the priesthood [treating the sacred office as though it were nothing other than a governmental office]. The worst was yet to come.
- The hellenizers had full control of the government in Jerusalem and they began to build gymnasiums within the city and encouraged the young to spend all their time there.
- The young priests engaged in sports. Jerusalem was filled with Greek styles, Greek clothes, Greek names, Greek language and worst of all, Greek religion and Greek morals.

171 BC: 1<sup>st</sup> campaign against Egypt - Dan. 11:25-28

Antiochus invaded Egypt and once again Israel was caught in the meat grinder of rivalry.

[Israel is the most fought-over country in the world. Jerusalem is the most captured city in all history. It has been pillaged, ravished, burned and destroyed more than 27x in its history.]

He won the battle even though he failed to take all of Egypt. He sat down at the bargaining table with the Egyptian leaders, never intending to keep any agreements.

In spite of deception on both sides, the Lord was in control and watching the calendar.

- God has His appointed times and is always on time.

170 BC On his return to Syria, Antiochus turned his attention to Israel and the wealth in their Temple. [Dan. 11:28] He plundered and defiled the Temple, abolished the daily sacrifices, killed many Jews and left soldiers to keep things in control.

In 168 BC, he invaded Egypt again, but this time the Romans [Dan. 11:30 "ships of Chittim"] confronted him and told him to stop. After leaving Egypt, he took out his rage again on Israel with the help of Jewish traitors who forsook their own covenant to support him.

He promised to reward them generously for their help.

Once again Jerusalem became a ruin. The walls were broken down and the city was burned.

The people were slaughtered by the thousands. The women and children were taken captive.

Jerusalem and all the Jews' Religious Rites Began To Deteriorate as they came fully under the power of the Syrian king.

He sent letters to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah.

[I Maccabees 1:44-49]

1. Follow customs strange to the land
2. Forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary
3. Directed the Jews to profane Sabbaths and feasts
4. Directed Jews to defile the sanctuary and the priests
5. Directed them to build altars in sacred precincts and shrines for idols
6. Sacrifice swine and unclean animals
7. Leave your sons uncircumcised
8. Forget Jewish law and change all your ordinances
9. Whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.

The most famous conflict connected to Antiochus Epiphanes is the Maccabean revolt.

#### Events:

1. While Antiochus was in Egypt, it was REPORTED he had been KILLED in battle.
2. Jerusalem rejoiced! The people organized a revolt and overthrew Menelaus, the pseudo-priest.
3. When the report reached Antiochus [very much alive in Egypt] that Jerusalem was delighted at the report of his death, he organized his armies and swept like a fury back across the land, falling upon Jerusalem with terrible vengeance.

II Maccabees 5:11-14 Raging like a wild animal, he set out from Egypt and took Jerusalem by storm. He ordered his soldiers to cut down without mercy those whom they met and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. There was a massacre of young and old, a killing of women and children, a slaughter of virgins and infants. In the space of 3 days, 80,000 were lost, 40,000 meeting a violent death, and the same number being sold into slavery.

- Only the known Hellenists were allowed to remain.
- He destroyed all found copies of Scripture and slaughtered everyone who had possession of a copy.
- He prohibited Temple worship. No observance of Sabbath, Feast Days or New Moons
- He resorted to every conceivable torture to force Jews to renounce their religion.
- He forbade circumcision on pain of death,

Mothers who circumcised their children were thrown from the city walls along with their children. Those who observed the sabbath were burned alive.

A woman, and her seven sons were taken before the king, where they were demanded to abandon their faith and serve Antiochus's god. When she refused, her eldest son was taken, whereupon his tongue was torn out, his members cut off, and he was burned alive for his refusal to serve the king's heathen god. The woman was forced to watch as her other six sons, in like manner, were killed. She was the last to die.

4. He overturned the city, regained his power, and guided by the treacherous Menelaus, intruded into the very Holy of Holies in the TEMPLE itself.

When he forced his way into the Holy of Holies

- He destroyed the scrolls of the law and stole the treasures of the Jews.
- He stripped the Temple of its sacred vessels, including the seven-branched golden menorah, and stole the silver and gold coin.

5. A statue of Zeus/Antiochus was placed in the Temple above the altar. [Macc. 1:54]

- He believed there was a god manifest in his own royal being.

6. To the absolute horror of the Jews, he took a sow and offered it upon the sacred altar.

7. Then with a broth made from the flesh of this unclean animal, he sprinkled everything in the temple, thus completely defiling and violating the sanctuary. [~171 BC]

An abominable act was perpetrated on Kislev 25, 168 BC according to the Book of Maccabees that "left the Jewish people desolate."

- This was his act to dedicate the Temple in Jerusalem to the Olympian god, Zeus.

Daniel prophesied this event:

Dan. 11:31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

The "Abomination Of Desolation" is also a future sign of the coming desolation of the temple when the Antichrist himself will enter the temple, call himself God and defile the temple during the Tribulation Period. He will set up his OWN image, demand worship and kill those who refuse to worship him.

The Temple was cleansed under the leadership of a man now famous in Jewish history, Judas Maccabeus, "The Hammer." He was of the Aaronic priestly line who with his father and 4 brothers, rose up in revolt against the Syrian king.

1. His father, Mattathias, an elderly priest, refused to offer a required pagan sacrifice to Zeus. He killed a Syrian officer and a reprobate Jew who performed the sacrifice.

He fled to the hills and called faithful Jews to join him in rebellion. [167 BC]

Many Jews laid down their lives for their city, their temple and their faith.

2. The Maccabees, followers of Judas, made their way to Jerusalem in 165 BC.

3. They entered the Temple, removed evidence of pagan worship, erected a new altar to God and ground to dust the statue of Zeus-Antiochus.



4. The day they cleansed the temple was named the Day of Dedication. It occurred on the 25th day of Kislev. Jews still celebrate the Feast of Dedication on that date each year.

Compare Antiochus Epiphanes IV with The Future Antichrist

- Both begin modestly but increase in power and influence.
- Both blaspheme God with mouths that speak great things.
- Both persecute the Jewish people.
- Both claim to be gods and put images in the temple.
- Both impose their own religion on the people.
- Both are opposed by a believing remnant that knows the true God.
- Both are energized by the devil and are great deceivers.
- Both appear to succeed marvelously and seem to be invincible.
- Both are finally defeated by the coming of a redeemer.
  - ❖ Judas Maccabeus under Antiochus IV
  - ❖ Jesus Christ under The Antichrist

Antiochus did his best not only to exterminate the Jewish people but to eliminate their religion from the earth. He promised to reward the Jews who followed his orders. There were many who forsook their holy covenant to obey him. It was a time of testing and refining for the Jewish people when they had to decide to obey the God of their fathers and face probable death or submit to the pagan Syrian leaders and live as traitors to their faith. [Dan. 11:34-35]