

PRELUDE TO “THE END” OF THE JEWISH TEMPLE (PART I)

And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.

And He answered and said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”

And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.”

Matthew 24:1-14 (NASB 77)

42 [10th Year of the Church] Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch in order to oversee the explosive growth of the Church (predominately Gentiles) in that city (Acts 11:22-24).

43 Barnabas brought Saul (c. 30 yrs) from Tarsus to Antioch in order to assist him, knowing that he had been called to be “Apostle to the Gentiles” at the time of his conversion almost a decade earlier (Acts 11:25-26). The believers were first called “Christians” (Χριστιανοί) at Antioch.

44 [Winter/Spring] The Jewish prophet Agabus, while visiting Antioch, warned that a famine was going to descend upon the Middle East. The Church at Antioch responded by collecting and sending financial aid to the Judean Church, via the hands of Barnabas & Saul (Acts 11:27-30).

[Passover (MAR/APR)] Having executed the Apostle James (son of Zebedee), Herod Agrippa arrested Peter, intending to execute him as a favor to the anti-Christian Jewish people. Only angelic intervention kept him from carrying out his plan (Acts 12:1-19).

[Summer] Herod Agrippa was “executed” by God while at Caesarea (Acts 12:20-23), leaving behind four children:

- His 17 year old heir, Agrippa II, who was living in Rome with Emperor Claudius
- His 16 year old daughter, Bernice, already widowed by the death of her first husband & now married to her paternal uncle, Herod of Chalchis (a city located in Syria)
- Two other daughters, Mariamne (10 yrs) & Drusilla (6 yrs) who were betrothed into the royal family of the Kingdom of Commagene (located immediately north of Syria)

After the king’s death, anti-Agrippa celebrations broke out in Caesarea & Sebaste (Samaria). Many of the revelers were soldiers, toasting Charon (the mythical ferryman of the dead) for taking Agrippa away into Hades. One group broke into Agrippa’s residence & stole statues of his daughters, which they promptly displayed on the roofs of local brothels, making exceptionally rude comments & gestures toward these images.

44 [Summer] When informed of Agrippa's death, Emperor Claudius initially planned to send Agrippa II into the Middle East as the new ruler of his father's territories; however, he was dissuaded from doing so by his advisors, in view of Agrippa's youth.

[Summer/ Fall] Claudius sent Cuspius Fadus to be the Procurator of the late Agrippa's territories, with instructions to punish those civilians who participated in the inappropriate revelry & to rotate out of the country those military units which had not only permitted such behavior, but had even participated in it. Upon appeal, these units were permitted to remain in country and, according to Josephus, became part of the anti-Semitic element that sparked the Jewish War of 66.¹

[Fall/Winter] In general, while not actually being anti-Semitic, Fadus did crack down on independent Jewish actions, requiring them to depend upon the Roman government. Among other things, he retook custody of the High Priestly garments, which prompted the Jews to appeal to Caesar.

44-46 Barnabas & Saul made the "1st Missionary Journey" to Cyprus & into Galatia.

45 [JUL] At the request of Agrippa II, Claudius decreed that the right to keep custody of the High Priestly garments would remain with the Jews.²

Shortly thereafter, Herod of Chalcis specifically requested that all matters relating to the Temple, including its finances and the appointment of High Priests, should be kept under his control rather than that of any Roman present or future Roman proconsul. Claudius agreed.³

45/46 A Jewish false prophet named Theudas arose within Israel around this time.

"Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea, that a certain magician, whose name was Theudas, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them he was a prophet, and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it; and many were deluded by his words. However, Fadus did not permit them to make any advantage of his wild attempt, but sent a troop of horsemen out against them; who, falling upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them and took many of them alive. They also took Theudas alive, and cut off his head, and carried it to Jerusalem."⁴

46 Claudius sent Tiberius Alexander, a secular Jew & the son of an exceptionally well-connected (he was a personal friend of the Emperor) Egyptian Jew, to be the new Proconsul of Judea. During his tenure, he crucified the sons of the infamous Judas the Galilean (died during a protest against direct Roman rule in AD 6) for their anti-Roman activities.

47 [Fall]-

48 [Fall] = The Jewish Sabbatical Year

The famine predicted by Agabus was still fully in force, no doubt intensified by the observance of the Jewish Sabbatical Year. Queen Helena of Adiabene (a region within the Armenian Empire, NE of Syria), a convert to Judaism, arranged for wheat from Egypt & figs from Cyprus to be sent to Judea as relief for those multitudes dying of starvation.⁵

¹ Antiquities 19.9.2.

² Antiquities 20.1.1-2.

³ Antiquities 20.1.3.

⁴ Antiquities 20.5.1.

⁵ Antiquities 20.2.5.

47 [15th Year of the Church] The so-called “Jerusalem Council” (prompted by a visit of inquiry from Antioch by Barnabas, Saul & Titus) wrote a letter, outlining the proper assimilation of non-Jewish believers into the Church. In effect, beyond acceptance of Jesus as Savior & Lord and the living of a holy life, it only required Gentiles to adhere to the following principles (Acts 15:1-29):

- Not to participate in the fellowship meals associated with idol worship
- Not to engage in sexual immorality
- Not to eat meat which had not been properly drained of arterial blood.

Saul (a.k.a., Paul) later wrote that the Apostles James (half-brother of Jesus) Peter & John freely acknowledged his role as “Apostle to the Gentiles” at this time, while they would continue focusing upon ministry among the Jews. They did request that he remember the poor Judeans suffering from the prolonged famine (Galatians 2:1-10).

48 Herod of Chalchis died, leaving Bernice (20 yrs) a widow for the second time. Emperor Claudius decided that Herod Agrippa II (21 yrs) was now at least old enough to take on the rulership of his late uncle’s city in Syria.⁶ He also gave him control over matters relating to the Jewish Temple.

Claudius also sent Ventidius Cumanus to the Middle East as the new Proconsul of Judea, which appointment, according to Josephus, marked a dramatic turning point for Judaism.⁷

48-53? Paul & Silas made the “2nd Missionary Journey” through Asia & into Macedonian/Greece.

49 Despite the fact that no apostle of Christ had yet arrived in the capital city⁸, there were nevertheless arguments within the Jewish community regarding the identity of Christ, for the Emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews from Rome for a period of time because of these disturbances.

“Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus⁹, he expelled them from Rome.”¹⁰

This is how Paul first became acquainted with Aquilla & Pricilla, Jewish Christians having recently arrived at Corinth from Rome (Acts 18:1-3).

51 [1*18 (THU/FRI 8/9 APR)] For some reason, Cumanus posted extra troops on the walls surrounding the Temple complex during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. One of these Roman soldiers dropped his underwear & began shaking his uncircumcised penis at the Passover crowds, making rude comments relating to such action. This obviously incensed the Jewish worshippers. When Cumanus tried to calm the crowd (who were insisting that he punish the offender) nasty things were shouted about him & rocks were thrown by the younger men. Cumanus ordered all his troops to suit up in full armor and present themselves at the Antonia Tower (located on the NW corner of the Temple complex) for action against a Jewish riot. As these troops entered the Temple complex, beating some of the rioters as they came, the Jewish crowds bolted in the opposite direction, trampling one another. According to Josephus, something like 10,000-20,000 people died from injuries sustained in the stampede.¹¹

⁶ Antiquities 20.5.2.

⁷ Wars 20.12.1.

⁸ Paul would write his letter to the Roman Church in 57, but not arrive as a prisoner in Rome until 61.

⁹ For some reason, a few Romans transliterated the Greek form of “Christ” into Latin with an “e” instead of an “i.”

¹⁰ Seutonius’ Life of Claudius 25.

¹¹ Wars 20.12.1 & Antiquities 20.5.3.

51 [Still during the Feast (APR)] Some Jews ambushed & robbed a servant of Caesar on the road between Jerusalem & Caesarea, near Beth-horon. Cumanus sent a Roman patrol out to search the area in order to find the bandits, instructing them to arrest local Jewish leaders who had permitted their escape. One of the Roman soldiers in this patrol, upon finding a copy of the Law of Moses during the search, publicly burned it (perhaps as inducement to reveal the identity of the outlaws). Obviously, this resulted in another gathering of Jewish protesters before Cumanus at his HQ in Caesarea. He defused the situation by having the offending trooper beheaded in the presence of the crowd.¹²

[Feast of Tabernacles SEP/OCT] Samaritans attack & killed a Jewish pilgrim from Galilee passing through their country to Jerusalem. Having been bribed by the Samaritan leaders, Cumanus refrained from punishing anyone for the murder.

[After the Feast (OCT)] An angry mob of Jews, led by a Jewish gang leader named Eleazar, invaded Samaria – killing people, plundering homes & burning whole villages. Cumanus responded with his “Troop of Sebaste” a cavalry unit, which was supported by Samaritan foot soldiers in tracking down & killing many of the invading Jews. He also captured some.

The Jewish leaders at Jerusalem barely convinced many others upset with the situation not to march against the Samaritans & Cumanus, warning them that doing so might result in the destruction of their Temple and the loss of Jewish freedom.

51/52 [Winter/Spring] Not satisfied with Cumanus’ actions against the Jews, the Samaritans complained to Quadratus, the Legate of Syria, who had arrived at Tyre for a visit. A former High Priest named Jonathan (the son of Ananus¹³) lodged a counter complaint, that the Samaritans had initiated the aggression by the murders of the Galilean pilgrims. The Legate promised to look into the matter during his tour of the area.

52 [Spring] At Caesarea, he ordered the crucifixion of those Jews captured by Cumanus in Samaria. At Lydda, he ordered 18 more Jews (apparently Roman citizens) beheaded for their part in the affair. Since so many high ranking members of society were involved in the matter, Legate Quadratus decided to let Emperor Claudius settle it. He sent Proconsul Cumanus & his top military man, the Tribune Celer to Rome, along with the current High Priest Ananias & the former High Priest Jonathan, plus high ranking members of the Jewish & Samaritan communities.

[Passover (MAR/APR)] Legate Quadratus went to Jerusalem, afraid that he would find the city in turmoil. To his relief all the worshippers were comporting themselves in a peaceful manner.

[Spring/Summer] Herod Agrippa II (c. 25 yrs), who was then at Rome, spoke with both Claudius & his wife, Agrippina (mother of Nero), against the Samaritan delegation. Thanks to his intervention, when the matter officially came before the Emperor, it was settled in favor of the Jews, despite powerful Roman intercession for the other side. Three of the Samaritan leaders were summarily executed; Proconsul Cumanus was banished; and Tribune Celer was returned to Jerusalem to be paraded through the streets & then beheaded.

Antonius Felix was dispatched as the new Proconsul of Judea.¹⁴

¹² Wars 2.12.2 & Antiquities 20.5.4.

¹³ The High Priest Annas, who, along with his son-in-law, Caiaphas, condemned Jesus to death (John 18:13,24).

¹⁴ The Samaritan affair which brought down Cumanus and installed Felix can be found in Wars 20.12.3-8 & Antiquities 20.5.4-7.1.

53 [20th Year of the Church] Emperor Claudius removed Herod Agrippa II from the governance of Chalcis, giving him instead the former tetrarchies of his late father located N, NE & E of the Sea of Galilee. Having been promoted, Agrippa oversaw the marriages of his two young sisters:

- Mariamne (20 yrs), to Prince Archelaus of Commagene (located immediately north of Syria)
- Drusilla (15 yrs), to Azizus, Priest-King of Emesa (a region of Syria), provided he would be circumcised

53 or 54 Proconsul Felix met Drusilla (c. 16 yrs) for the very first time & was smitten by her beauty.

“While Felix was procurator of Judea, he saw this Drusilla, and fell in love with her; for she did indeed exceed all other women in beauty, and he sent to her a person whose name was Simon, one of his friends; a Jew he was, and by birth a Cypriot, and one who pretended to be a magician;¹⁵ and endeavored to persuade her to forsake her present husband, and marry him; and promised, that if she would not refuse him, he would make her a happy woman. Accordingly she acted ill, and because she was desirous to avoid her sister Bernice’s envy, for she was very ill treated by her on account of her beauty¹⁶, was prevailed upon to transgress the laws of her forefathers, and to marry Felix; and when he had had a son by her, he named him Agrippa. But after what manner that young man, with his wife, perished at the conflagration of the mountain Vesuvius, in the days of Titus Caesar¹⁷, shall be related hereafter.”¹⁸

¹⁵ This sounds very much like the man Paul ran in to on the island of Cyprus back in 44/45, only a decade earlier (Acts 13:4-12). Is it possible that once Paul forced him to detach himself from the Roman governor of that island, that this spiritual leech went out and found another Roman leader to whom to attach himself?

¹⁶ Bernice (c. 25 yrs), who had already buried two husbands, been divorced by a third over her adherence to Judaism, and had once again moved in with her brother, Herod Agrippa II, despite persistent rumors about their incestuous relationship (Antiquities 20.7.3), was evidently a great source of grief for the beautiful Drusilla.

¹⁷ August 79.

¹⁸ Antiquities 20.7.2.