

Mattathias

1 Maccabees 2

by Don Falkos

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The officials of Antiochus IV Epiphanes king of Syria went to the town of Modein and approached a priest named Mattathias. "You are an important man in this town. Obey the king; accept his religion; others will follow your example; and you will be richly rewarded."

Mattathias replied, "My family and I will never give up our faith or disobey God's Law."

Just then a local Jew stepped forward to obey the king by offering an unclean sacrifice. Mattathias was furious. He killed the man. Then he invited every true believer in the Lord to follow him as he and his five sons escaped into the hills, leaving behind everything they owned.

A large number of Jews moved out into the desert, assuming they would be safe there. But one Sabbath the king's men came and slaughtered a thousand men, women, and children because of their disobedience to the king. And since it was the Sabbath, these faithful people didn't even defend themselves.

Mattathias and his ever-growing following kept the Law of God but vowed to fight as one if attacked, even on the Sabbath.

Just before his death, Mattathias reminded his sons of their brave and faithful ancestors such as Phinehas, David, Daniel and his three friends. "Be like them! Find courage and strength in the Lord. And don't be afraid of that brutal Antiochus. His glory will crumble to dust. He is destined to be consumed by maggots."