

2 Maccabees

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, ... the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Second Book of the Maccabees using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to the Historical Books* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§]And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶]Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||}that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||}and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shinin

12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.

14 Do all th tioning,¹⁵that y children of God crooked and per

2:9-11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20-21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven ... earth ... under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

serious that we pur sense of awe at sen the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu 2:15 pervers • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable de the leading vi (1) Some, like

Prepare

Read the Introduction to 2 Maccabees, paying particular attention to the *Literary Background*, the *Themes and Characteristics*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of 2 Maccabees to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of 2 Maccabees, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on 2 Maccabees as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

Chapter 1



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 1:9

- In accordance with Lev 23, how and when was the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) celebrated?
- As a harvest celebration that also became a great commemoration of the Temple, when was it renewed and under whose leadership?
- For what feast did this celebration become the model, and how was it celebrated?
- Following some variant readings, what does the reference to 164 B.C. commemorate and with reference to what other date?

2 Maccabees 1:18—2:15

- What does the lengthy portion of this letter recount?
- Why is the appeal to an array of scriptural figures—Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Solomon, Moses—essential?

2 Maccabees 1:18

- How does the Greek text literally read, and to what feast does it most likely refer?
- To what does the fire refer?
- For what is this memory foundational?
- What prompts commentators to speculate as to why the author of 2 Maccabees credits Nehemiah with constructing the Temple and altar?
- Where else are similar identifications of Nehemiah as the Temple's builder found?
- Within the context of 2 Maccabees, why would it seem that Nehemiah's role as a builder is emphasized?
- To what other parallels is this added?

2 Maccabees 1:31–33

- How does Christian interpretation view this mysterious fire-water?

- How does St. Ambrose interpret this fire-water symbol in the light of Baptism?



For Application

2 Maccabees 1:1–5

- If you became aware that a group of Christians in Iraq were in a precarious situation such as imminent persecution, what would you say to encourage them in their faith?

- How might this introduction serve as a model?

2 Maccabees 1:18—2:15

- The note for these verses states that they provide the rationale for establishing a new feast not prescribed in the Torah. Aside from Christmas and Easter, what are some important feasts that the Church has established?

- What do they commemorate?

- Why devote several feasts to various aspects of the lives of Jesus and Mary or of John the Baptist and St. Paul?

2 Maccabees 1:22

- What fire does the Feast of Pentecost celebrate?

- What does the association of fire with the Holy Spirit mean?

- How does one obtain that fire?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 2



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 2:1

- Though this narrative is not present in the canonical book of Jeremiah, what action of Jeremiah/Baruch do several early Jewish sources discuss?
- On what does Eupolemus, a Jewish historian contemporary with the Maccabees, also comment?
- Why did Jeremiah hold a distinct significance for Jews in Egypt?

2 Maccabees 2:7

- What hope is the focal point of this second letter, and with what is it linked?
- For what does the inclusion of Jeremiah's testimony about the future reappearance of the ark and God's glory serve as an encouragement?
- What desire may these "gathering" references indicate?
- While little testimony survives from this period, what feast do we know that Jesus observed?

Word Study: *Appearances* (2 Maccabees 2:21).

- What does the Greek word *epiphaneia* mean, and for what English word is it the source?
- What can this word be used to describe?
- How is the second sense of *epiphaneia*, common in 2 Maccabees, employed?
- Why did Antiochus give himself the nickname Epiphanes?
- Throughout 2 Maccabees, how are the wicked plans of this “God Manifest” countered?
- How is this theme in 2 Maccabees further developed in the Gospel of John?

2 Maccabees 2:23–32

- Where do we find the closest scriptural parallel to the author’s account of his own writing?

- What was the effect of God's inspiration?
- What Church teaching about the authors of Scripture did Vatican II reaffirm?



For Application

2 Maccabees 2:2–3

- Immigrants from other countries are usually expected to assimilate to the prevailing culture, as were European immigrants to United States in the last century. What are the advantages of assimilation for them?
- From a religious perspective, what are the disadvantages of assimilation?
- How can immigrants adapt to the new culture and still retain their religious beliefs?

2 Maccabees 2:7–8

- What do you expect will happen at the Last Judgment, when God gathers his people together for the revelation of his sons?
- What will it reveal that now remains hidden (CCC 1038–41)?

2 Maccabees 2:19–22

- The story of the Maccabees against the Seleucids is presented as a war between two personal antagonists. In reality, what might be said of most people, those in the middle who joined neither side?
- Whom might they have favored?
- How might they have tried to avoid committing themselves to either side?
- In today's secular culture, who are the antagonists?
- What does Jesus say about the effort to avoid taking sides (cf. Mk 8:34–38)?

2 Maccabees 2:24–32

- Have you ever had to present information to an audience?
- What was your purpose?
- What background research did you have to do?

- With what intent or according to what schema did you organize your material?
- How successful was your presentation?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 3



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 3:5

- Who is Apollonius of Tarsus?

2 Maccabees

- As what province are Coele-syria and Phoenecia also known, and what area did it include?
- What is the term Coele-syria also used more narrowly to describe?

2 Maccabees 3:7

- Who is Heliodorus, and how is he identified by the Greek historian Appian?
- What did archaeologists at Tell Maresha in Judea discover about him?
- Bearing the date of 178 B.C., what did the stele detail?

2 Maccabees 3:11

- What is known from the Jewish historian Josephus about Hyrcanus, son of Tobias?
- What context can help readers understand the value of four hundred talents of silver and two hundred of gold?

2 Maccabees 3:39

- What is the significance of the statement in this verse?

- What principle does Heliodorus' unsuccessful invasion establish, and what does it have to do with the Temple's later desecration under Antiochus?



For Application

2 Maccabees 3:4–6

- When you have a disagreement with a religious or spiritual authority, how do you resolve it?

- What do you do if there is no one higher in authority to whom to appeal?

- How appropriate is it to appeal to an outside source?

2 Maccabees 3:25

- How does this figure resemble St. Michael the Archangel?

- What is the usual role of this archangel?

- Do you ever recite the prayer to St. Michael? If so, when?

2 Maccabees 3:26

- In the New Testament, when do two strong young men make their appearance (cf. Lk 24:4)?
- To whom do they appear, and what do they do?
- According to the *Catechism*, what is the role of angels in the life of the Church (CCC 334–36)?

2 Maccabees 3:38

- Where are some locations where one might experience the power of God's presence?
- Have you ever experienced such an encounter? If so, what did it teach you about God's love and mercy toward you?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 4



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 4:9

- Rather than enrolling the men of Jerusalem as citizens in the far-off Seleucid capital of Antioch, what would this proposal have meant?

- Into what would Jerusalem have been made?

2 Maccabees 4:12

- What kind of institution was a Greek gymnasium?
- What was the citadel?
- What was a Greek hat?

2 Maccabees 4:18

- Though called the quadrennial games, what were they literally?
- How did the Greek system of counting years make the games equivalent to quadrennial?
- By whom were the games inaugurated?

2 Maccabees 4:23–25

- As whom is Menelaus here presented, and why would he be unqualified for the high priesthood?
- However, what ancestry do some manuscripts of 3:4 offer in place of Benjamin?

- How does Josephus' later testimony complicate the issue even more?
- While a conclusive solution is not possible at present, how is the Septuagint's reading of "Benjamin" here taken?



For Application

2 Maccabees 4:1

- Against which commandment is the sin of slander or calumny an offense?
- What virtues does this offense oppose?
- What does slander do to one against whom it is directed (CCC 2477, 2479)?
- How can social media contribute to the spread of slander?

2 Maccabees 4:4–6

- According to Mt 18:15–17, what procedure should one follow to resolve a dispute with a fellow Christian?

2 Maccabees

- Why not have recourse to the highest authority as the first step rather than the last?

2 Maccabees 4:7–9

- What is simony, and why is it a sin?

- According to the *Catechism*, why is it “impossible to appropriate to oneself spiritual goods and behave toward them as their owner or master” (CCC 2118, 2121)?

2 Maccabees 4:13–14

- What is the likely influence on subordinates when their leader either neglects his duties or positively disregards them? For example, if a religious leader such as a bishop were to become secularized and use Church goods for his own benefit, how intent on the performance of their ministries are his priests likely to be?
- Considering his influence on the priesthood, what sin might the bishop be committing?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 5



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 5:19

- Similarly to this maxim, what does Christ teach regarding why the Lord gives institutions?
- Just as the Sabbath is created for man, rather than man for the Sabbath, for whose sake is the Temple made?

2 Maccabees 5:21

- How was the tremendous sum of eighteen hundred talents likely generated?

2 Maccabees

- To whom is the allusion of sailing on land and walking on the sea made?
- In a famous passage, of what does Xerxes' uncle warn him, and to whom else does this warning apply?

2 Maccabees 5:22

- In what way are Antiochus' actions described in the same terms as Pharaoh's?
- Who is Philip, the Phrygian?

2 Maccabees 5:27

- By taking refuge in the wilderness, whose pattern are Judas and his companions following?
- Rather than eat unclean food, how do Judas and his friends sustain themselves?



For Application

2 Maccabees 5:2–3

- When confronted with a heavenly apparition or a private revelation, what principles should one use to determine whether it is true or false?

2 Maccabees

- To what sources might one go to locate or clarify these principles?

2 Maccabees 5:12–14

- What are some of the names we give to the wanton killing of large numbers of people?

- Why are we appalled at the murder of even one innocent human being? If that is so, how are we to respond to wholesale slaughters of entire communities?

2 Maccabees 5:19

- Read the note for this verse. Applying the same teaching, why are attendance at Mass on Sundays and holy days as well as certain penitential seasons mandated?

2 Maccabees 5:21

- Is it always the case that pride goes before a fall (cf. Prov 16:18)?

- What does Paul mean when he warns Christians who think they are standing to beware of falling (1 Cor 10:12)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 6



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 6:1

- Who is the Athenian senator referred to here?
- Why was Antiochus' compulsion to suppress the Jewish way of life unusual?
- How did Antiochus likely see Torah observance?

2 Maccabees 6:12–17

- Which one of the book's central themes does the author make explicit?

- Where else in Scripture does this biblical principle appear?

2 Maccabees 6:19

- What is the rack?

- How does Heb 11:35 allude to this event?

2 Maccabees 6:24

- For whom did Eleazar's testimony become an example?

- With what strikingly similar language does the martyr Polycarp reply to the Roman proconsul?



For Application

2 Maccabees 6:6

- In our society, how dangerous is it for one to profess himself a Christian?

2 Maccabees

- If it is not currently dangerous, why do some Christians hide not only the profession but the practice of their faith?
- What does Scripture say about the consequences of being ashamed of the faith (cf. Mt 5:13; 10:32)?

2 Maccabees 6:12–17

- According to the text of these verses, what is the Lord's motive for disciplining his people?
- According to the Book of Hebrews, why does he administer discipline (Heb 12:4–10)?
- How do you respond to setbacks, hardships, desolations, or other forms of divine discipline?

2 Maccabees 6:24–25

- Why does Eleazar refuse to pretend to cooperate with his tormentors?
- What sin is he trying to avoid?
- To what lengths are you prepared to go to avoid committing this same sin?

2 Maccabees 6:31

- What kind of example does the martyrdom of Christians give to the Church?

- What thought have you given to the possibility of your own martyrdom?

- How is living an exemplary Christian life in ordinary circumstances a kind of martyrdom?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 7



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 7:1

- Of whom is no mention made in this account?
- How does St. Cyprian explain this omission?
- Although the text does not identify the location of these events, where does evidence from early reception suggest they took place?
- As what kind of food does the Torah list pigs?
- While *4 Maccabees* 8, 25, testifies that the Law of Moses would not have condemned the brothers to death for this violation, why did they choose to lose their lives?

2 Maccabees 7:28

- To which doctrine does the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* cite the mother's testimony in this passage as a witness?

Topical Essay: *Resurrection in the Old Testament.*

- What evidence is there to support the claim that the Old Testament presents no clear vision of life after death?
 - What are some definite exceptions to this rule, however?
 - While commentators rightly point out that some resurrection passages, particularly those in Ezekiel and Isaiah, serve as analogies for what will happen when the nation of Israel is restored from exile, how does this very point serve to demonstrate the existence of some notion of physical resurrection in these contexts?
 - Why can we regard the Old Testament's testimony on the resurrection as well represented by the conflict between the Sadducees and Pharisees in Acts 23:6–8?
-
- As the *Catechism* states, what follows from this doctrine?

2 Maccabees 7:38

- How is the martyrs' hope that their suffering will bring an end to God's wrath fulfilled?

2 Maccabees

- Of what does 2 Mac 7 offer perhaps the clearest example before the advent of Christ?
- Like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, what does the suffering of these righteous representatives of Israel serve to elicit, and for what does it provide atonement?
- When was the belief that the sufferings of the righteous could bring atonement for others made familiar?
- While the sacrifices of these martyrs and Christ are similar in kind but infinitely distinct in degree, what did the faithfulness of these martyrs accomplish?
- What appeal to the same principle does Paul make in Gal 3?



For Application

2 Maccabees 7:1–2

- Do you have any religious emblems (crucifixes, bibles, icons, etc.) around your home?
- If these were outlawed under severe penalties for their possession, what would you do with them?

- To what lengths would you go to protect them and continue their use?

2 Maccabees 7:7–8

- St. Dominic Savio had as his personal motto, “Death rather than sin”. To what lengths are you willing to go to maintain moral purity in your life? Or what compromises are you willing to make to preserve your life?

2 Maccabees 7:28–29

- What impresses you about the creative power of God?

- What moves him to create?

- Of all the persons he could have created, why did he create you?

2 Maccabees 7:36

- Read Jn 3:13–16, 36. What is your understanding of the eternal life that Jesus promises? When does it begin? How is it completed?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 8



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 8:11

- What did the very low price for slaves possibly indicate about Nicanor?

- What would setting the price this low do to the slave market?

2 Maccabees 8:19

- Because Sennacherib's Assyrian empire covered a territory similar to that of the Seleucid empire in the time of the Maccabees, how did it serve as a natural analogy in the eyes of the Jewish resistance?

- What blueprint does God's defeat of Sennacherib's army against all expectations in 701 B.C. provide for them?

2 Maccabees 8:26

- What does the author highlight in this verse, and in contrast to what?

2 Maccabees 8:30

- Who is Timothy?
- Killed at the end of chap. 10, how can Timothy then reappear at the beginning of chap. 12?
- Who is Bacchides, and what is he attested to have done in 1 Maccabees?



For Application

2 Maccabees 8:2–4

- This prayer lists seven evils from which the faithful Jews need deliverance. When praying for help, why list the troubles you face?
- According to Jesus, what seems to motivate the Lord to act (cf. Mt 9:22; Mk 10:52; Lk 8:50)?

2 Maccabees 8:10

- Although selling human beings into slavery has been outlawed in this country, it is still practiced here. What forms does it take?

- What makes enslaving other people such an abominable crime?

2 Maccabees 8:18

- According to Ps 20:7–8, ancient armies trusted in horses and chariots for military strength. What are the modern equivalents of such equipment?

- The psalm praises those of faith who place their trust in the Lord. Why is it still necessary for people of faith to trust in him rather than in armies?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 9



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 9:1–29

- Where else is Antiochus' demise narrated?
- With what slightly varying details do these accounts report similar stories?
- In keeping with the author's stated aim of making the material easy to memorize (2:25), what kind of organization may these narratives reflect?

2 Maccabees 9:4

- What judgment of heaven finds its fulfillment here?
- What does Antiochus' promise include?

2 Maccabees 9:17

- After making it unlawful to confess to be a Jew in 6:6, what does Antiochus now vow?

- What is the meaning of “Jew” in this context?

2 Maccabees 9:18

- If the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective (Jas 5:16), what qualities characterize the prayer of wicked Antiochus?

- How is Antiochus’ dubious sincerity illustrated?



For Application

2 Maccabees 9:8

- While this verse drips with sarcasm regarding Antiochus, what person is actually able to command the waves of the sea and weigh the mountains in a balance?

- When Jesus commanded the waves and the sea, what was the disciples’ reaction (cf. Mt 8:27; Mk 4:41)?

2 Maccabees 9:11

- Although broken in spirit, how much of his arrogance did Antiochus actually relinquish?

2 Maccabees

- When the Lord allows a person's spirit to be broken, what is his purpose?

- According to Ps 51:17, upon what kind of spirit does the Lord look favorably?

2 Maccabees 9:13–17

- What is Antiochus attempting to do with his vow?

- Have you ever tried to bargain with God to give you some benefit or relieve you of some problem?

- What does God look for in those who pray to him?

2 Maccabees 9:27

- What is the irony in this verse?

- What ironies often lie hidden in the promises of politicians, whether intentionally or not?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 10



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 10:3

- How does the Greek read literally, and to what do some translations speculate these words may refer?
- What is a more natural referent?
- Now, at the Temple's second rededication, for what do these stones become the source?

2 Maccabees

- While both 1 and 2 Maccabees report that the Temple was profaned and rededicated on the same date, the 25th of Chislev, what is the difference in years between these two books, and why is this surprising?

- To what is the difference likely due?

2 Maccabees 10:6

- How is this festival, which becomes known as Hanukkah (meaning “dedication”), here celebrated?

- Just as the Feast of Booths (= Tabernacles) was meant to bring to the Israelites’ remembrance of their time spent in the wilderness after their deliverance from Egypt, how does this new feast use booths?

2 Maccabees 10:7

- Formerly forced to wear ivy in honor of Dionysus, how do Jews now use it?

2 Maccabees 10:20

- To what was a drachma roughly equivalent, and to what would the total of seventy thousand drachmas amount?



For Application

2 Maccabees 10:1–4

- In the dedication or rededication of a church, the building and its altar are sprinkled with holy water, anointed with chrism, and incensed. What is the significance of using sacred chrism, especially on the altar?
- The incensing of the altar signifies the pleasing nature of Christ's sacrifice; what does the incensing of the nave of the church signify?

2 Maccabees 10:6

- How long does the celebration of Christmas last?
- For how many days do Christians celebrate Easter? What feast concludes the Easter celebration?
- How similar are these feasts to the Jewish feasts of Hanukkah, Passover, and Pentecost (Shavuot)?

2 Maccabees 10:13

- Against what commandment is suicide an offense?
- How does it offend love of neighbor?

- What factors can diminish the responsibility for one who commits suicide (CCC 2281–82)?

2 Maccabees 10:20–23

- Under the rules of most armies, commanders may execute those under their command for a variety of serious reasons. What are some of them?
- Since these executions are usually public, what is their purpose?
- How do they accord with the fifth commandment?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 11



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 11:1

- For what manifestation does Lysias' self-confidence and pride in attacking Judea set the stage?
- With what do the events in this section appear to correspond? If so, how would the author likely be organizing the series of events?

2 Maccabees 11:3

- While the Jewish high priesthood was traditionally hereditary and kept for the priest's lifetime, what would its sale have made the high priest?

2 Maccabees 11:32

- How does the nature of this letter as genuine correspondence from the Seleucids seem to be confirmed?

2 Maccabees 11:33

- Of what significance is the date of Xanthicus the fifteenth?
- In any case, what theological significance may these dates hold?



For Application

2 Maccabees 11:3

- What would happen to the Church if the papacy were for sale to the highest bidder or if a political power were to impose a candidate?
- What protections have recent popes placed on the conclave to prevent such abuses from happening?
- Why do conclaves begin with the invocation to the Holy Spirit?

2 Maccabees 11:6–8

- What is the Catholic doctrine concerning guardian angels?
- How have angels intervened in human history (cf. CCC 331–36)?
- What is the role of the Archangel Michael (cf. Dan 10:13; 12:1)?

2 Maccabees 11:15

- How does the *Catechism*, quoting *Gaudium et Spes*, define what the common good is?

2 Maccabees

- What are its essential elements, and what are the responsibilities of authorities with respect to them (CCC 1906–9)?
- To what is the common good always ordered, and on what is it founded (CCC 1912)?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 12



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 12:15

- What war machines did Hellenistic-era warfare include?

- Like the miraculous toppling of the walls of Jericho in Josh 6:1–21, with what does God's aid provide the Jews?

2 Maccabees 12:29

- Where is Scythopolis, also known as Beth-shan?
- In contrast with Joppa, Jamnia, and the succeeding towns in chap. 12, how do the citizens of Scythopolis regard the Jews?
- As a result, what do Judas' forces have to offer them, and what does that show?

2 Maccabees 12:44–45

- For whom did the practice of praying for the dead, here attested by Jews over a century before Christ, become common as well?
- How does St. Augustine's treatise *On the Care of the Dead* begin?
- In his dispute with Vincentius Victor's claim that the sacrifice of the Eucharist can be offered for the unbaptized dead, how does Augustine counter?

Topical Essay: *Second Maccabees and the Canon of Scripture.*

- Why would “2 Maccabees 12” provide a quick and easy answer to why Protestant Bibles are shorter than Catholic ones?
- What in Martin Luther’s opinion did the abuse of collections being taken on behalf of the dead appear to have produced?
- For Luther, what more dramatic solution to the problem was found?
- Why did such a move seem necessary to Luther and, similarly, to Calvin?
- While the reformers were correct that St. Jerome and certain other Fathers, following the general practice of Jews after Christ’s time, regarded books like 2 Maccabees as holding a lower status, how was the broader Old Testament canon found in the Greek Septuagint followed in the early Church?
- While the potential for abuses was recognized on the Catholic side as well as the Protestant side, what doctrine did the Church uphold, and how did she regard the canonicity of Scripture?

- What famous story of early Christian prayers for the dead is found with the example of Perpetua, who was martyred around A.D. 202?
- According to St. John Chrysostom, why should Christians pray for the dead?



For Application

2 Maccabees 12:3–6

- What Old Testament principle does Judas follow in taking revenge on Joppa for the murder of two hundred Jews (cf. Ex 21:23; Lev 24:19–20)?
- How do you think modern Christians would respond to such an incident?

2 Maccabees 12:8–9

- Would you consider Judas' nighttime attack on Jamnia an offensive or a defensive operation?
- Granted that nations have a right to legitimate defense, according to the “just war” doctrine, what is the moral legitimacy of a preemptive strike?

2 Maccabees 12:40

- What is the morality of carrying with you some good luck charm such as a rabbit's foot?
- How do you interpret the *Catechism's* definition of superstition, particularly the last sentence (CCC 2111)?
- What might be some examples of using sacramentals in a superstitious manner?

2 Maccabees 12:43–45

- Why does the Church refer to those in Purgatory as “*holy* souls”?
- Do you ever pray for them?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 13



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 13:1–26

- What period does this section cover?

- Why do the figures of the Seleucid armies vary between the accounts?

2 Maccabees 13:5

- How high are fifty cubits?

- What fascinating parallel between Menelaus and wicked Haman does this create?

2 Maccabees 13:8

- What principle in the Book of Wisdom does the death of Menelaus illustrate?



For Application

2 Maccabees 13:8

- Look up Wis 11:16. What examples can you think of to illustrate this principle (hint: how overindulgence in food negatively affects one's health)?

- How has this principle shown itself in your own experience?

2 Maccabees 13:10–12

- What kind of preparation does Judas make in these verses as he and all Judea face this military threat?

- For the devout Christian facing a difficult situation, why should prayer be the first step taken?

- What danger might be inherent in deciding to skip prayer and act first?

2 Maccabees 13:21

- What crime against the Jews did Rhodocus commit?

- In the military, what would be the normal punishment for such a crime?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 14



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 14:3

- Who was Alcimus, and what claim did he have to win the support of the more traditionally minded Jews?
- When might Alcimus have taken this role, and with whose confirmation being required?

2 Maccabees 14:6

- Who do commentators say the Hasideans were?

2 Maccabees

- What does their name mean, and how are they related to the Essenes and Pharisees?
- When Alcimus acquires the high priesthood at this point in the narrative in 1 Maccabees, what happens to the Hasideans?

Topical Essay: *The Death of Razis.*

- What interpretative questions does the death of Razis present?
- First, what is the answer regarding the question of whether Razis' death was martyrdom or suicide?
- Second, although the author regards him as a hero of the nation, how does the description of his death fall far short of the praises given to the prior martyrdoms of Eleazar and the mother and seven brothers?
- Third, how do interpreters such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas explain how this text cannot be used as a theological pretext for presenting suicide as martyrdom?
- In summary, how is the Christian reader to understand the ambiguous nature of Razis' death?

2 Maccabees 14:24–30

- What description is absent from the parallel account in 1 Mac 7?
- What may explain why, out of all the Jews' enemies in this period, only Nicanor's death is commemorated as a national holiday?
- What analogy from American history illustrates this?



For Application

2 Maccabees 14:3–4

- Statesmen frequently offer gifts to one another upon their first meeting. If you wished to make a presentation to a new superior but were uncertain of your reception, how might you obtain a favorable hearing? For example, what would you try to learn about the superior before your meeting?

2 Maccabees 14:6–10

- Note how Alcimus replies to the king's request for information. What misinformation does he provide regarding Judas and even about himself?
- When you encounter misinformation calculated to undermine the faith, how can you counter it?

2 Maccabees 14:28

- Have you ever been ordered by a higher authority to renege on an agreement you have just made and to do the opposite? If so, what moral or ethical problems did the order raise for you?
- What did you do in response?
- Afterward, what second thoughts did you have about your response?

2 Maccabees 14:37–46

- Read the essay *The Death of Razis*, especially the next-to-last paragraph. Using these criteria, how would you evaluate the death of King Saul (1 Sam 31:4)?
- How would St. Thomas' dictum ("without consent of the mind, there is no stain on the body") apply to victims of abuse such as rape?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:

Chapter 15



For Understanding

2 Maccabees 15:14

- How powerful does Jeremiah's intercession seem to have been for the nation?
- Why does Origen of Alexandria appeal to Jeremiah in this passage as evidence of saints' prayers after their death?

2 Maccabees 15:25–26

- As St. John Chrysostom observes, what does the contrast between the bombast of the Seleucids and the prayers of the Maccabees demonstrate?

2 Maccabees 15:36

- As with the purification of the Temple and subsequent festival in 10:8, how does the book close?

- How is Mordecai's day also known?

2 Maccabees 15:38

- Although the author speaks frankly about his efforts and his limitations as a storyteller, how aware is he of being divinely inspired?

- What does the Catholic doctrine of biblical inspiration teach?



For Application

2 Maccabees 15:7

- When have you most needed help from the Lord?

2 Maccabees

- How hard was it for you to maintain your trust in such a difficult situation?

- How did you stir up confidence in him?

2 Maccabees 15:14

- If Jesus is the one Mediator between God and man, why do Catholics pray to saints?

- To which saint do you most frequently pray?

- What attracts you to him or her?

2 Maccabees 15:17

- Whom do you know who is the most effective in encouraging others to persevere in confidence or effort?

- How does this person do it?

- What encouragement have you drawn from this person?

- How have you worked to encourage others when their confidence flags?

2 Maccabees 15:38

- What is your understanding of the historical reliability of the Gospels?
- How important is it for the doctrine of biblical inspiration that the Gospels be historically reliable?
- Have you devoted any time to studying the subject?
- How does their reliability influence your faith?

Reflect

After reading and reflecting on this chapter, I hear the Lord saying to me:

My prayer response to him:



Review and Respond

To complete your study of 2 Maccabees, prayerfully read it straight through, focusing on the biblical text alone. What stands out to you?

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. What is your response to him?