

Destruction of Jerusalem

1. Introduction

- A. The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 is most the dateable, climactic, and apocalyptic event in Jewish history.
- B. Jesus spoke of it in His Olivet Discourse and at other times.
 - Prophecy that the Temple will be left desolate – Matthew 23:37-39
 - Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies signaling its desolation – Luke 21:20
 - Mentioned in Daniels 70 Weeks Prophecy – Daniel 9:27
 - Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles – Luke 21:24
 - Not one stone left upon another, Jews not knowing their time of visitation – Luke 19:41-44.
- C. Many Christians are unaware of its significance on biblical history & Bible eschatology.

2. Historical facts concerning the destruction of Jerusalem:

- A. The First Jewish Revolt AD 66-70.
- B. Jewish rebellion against Roman rule in Judaea.
- C. Long series of clashes in which small groups of Jews offered sporadic resistance to the Romans.
- D. In fall of AD 66, Jews expelled Romans from Jerusalem.
- E. In Nov AD 66, the Roman army under Cestius Gallus unaccountably withdrew after 9 days of the siege on Jerusalem giving Jewish Christians time to flee the city (Matt 24:16)
- F. A revolutionary government was then set up.
- G. Vespasian dispatched by the Roman emperor Nero to crush the rebellion, joined by his son Titus.
- H. The Roman armies entered Galilee, where the historian Josephus headed the Jewish forces.
- I. Josephus Flavius, a Jewish historian from a priestly family.
- J. Josephus gave himself up to the Roman forces. Perceived as a traitor to the Jews.
- K. The Romans encircled the city with a wall to cut off supplies completely and thereby drive the Jews to starvation.
- L. The city was ravaged by murder, famine, and even cannibalism.
- M. Vespasian returns to Rome and becomes emperor (AD 69-79)
- N. Titus takes command of the Roman army (later becomes emperor from AD 79-81).
- O. The siege of Jerusalem occurred from April 14 through September 8, AD 70 lasting 3 months and 4 days.
- P. On the 9th of the month of Av (August 29) in AD 70, Jerusalem fell; the Temple was burned, and the Jewish state collapsed. Same date first temple was destroyed.
- Q. The fortress Masada was not conquered by the Romans until April AD 73
- R. Estimated 600 thousand to 1.1 million killed during the siege of Jerusalem.

3. Some of the horrendous events mentioned in Josephus's "The Jewish Wars,"

- A. A woman who killed her nursing child for food. 6.3.4 (201-213)
- B. A Roman soldier, without any orders, set the fire that burned the Temple. 6.4.5 (252)
- C. Titus tried to have the fire stopped. But the soldiers did not hear the order to quench the fire due to the noise, nor did they see the hand signal, and were distracted by the fighting. 6.4.5 (256)

Destruction of Jerusalem

- D. Many were trampled to death as they were crowding into the Temple. 6.4.5 (257)
- E. Around about the altar were dead bodies heaped upon each other. 6.4.6 (259)
- F. The Temple was burned on the same month and day as the first Temple. 6.4.8 (268)
- G. From the foundation of the first Temple to the destruction in A.D. 70 was 1,130 years, 7 months, and 15 days. 6.4.8 (269)
- H. The second Temple stood for 639 years and 45 days. 6.4.8 (270)
- I. The Temple was plundered as it was burning and 10,000 that were caught were slain. 6.5.1 (271)
- J. The flame was carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those slain. 6.5.1 (272)
- K. The multitude when seeing the fire exerted their utmost strength, and broke out into groans and outcries. 6.5.1 (274)
- L. The ground was not visible for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of those bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them. 6.5.1 (276)
- M. False prophets proclaimed to go to the temple and God would give miraculous signs of their deliverance. 6.5.2 (285)
- N. Brought their ensigns to the temple, ... And there did they offer sacrifices to them. 6.6.1 (316)
- O. I had seen the house of God full of so many abominations. 4.3.10 (163)

3. Miraculous Signs Mentioned by Josephus in “The Jewish Wars”

- A. There was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. 6.5.3 (289)
- B. At the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour. 6.5.3 (290)
- C. Before the Jews rebellion, during the Passover season (Nisan), a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. 6.5.3 (292)
- D. The eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, where 20 men had difficulty shutting it, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. 6.5.3 (293)
- E. Other signs included, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. 6.5.3 (298)
- F. At Pentecost, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence." 6.5.3 (300)

4. Final Comments:

- A. In the Roman Empire, the eagle over time became the emblem of the emperor as the head of the army, and then as the universal symbol of the Roman state.
- B. The “eagle” was a prominent symbol used in ancient Rome, especially as the standard of a Roman legion.
- C. Jesus said: “Wherever the body (or carcass) is, there the eagles/ vultures will be gathered together” (Matt. 24:28)
- D. In the writings of Josephus, he mentions the Romans brought their abominations, or ensigns, into the temple bearing the image of an eagle. Could the meaning of where a

Destruction of Jerusalem

dead body is, there will the eagles/vulture gathered, is a picture of the Roman army walking over the heaps of dead bodies as a sign of judgment on Israel?

- E. The destruction of Jerusalem was judgment upon the Jewish people because of their disobedience and rejection of their Messiah. The scripture says,”

“The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young” (Deuteronomy 28:49-50).

- F. The early church, prior to A.D.70 had a problem of Judaizers who said Christians must to follow the ceremonial Law of Moses.
- G. This contention in the early church existed before A.D. 70. Since then, Christianity and Judaism have gone their separate directions.
- H. Both the Holocaust (1933-1945) and the Destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) are the most horrific events in Jewish history. Many do not realize of scale of the atrocities in AD 70. Hopefully, this lesson increases your awareness of this important historical event.

This is just some of the information contained in Josephus’s “The Jewish Wars.” Even though this is not scripture, it is a very valuable historical record of the eyewitness events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The siege of Jerusalem occurred from April 14 through September 8, A.D. 70, lasting three months and four days. The Roman army was led by the future emperor Titus. Many people were in the city due to the celebration of the Passover which attributed to the high death toll. I believe many Christians are not aware of the savagery, cruelty, devastation, and monstrosities that occurred during this event and its importance in Bible prophecy.