

The last words of Mattathias (1 Macc. 2:49-70)

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1 Maccabees describes the revolt of Mattathias and his sons against the ungodly rule of the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes and carries the story of their success right up to the reign of John Hyrcanus. The book attempts to view the events as fulfilment of the prophesies of Daniel. The book was originally written in Judea in Hebrew (which was still extant in Origen's time) in order to justify the Hasmonean revolt and their appropriation of the high priesthood.¹ It survives only in Greek translation.

The recorded final words of Mattathias present an Old Testament list of heroes of the faith comparable in many ways to that recorded in Hebrews 11, though with distinct differences.

⁴⁹ Καὶ ἤγγισαν αἱ ἡμέραι Ματταθίου ἀποθανεῖν, καὶ εἶπεν τοῖς υἱοῖς αὐτοῦ Νῦν ἐστηρίσθη ὑπερηφανία καὶ ἐλεγμός καὶ καιρὸς καταστροφῆς καὶ ὀργῆ θυμοῦ. ⁵⁰ νῦν, τέκνα, ζηλώσατε τῷ νόμῳ καὶ δότε τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ὑπὲρ διαθήκης πατέρων ἡμῶν ⁵¹ καὶ μνήσθητε τὰ ἔργα τῶν πατέρων, ἃ ἐποίησαν ἐν ταῖς γενεαῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ δέξασθε δόξαν μεγάλην καὶ ὄνομα αἰώνιον. ⁵² Ἀβρααμ οὐχὶ ἐν πειρασμῷ εὐρέθη πιστός, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην; ⁵³ Ἰωσηφ ἐν καιρῷ στενοχωρίας αὐτοῦ ἐφύλαξεν ἐντολὴν καὶ ἐγένετο κύριος Αἰγύπτου. ⁵⁴ Φινεες ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ζηλωσῆαι ζῆλον ἔλαβεν διαθήκην ἱερωσύνης αἰωνίας. ⁵⁵ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῷ πληρῶσαι λόγον ἐγένετο κριτῆς ἐν Ἰσραηλ. ⁵⁶ Χαλεβ ἐν τῷ μαρτύρασθαι ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἔλαβεν γῆς κληρονομίαν. ⁵⁷ Δαυὶδ ἐν τῷ ἐλέει αὐτοῦ ἐκληρονόμησεν θρόνον βασιλείας εἰς αἰῶνας. ⁵⁸ Ἡλίας ἐν τῷ ζηλωσῆαι ζῆλον νόμου ἀνελήμφθη εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν. ⁵⁹ Ἀνανίας, Ἀζαριας, Μισαηλ πιστεύσαντες ἐσώθησαν ἐκ φλογός. ⁶⁰ Δανιηλ ἐν τῇ ἀπλότητι αὐτοῦ ἐρρύσθη ἐκ στόματος λεόντων. ⁶¹ καὶ οὕτως ἐννοήθητε κατὰ γενεὰν καὶ γενεάν, ὅτι πάντες οἱ ἐλπίζοντες ἐπ' αὐτὸν οὐκ ἀσθενήσουσιν. ⁶² καὶ ἀπὸ λόγων ἀνδρὸς ἁμαρτωλοῦ μὴ φοβηθῆτε, ὅτι ἡ δόξα αὐτοῦ εἰς κόπρια καὶ εἰς σκώληκας, ⁶³ σήμερον ἐπαρθήσεται καὶ αὔριον οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ, ὅτι ἐπέστρεψεν εἰς τὸν χοῦν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὁ διαλογισμὸς αὐτοῦ ἀπολείπεται. ⁶⁴ τέκνα, ἀνδρίζεσθε καὶ ἰσχύσατε ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ δοξασθήσεσθε. ⁶⁵ καὶ ἰδοὺ Συμεων ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν, οἶδα ὅτι ἀνὴρ βουλήs ἐστίν, αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας, αὐτὸς ἔσται ὑμῶν πατήρ. ⁶⁶ καὶ Ἰουδᾶς Μακκαβαῖος ἰσχυρὸς δυνάμει ἐκ νεότητος αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸς ἔσται ὑμῖν ἄρχων στρατιάs καὶ πολεμήσει πόλεμον λαῶν. ⁶⁷ καὶ ὑμεῖς προσάξετε πρὸς ὑμᾶς πάντας τοὺς ποιητὰς τοῦ νόμου καὶ ἐκδικήσατε ἐκδίκησιν τοῦ λαοῦ ὑμῶν, ⁶⁸ ἀνταπόδοτε ἀνταπόδομα τοῖς ἔθνεσιν καὶ προσέχετε εἰς πρόσταγμα τοῦ νόμου. — ⁶⁹ καὶ εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς, καὶ προσετέθη πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας αὐτοῦ. ⁷⁰ καὶ ἀπέθανεν ἐν τῷ ἔκτῳ καὶ τεσσαρακοστῷ καὶ ἑκατοστῷ ἔτει καὶ ἐτάφη ἐν τάφοις πατέρων αὐτοῦ ἐν Μωδεῖν, καὶ ἐκόψαντο αὐτὸν πᾶς Ἰσραηλ κοπετὸν μέγαν.

v.49

στηρίζω, to make fast / firm

ἐλεγμός, ὁ, *Jewish coinage*, = the late Hellenistic word ἡ ἔλεγξις, 'refuting, reproving'. The standard word for this had always been ὁ ἔλεγχος (cf. ἐλέγχω).

καταστροφή, ἡ, *lit.* turning down, here in the sense of subjugation.

v.56

μαρτύρομαι, see the note 'Μάρτυς and its cognate verbs' in Animal Story.

v.61

ἐννοέω, to put in mind, is active in Ionic and deponent in Attic.

ἐλπίζω, 1. to hope for something + acc.

2. to hope in someone + dat. (Jewish writers use a variety of prepositions for this)

v.62

φοβέομαι *Greek writers use a variety of prepositions to express what is feared, but never ἀπό, which is a Semitism.*

v.67

προσάξετε πρὸς ὑμᾶς

The reflexive pronoun should have been used: ὑμᾶς αὐτούς or ἑαυτούς.

τοὺς ποιητὰς τοῦ νόμου

In non-Jewish Greek this would mean 'the writers of the law', cf. Paul in Romans 2:13.

v.68

προσέχετε

Sc. τὸν νοῦν.

1 1 Macc. 8:14-15 criticises those who take to themselves kingship and strongly suggests that the book was written before the Hasmoneans took this upon themselves (which happened in 104 BC).

v.69

προσετέθη πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας αὐτοῦ
An Hebraic idiom.

v.70

κόπτω, smite, strike *Middle*: to strike oneself in lamentation, *and then simply* to mourn
κοπετός, ὄ, noise (esp. of lamentation)