

Week Forty-Two

Days 288–294



Maccabean Revolt Narrative: 1 Maccabees 7–13 | Supplemental: Sirach 19–33; Proverbs 22:22–23:21

HISTORICAL BIBLE BOOKS IMPART WISDOM



The Triumph of Judas Maccabeus
by Peter Paul Rubens

The connections this week between the wisdom books (Sirach and Proverbs) and the historical book (1 Maccabees) are not too difficult to spot. Just as we read the historical books of Kings and Chronicles in light of different prophetic books, we can also see how the same themes of faithfulness, trust, responsibility, and judgment feature in all time periods of the Jews. It is up to each generation to discern God's intentions for them and to put their trust in him. The Maccabees understood that their obedience to a foreign power for worldly security was worth nothing if it meant they must violate God's commandments to them.

- Numerous verses in Sirach and Proverbs are about how to raise children. For example, in Proverbs 22:6 we read, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Laying a foundation for virtue is vitally important.
- This also helps us to understand how some people are better (or worse) equipped to stay faithful during times of strife and to understand God's wisdom when it is presented in books like Sirach and Proverbs.
- At the time of the Maccabees, enough of the people had been so equipped to fight against oppression that it would have made them violate God's Law.
- In 1 Maccabees, kings rise and fall, and the Jewish people continue to fight. Judas Maccabeus and the men of Israel continue to pray to the Lord before they go into battle. There is great wisdom here.
- But this book tells us these stories without attempting to preach or teach lessons. The narrative describes whether the people respond faithfully or unfaithfully without becoming a book of preaching.
- We need to remember that this is still the story of the people of Israel. God is active and engaged, though the human author of 1 Maccabees does not point out how.
- In 1 Maccabees 13, we see the Jewish warriors battle to have an independent nation and achieve freedom for God's people.
- The people of Israel fight against the Greeks, but they do so in a way that respects the Law of the Lord.

Are there any teachings or disciplines of the Catholic Faith that you do not understand? If so, seek understanding, asking the Lord for the grace to trust him even when you do not understand.

How did they mark time in the Old Testament? For example, we read phrases like “on the fourth day of the fifth month.”

First, let's understand that the people of Israel followed a lunar calendar for their religious feasts. Because a lunar year is shorter than a solar year, a month was inserted from time to time to ensure that the feasts and festivals would remain consistent from year to year.

Around 500 BC, the leaders of Israel adjusted their calendar to reflect that of the solar year. Here are the Jewish months as they relate to our calendar today: Shevat (January and February), Adar (February and March), Nisan (March and April), Iyar (April and May), Sivan (May and June), Tammuz (June and July), Av (July and August), Elul (August and September), Tishri (September and October), Heshvan (October and November), Kislev (November and December), and Tevet (December and January). The Jewish first month is the month of Nisan (see Exodus 12:1–6). In expressing dates, the Bible, like many ancient writings, uses the names of the kings and rulers as well as national events as points of reference. For examples, see Numbers 33:38, Jeremiah 1:3, and Daniel 1:1.



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This artwork by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld shows Simon being made high priest. He is described in 1 Maccabees 13:42 as “the great high priest and commander and leader of the Jews.”

The Bible in a Year is a daily podcast, produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mike Schmitz, where we read the whole Bible following *The Great Adventure* Bible study program created by Jeff Cavins. This bulletin was adapted from *The Bible in a Year Companion* books that complement the podcast.