

TITUS AND THE GREAT JEWISH CIVIL WAR

“And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.”

Matthew 24:12 (NASB95)

69 **[Spring]** Vespasian (58 yrs) declared emperor by his own legions in Judea.

[1 JUL] Vespasian declared emperor by the legions & Roman leaders of Egypt. He took control of the grain shipments to Rome & waited for the safer sailing weather of spring.

[22 DEC] Vitellius (54 yrs) killed at Rome by Vespasian supporters.

70 **[Late Winter]** While at Alexandria, Egypt, Vespasian (60 yrs) received word that Vitellius was dead. He continued his preparation for sailing to Italy after the winter was over. He also dispatched his son, Titus (30 yrs), to go back to Judea and put an end to the Jewish rebellion. Titus immediately left for Caesarea to prepare for his assault upon the city of Jerusalem.

70 **[Late Winter/Early Spring]** The situation at Jerusalem:

- Eleazar, the rebel priest who had triggered the war in 66 by refusing to offer sacrifices on behalf of Gentiles, still had control of the inner courts of the Temple.
- John of Gischala, who had been instrumental in bringing about the previous year’s “reign of terror,” during which the High Priest Ananus was killed, had control of the Temple’s outer courts & part of the lower city located nearby.
- Simon of Gadara, who was basically the warlord of Idumea (southern Judea), and who had recently been invited into the city by the zealots who opposed Eleazar & John, had control of the upper city (the wealthy district) & part of the lower city (near the Temple complex).

“And now there were three treacherous factions in the city, the one parted from the other. Eleazar and his party, that kept the sacred firstfruits, came against John in their cups¹. Those that were with John plundered the populace, and went out with zeal against Simon. This Simon had his supply of provisions from the city, in oppositions to the seditious.

“When, therefore, John was assaulted on both sides, he made his men turn about, throwing his darts upon those citizens that came up against him, from the cloisters he had in his possession, while he opposed those that attacked him from the temple by his engines of war; and if at any time he was freed from those that were above him, which happened frequently, from their being drunk and tired, he sallied out with a great number upon Simon and his party; and this he did always in such parts of the city as he could come at, till he set on fire those houses that were full of corn², and of all other provisions.

“The same thing was done by Simon, when, upon the other’s retreat, he attacked the city also; as if they had, on purpose, done it to serve the Romans, by destroying what the city had laid up against the siege, and by thus cutting off the nerves of their own power. Accordingly, it so came to pass, that all the places that were about the temple were burnt down, and were become an intermediate desert space, ready for fighting on both sides, and that almost all the corn was burnt, which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years. So they were taken by the means of the famine, which it was impossible they should have been, unless they had thus prepared the way for it by this procedure.”³

¹ An old English idiom for being drunk. This translation of Josephus was done in 1828.

² Wheat & barley grains actually. Old English used the term “corn” in reference to kernels of grain.

³ Wars 5.1.4.

“And now, as the city was engaged in a war on all sides, from these treacherous crowds of wicked men, the people of the city, between them, were like a great body torn in pieces. The aged men and the women were in such distress by their internal calamities, that they wished for the Romans, and earnestly hoped for an external war, in order to their delivery from their domestic miseries.

“The citizens themselves were under a terrible consternation and fear; nor had they any opportunity of taking counsel, and of changing their conduct, nor were there any hopes of coming to an agreement with their enemies; nor could such as had a mind flee away; for guards were set at all places, and the heads of the robbers, although they were seditious one against another in other respects, yet did they agree in killing those that were for peace with the Romans, or were suspected of an inclination to desert to them, as their common enemies. They agreed in nothing but this, to kill those that were innocent.

“The noise also of those that were fighting was incessant, both by day and by night; but the lamentation of those that mourned exceeded the other; nor was there ever any occasion for them to leave off their lamentations, because their calamities came perpetually one upon another, although the deep consternation they were in prevented their outward wailing; but, being constrained by their fear to conceal their inward passions, they were inwardly tormented, without daring to open their lips in groans. Nor was any regard paid to those that were still alive, by their relations; nor was there any care taken of burial for those that were dead; the occasion of both which was this, that everyone despaired of himself; for those that were not among the seditious had no great desires of anything, as expecting for certain that they should very soon be destroyed; but, for the seditious themselves, they fought against each other, while they trod upon the dead bodies as they lay heaped one upon another, and taking up a mad rage from those dead bodies that were under their feet, became the fiercer thereupon.

“They, moreover, were still inventing somewhat or other that was pernicious against themselves; and when they had resolved upon anything, they executed it without mercy, and omitted no method of torment or of barbarity. Nay John abused the sacred materials, and employed them in the construction of his engines of war, for the people and the priests had formerly determined to support the temple, and raise the holy house twenty cubits higher; for King Agrippa had at a very great expense, and with very great pains, brought thither such materials as were proper for that purpose, being pieces of timber very well worth seeing, both for their straightness and their largeness: but the war coming on, and interrupting the work, John had them cut, and prepared for the building him towers, he finding them long enough to oppose from them those his adversaries that fought him from the temple that was above him. He also had them brought and erected behind the inner court over against the west end of the cloisters, where alone he could erect them; whereas, the other side of that court had so many steps as would not let them come nigh enough the cloisters.”⁴

⁴ Wars 5.1.5.

70 [Early Spring/1st Jewish Month (MAR/APR)] Coming from an encampment at Gibeah of Saul (located about 4 miles north of Jerusalem), Titus – accompanied by 600 horsemen - did a quick reconnoiter of Jerusalem, trying to assess whether or not some within the city were ready to surrender to the Romans, since he'd heard reports of the terrible atrocities being committed by the various Jewish factions. How the future emperor survived the ambush into which he rode convinced Josephus that Titus was being protected by God.

“Now, so long as he rode along the straight road which led to them all of the city, nobody appeared out of the gates; but when he went out of that road, and declined towards the tower Psephinus, and led the band of horsemen obliquely, an immense number of the Jews leaped out suddenly at the towers called the “Women’s Towers,” through that gate which was over against the monuments of queen Helena, and intercepted his horse: and standing directly opposite to those that still ran along the road, hindered them from joining those that had declined out of it. They intercepted Titus also, with a few others.

“Now it was here impossible for him to go forward, because all the places had trenches dug in them from the wall, to preserve the gardens round about, and were full of gardens obliquely situated, and of many hedges; and to return back to his own men, he saw it was also impossible, by reason of the multitude of the enemies that lay between them; many of whom did not so much as know that the king was in any danger, but supposed him still among them. So he perceived, that his preservation must be wholly owing to his own courage, and turned his horse about, and cried out aloud to those that were about him, to follow him and ran with violence into the midst of his enemies, in order to force his way through them to his own men.

“And hence we may principally learn, that both the success of wars, and the dangers that kings are in, are under the providence of God; for while such a number of darts were thrown at Titus, when he had neither his headpiece on, nor his breastplate (for, as I told you, he went out not to fight, but to view the city), none of them touched his body, but went aside without hurting him; as if all of them missed him on purpose, and only made a noise as they passed by him.

“So he diverted those perpetually with his sword that came on his side, and overturned many of those that directly met him, and made his horse ride over those that were overthrown. The enemy indeed made a great shout at the boldness of Caesar, and exhorted one another to rush upon him. Yet did those against whom he marched fly away, and go off from him in great numbers; while those that were in the same danger with him kept up close to him, though they were wounded both on their backs and on their sides; for they had each of them but this one hope escaping, if they could assist Titus in opening himself a way, that he might not be encompassed round by his enemies before he got away from them.

“Now, there were two of those that were with him, but at some distance; the one of whom the enemy encompassed round, and slew him with their darts and his horse also; but the other they slew as he leaped down from his horse, and carried off his horse with them. But Titus escaped with the rest, and came safe to the camp. So this success of the Jews’ first attack raised their minds, and gave them an ill-grounded hope; and this short inclination of fortune, on their side, made them very courageous for the future.⁵

Titus now set up his HQ encampment – consisting of two full legions, the Fifteen & Twelfth - on Mt. Scopus (“Overlook”) just under a mile north of Jerusalem. He encamped another legion, the Fifth, about a third of a mile behind his main encampment. The Tenth Legion, having come up from Jericho, began setting up their encampment on Mt. Olivet, overlooking the Temple from the east.⁶

When the Jewish rebels realized that the Romans were establishing their siege encampments, they arranged for a quick truce & temporally joined forces to assault the Tenth Legion, which was in the process of building its encampment. The Romans were completely caught off guard by this attack & scattered, many of them being killed. Titus had to rush in with some of his own troops from the north encampment to rescue & rally the men of the Tenth. In the process, he was once again surrounded by Jewish rebels; according to Josephus, under any other circumstances, he should have been killed, but wasn’t. With Titus leading his rallying men, the Jewish sally was eventually repulsed & the encampment finished.⁷

⁵ Wars 5.2.2.

⁶ Wars 5.2.3.

⁷ Wars 5.2.4-5.

70 [1*14 = Passover (SAT/SUN 14/15 APR)] Motivated by long-standing tradition, Eleazar opened the gates of the Temple to permit Jewish worshippers to come in for the festival.⁸ John had his soldiers throw civilian attire over their armor & weapons and enter the Temple courts. Once inside, they attacked Eleazar's followers & took control of the inner courts for themselves. Eleazar surrendered to John's leadership of the zealots at this point, reducing to two the number of Jewish factions vying for control of the city.⁹

[APR] The Romans began leveling the ground leading up to the northernmost city wall. By pretending to want to surrender, some Jewish rebels lured a group of Roman soldiers into an ambush at the gate; this, despite direct orders from Titus not to go near the wall. Enraged at the unprofessional actions of these men, Titus threatened to execute the survivors for disobeying orders; however, at the request of his top commanders, he let them live after a stern lecture on not being so gullible to Jewish pretenses in future.¹⁰

Josephus reported the strength of the Jewish factions around this time:¹¹

- Simon of Gadara had a total of 15,000 men under his command
 - 10,000 Jewish soldiers under 50 commanders
 - 5,000 Idumean soldiers under 8 commanders
- John of Gischala had a total of 8,400 men under his command
 - 6,000 of his own soldiers under 20 commanders
 - 2,400 under the command of Eleazar, the former leader of the defunct third faction
- Based on later casualty reports, there were over a million civilians within the city.

John had control of the Temple complex. Simon had control of most of the city. After their combined assault upon the Tenth Legion failed, the two factions had returned to fighting one another, leaving a burned out "no-man's-land" between them where daily skirmishes occurred.

The Jewish rebels also took shots at the Romans when the opportunity arose. Nicanor, one of Titus' tribunes & Josephus' friend, took an arrow to the shoulder as they tried to speak with some of the Jews on the wall. According to Josephus, this incident convinced Titus it was time to begin his siege.¹²

[1*22 (SUN/MON 22/23 APR) = 1st Day of Siege] Having waited until just after the last day of Unleavened Bread (1*15-21), Titus began siege operations against the western wall of Jerusalem city.

⁸ It would appear that Titus - knowing he was about to besiege the city - permitted these worshippers to enter, thinking that the extra persons would consume the city's food/water reserves faster, thereby making his upcoming siege even more effective.

⁹ Wars 5.3.1; cf. 5.6.1.

¹⁰ Wars 5.3.2-5.

¹¹ Wars 5.6.1.

¹² Wars 5.6.2.

70 [APR] The Jewish rebels under John tried to stop the building of siege works, even using some of the artillery machinery captured from Cestius' legion back in 66, but the Romans were so much better trained in the use of such long-range weapons as to make the Jewish efforts completely vain.

“But though they had these engines in their possession, they had so little skill in using them, that they were in a great measure useless to them; but a few there were who had been taught by deserters how to use them, which they did use, though after an awkward manner. So they cast stones and arrows at those that were making the banks; they also ran out upon them by companies, and fought with them.

“Now those that were at work covered themselves with hurdles spread over their banks, and their engines were opposed to them when they made their excursions. The engines, that all the legions had ready prepared for them, were admirably contrived; but still more extraordinary ones belonged to the tenth legion: those that threw darts and those that threw stones, were more forcible and larger than the rest, by which they not only repelled the excursions of the Jews, but drove those away that were upon the walls also. Now, the stones that were cast were of the weight of a talent [75+ pounds], and were carried two furlongs and farther [1,200+ feet]. The blow they gave was no way to be sustained, not only by those that stood first in the way, but by those that were beyond them for a great space.

“As for the Jews, they at first watched the coming of the stone, for it was of a white color, and could therefore not only be perceived by the great noise it made, but could be seen also before it came by its brightness; accordingly the watchmen that sat upon the towers gave them notice when the engine was let go, and the stone came from it, and cried out aloud in their own country language, “THE SON COMETH:”¹³ so those that were in its way stood off, and threw themselves down upon the ground; by which means, and by their thus guarding themselves, the stone fell down and did them no harm. But the Romans contrived how to prevent that by blacking the stone, who then could aim at them with success, when the stone was not discerned beforehand, as it had been till then; and so they destroyed many of them at one blow.

“Yet did not the Jews, under all this distress, permit the Romans to raise their banks in quiet; but they shrewdly and boldly exerted themselves, and repelled them both by night and by day.”¹⁴

The Ironic End of a Farmer/Prophet

“But, what is still more terrible there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, who, four years before the war began, and at a time when the city was in very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for everyone to make tabernacles to God in the temple [OCT in 62], began on a sudden cry aloud, “A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!” This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city.

“However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but still he went on with the same words which he cried before. Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator; where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, “Woe, woe to Jerusalem!” And when Albinus (for he was then our procurator) asked him who he was, and whence he came, and why he uttered such words; he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off his melancholy ditty, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him.

“Now, during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, “Woe, woe, to Jerusalem!” Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come.

“This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfilled in our siege, when it ceased; for as he was going round upon the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, “Woe, woe, to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!” And just as he added at the last,—“Woe, woe, to myself also!” there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost.”¹⁵

¹³ In Hebrew the word for “son” (BN) & “stone” (‘BN) sound very similar.

¹⁴ Wars 5.6.3.

¹⁵ Wars 6.5.3.

70 [2*7 (SUN/MON 6/7 MAY) = 15th Day of Siege] Titus broke through the western wall of Jerusalem & moved his army into the “new city” which wrapped around the northern end of “old” Jerusalem.

[2*12 (FRI/SAT 11/12 MAY) = 20th Day of Siege] Titus broke through a second wall into a commercial area of the city immediately west of the Temple. He wanted very badly to keep civilian casualties & collateral damage to a minimum, but ended up with a “Blackhawk Down” situation – a small force of soldiers attempting to retreat through unfamiliar, narrow streets filled with many civilians, whom they were to treat as non-combatants, while being engaged by a huge, fairly well-armed opposing force that had little or no regard for the lives of the civilians.

“Now Caesar took this wall there on the fifth day after he had taken the first; and when the Jews had fled from him, he entered into it with a thousand armed men, and those of his choice troops, and this at a place where were the merchants of wool, the braziers, and the market for cloth, and where the narrow streets led obliquely to the wall. Wherefore, if Titus had either demolished a larger part of the wall immediately, or had come in, and according to the law of war, had laid waste what was left, his victory would not, I suppose, have been mixed with any loss to himself; but now, out of the hope he had that he should make the Jews ashamed of their obstinacy, by not being willing, when he was able to afflict them more than he needed to do, he did not widen the breach of the wall in order to make a safer retreat upon occasion; for he did not think they would lay snares for him that did them such a kindness. When therefore he came in, he did not permit his soldiers to kill any of those they caught, nor to set fire to their houses neither; nay, he gave leave to the seditious, if they had a mind, to fight without any harm to the people, and promised to restore the people’s effects to them; for he was very desirous to preserve the city for his own sake, and the temple for the sake of the city.

“As to the people, he had them of a long time ready to comply with his proposals; but as to the fighting men, this humanity of his seemed a mark of his weakness; and they imagined that he made these proposals because he was not able to take the rest of the city. They also threatened death to the people, if they should any one of them say a word about a surrender. They moreover cut the throats of such as talked of a peace, and then attacked those Romans that were come within the wall. Some of them they met in the narrow streets, and some they fought against from their houses, while they made a sudden sally out at the upper gates, and assaulted such Romans as were beyond the wall, till those that guarded the wall were so affrighted, that they leaped down from their towers, and retired to their several camps: upon which a great noise was made by the Romans that were within, because they were encompassed round on every side by their enemies; as also by them that were without, because they were in fear for those that were left in the city.

“Thus did the Jews grow more numerous perpetually and had great advantages over the Romans, by their full knowledge of those narrow lanes; and they wounded a great many of them, and fell upon them, and drove them out of the city. Now these Romans were at present forced to make the best resistance they could; for they were not able, in great numbers, to get out at the breach in the wall, it was so narrow. It is also probable that all those that were gotten within had been cut to pieces, if Titus had not sent them succors; for he ordered the archers to stand at the upper ends of these narrow lanes, and he stood himself where was the greatest multitude of his enemies, and with his darts he put a stop to them; as with him did Domitius Sabinus also, a valiant man, and one that in this battle appeared so to be. Thus did Caesar continue to shoot darts at the Jews continually, and to hinder them from coming upon his men, and this until all his soldiers had retreated out of the city.”¹⁶

On this day, the Romans began building siege ramps against the Temple & the Antonia Tower.¹⁷

[2*16 (TUE/WED 15/16 MAY) = 24th Day of Siege] Using overwhelming force, the Romans retook the commercial district behind the second wall.¹⁸

[MAY] Titus suspended active military operations so that the Jews could have some time for quiet consideration of their need to surrender. To put further psychological pressure on them, he had his soldiers muster out in full dress uniform to receive their monthly pay in view of the Jews who gathered on the northern walls of the Antonia Tower & the Temple. This took four days, one day for each legion. On the fifth day, having been seen no indication of surrender, he resumed his active siege.¹⁹

¹⁶ Wars 5.8.1.

¹⁷ Wars 5.11.4.

¹⁸ Wars 5.8.2.

¹⁹ Wars 5.9.1-2.

70 [MAY] Besides continuing his siege, Titus also had Josephus plead with the people on a daily basis, from his own Jewish perspective, regarding the insanity of resisting the Romans and offering safe passage to those who surrendered.²⁰ Some of the civilians responded by sneaking out to the Romans.

“As Josephus was speaking thus with a loud voice, the seditious would neither yield to what he said, nor did they deem it safe for them to alter their conduct; but as for the people, they had a great inclination to desert to the Romans; accordingly, some of them sold what they had, and even the most precious things that had been laid up as treasures by them, for a very small matter, and swallowed down pieces of gold, that they might not be found out by the robbers; and when they had escaped to the Romans, went to stool, and had wherewithal to provide plentifully for themselves;²¹ for Titus let a great number of them go away into the country, whither they pleased; and the main reasons why they were so ready to desert were these: that now they should be freed from those miseries which they had endured in that city, and yet should not be in slavery to the Romans; however, John and Simon, with their factions, did more carefully watch these men’s going out than they did the coming in of the Romans; and, if any one did but afford the least shadow of suspicion of such an intention, his throat was cut immediately.²²

The lack of provisions within the city brought on more outrageous behavior by the rebels. They forcibly confiscated food & water from the civilians; manhandling the elderly & the very young for scraps. They administered unbelievable tortures (for example, sharp spikes up the anus or the urethra) in order to learn where dwindling supplies might be hidden.²³

This prompted Josephus to write:

“It is therefore impossible to go distinctly over every instance of these men’s iniquity. I shall therefore speak my mind here at once briefly:—That neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world. Finally, they brought the Hebrew nation into contempt, that they might themselves appear comparatively less impious with regard to strangers. They confessed what was true, that they were the slaves, the scum, and the spurious and abortive offspring of our nation, while they overthrew the city themselves, and forced the Romans, whether they would or no, to gain a melancholy reputation, by acting gloriously against them, and did almost draw that fire upon the temple, which they seemed to think came too slowly; and, indeed, when they saw that temple burning from the upper city, they were neither troubled at it, nor did they shed any tears on that account while yet these passions were discovered among the Romans themselves; which circumstances we shall speak of hereafter in their proper place, when we come to treat of such matters.²⁴

Many Jews, both rebel & civilian, snuck out of the city (at night, no doubt) to gather wild greens, intending to return back inside the city walls. Those who resisted²⁵ when caught by the Roman pickets were treated as combatants, whipped & crucified in view of the walls.

“This miserable procedure made Titus greatly to pity them, while they caught every day five hundred Jews; nay, some days they caught more; yet did it not appear to be safe for him to let those that were taken by force go their way; and to set a guard over so many, he saw would be to make such as guarded them useless to him. The main reason why he did not forbid that cruelty was this, that he hoped the Jews might perhaps yield at that sight, out of fear lest they might themselves afterwards be liable to the same cruel treatment. So the soldiers out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after another, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies.²⁶

²⁰ Wars 5.9.3-4.

²¹ This practice was later discovered by anti-Semitic Syrian soldiers, who began killing & gutting Jews who surrendered. A few Romans also did the same. When Titus found out, he was furious and wanted to kill everyone who had participated in the atrocity; however, it was so widespread that it would have required him to kill a large portion of his Syrian auxiliaries. Instead he declared that any soldier engaging in this activity from now on would be executed. Wars 5.13.4-5.,

²² Wars 5.10.1.

²³ Wars 5.10.2-4.

²⁴ Wars 5.10.5.

²⁵ Josephus is quite clear in reporting that those who peaceably surrendered were always released to go about their business elsewhere, since the Romans were at war, not with Jews in general, but with Jewish rebels in particular.

²⁶ Wars 5.11.1.

70 [4*1 (WED/THU 27/28 JUN) = 67th Day of Siege] The Romans finished constructing a security fence around the city.

“So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city. Then did the famine widen its progress, and devoured the people by whole houses and families; the upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine; and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged; the children also and the young men wandered about the marketplaces like shadows, all swelled with the famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them.

“As for burying them, those that were sick themselves were not able to do it; and those that were hearty and well were deterred from doing it by the great multitude of those dead bodies, and by the uncertainty there was how soon they should die themselves, for many died as they were burying others, and many went to their coffins before that fatal hour was come! Nor was there any lamentation made under these calamities, nor were heard any mournful complaints; but the famine confounded all natural passions; for those who were just going to die, looked upon those that were gone to their rest before them with dry eyes and open mouths. A deep silence also, a kind of deadly night, had seized upon the city; while yet the robbers were still more terrible than these miseries were themselves; for they brake open those houses which were no other than graves of dead bodies, and plundered them of what they had; and carrying off the coverings of their bodies, went out laughing, and tried the points of their swords on their dead bodies; and, in order to prove what mettle they were made of, they thrust some of those through that still lay alive upon the ground; but for those that entreated them to lend them their right hand, and their sword to dispatch them, they were too proud to grant their requests, and left them to be consumed by the famine. Now every one of these died with their eyes fixed upon the temple, and left the seditious alive behind them.

“Now the seditious at first gave orders that the dead should be buried out of the public treasury, as not enduring the stench of their dead bodies. But afterwards, when they could not do that, they had them cast down from the walls into the valleys beneath. However, when Titus, in going his rounds along those valleys, saw them full of dead bodies, and the thick putrefaction running about them, he gave a groan; and spreading out his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing: and such was the sad case of the city itself.

“But the Romans were very joyful, since none of the seditious could now make sallies out of the city, because they were themselves disconsolate; and the famine already touched them also. These Roman besides, had great plenty of corn and other necessaries out of Syria, and out of the neighboring provinces; many of whom would stand near to the wall of the city, and show the people what great quantities of provisions they had, and so make the enemy more sensible of their famine, by the great plenty, even to satiety, which they had themselves.”²⁷

“And indeed, why do I relate these particular calamities?—while Manneus, the son of Lazarus, came running to Titus at this very time, and told him that there had been carried out through the gate, which was entrusted to his care, no fewer than a hundred and fifteen thousand eight hundred and eighty dead bodies, in the interval between the fourteenth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], when the Romans pitched their camp by the city, and the first day of the month Panemus [Tamuz]. This was itself a prodigious multitude; and though this man was not himself set as a governor at that gate, yet was he appointed to pay the public stipend for carrying these bodies out, and so was obliged of necessity to number them, while the rest were buried by their relations, though all their burial was but this, to bring them away, and cast them out of the city.

“After this man there ran away to Titus many of the eminent citizens, and told him the entire number of the poor that were dead; and that no fewer than six hundred thousand were thrown out at the gates, though still the number of the rest could not be discovered; and they told him farther, that when they were no longer able to carry out the dead bodies of the poor, they laid their corpses on heaps in very large houses, and shut them up therein; as also that a medimnus of wheat was sold for a talent²⁸; and that when, a while afterward, it was not possible to gather herbs, by reason the city was all walled about, some persons were driven to that terrible distress as to search the common sewers and old dung hills of cattle, and to eat the dung which they got there; and what they of old could not endure so much as to see they now used for food.

“When the Romans barely heard all this, they commiserated their case; while the seditious, who saw it also, did not repent, but suffered the same distress to come upon themselves; for they were blinded by that fate which was already coming upon the city, and upon themselves also.”²⁹

“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.” **Matthew 24:21-22 (NASB95)**

²⁷ Wars 5.12.3-4.

²⁸ 6,000 days wages. Roughly half a million dollars in modern buying power.

²⁹ Wars 5.13.7.