

The Fall of Jerusalem

By Flavius Josephus in Modern English

With Reflections on Its Meaning for Today and
Tomorrow

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AUTHORS INTRODUCTION

Let me start with a simple question:

Have you ever noticed your shadow?

Most of us have, probably without giving it much thought. But something interesting happens when you look a little closer. The more light there is, the clearer and sharper your shadow becomes. And the closer the object is to the ground, the more defined that shadow gets.

Try this the next time you're outside. On a cloudy day, your shadow is soft and blurry—just a general outline. But on a bright, sunny day, when the light is strong, you can make out every detail: your fingertips, the shape of your watch, maybe even a few stray hairs blowing in the wind.

Here's the point I'm making: The greater the light, the more the shadow reveals. A shadow may not show everything in full detail, but as the light increases, even the shadow begins to speak. It gives us a clearer glimpse of the object it's reflecting.

I believe the same principle applies to our understanding of history, prophecy, and the Word of God. As we draw closer to what the Bible calls the Day of the Lord, we also draw closer to the Light of the World—Jesus Himself. And in that growing light, the shadows of the past are coming into sharper focus. Events that once seemed vague or disconnected are starting to take shape, pointing us toward the larger picture God has always been painting.

That's what makes this moment in time so exciting. We're beginning to see things more clearly—how the past

connects with the present, and how it all leads to God's plan for the future.

Many have heard the name Josephus—especially those in academic or theological circles. And some believers may know about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and how Jesus foretold it. But few have taken the time to read Josephus's firsthand account of that tragic and pivotal moment in history. Even fewer have considered how often this event was prophesied in Scripture—or how deeply connected it is to God's redemptive plan for mankind.

This book is an attempt to shine some light on those shadows. I've taken the powerful, detailed writing of Josephus and adapted it into modern, easy-to-read language. My goal is to make his account accessible to any reader—no history degree required.

In addition to updating the language, I've added commentary and reflection to help uncover the deeper significance of these events—not only for ancient Israel, but for us today. I also touch on the restoration of Jerusalem in the 20th century, and the prophetic hope that still surrounds this remarkable city.

It's my sincere prayer that this book will help you see more clearly how the pieces fit together. That as the light of understanding increases, the once-blurry shadows of history will begin to reveal the incredible sovereignty, love, and purpose of our Father in heaven.

Let's walk into that light together.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL AND PROPHECTIC BACKGROUND

SETTING THE STAGE

By. Tim W. Gould

Before we dive into Josephus's account of the fall of Jerusalem, I believe it's important—extremely valuable, in fact—for readers to understand why this event was such a pivotal moment in history.

To help bring that into focus, I'll be sharing several key Scriptures in full. These passages will show that the fall of Jerusalem was not a surprise to God—and that, even in tragedy, it was (and still is) part of His ultimate plan for the redemption and restoration of mankind.

It's easy to get caught up in the events of a day, a week, or even a season—and lose sight of the bigger picture. We sometimes forget that our Heavenly Father is the Divine Maestro, orchestrating every note, even using our rebellion to bring about His greater purpose.

So, before we look at what happened in 70 A.D., let's go back to the Scriptures that foretold it—in the order they were given—so we can better understand how this monumental event was woven into the story long before it came to pass.

Moses: (1400 B.C.)

Deuteronomy 28:52-57: 52 They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the LORD your God is giving you. 53 Because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege, you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the LORD your God has given you. 54 Even the most gentle and sensitive man among you will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, 55 and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating. It will be all he has left because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of all your cities. 56 The most gentle and sensitive woman among you--so sensitive and gentle that she would not venture to touch the ground with the sole of her foot--will begrudge the husband she loves and her own son or daughter 57 the afterbirth from her womb and the children she bears. For in her dire need she intends to eat them secretly because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of your cities.

Jeremiah (636 – 586 B.C.)

Jeremiah 26:18: 18 Micah the Morashite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, “This is what Jehovah of hosts

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says, 'Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.'"

Daniel (530 B.C.)

Daniel 9:26: 26 And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed.

Jesus (A.D. 30 -33)

Matthew 24:1-2: 1 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. 2 But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."

Luke 21:7-9: 7 And they asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?" 8 And he said, "Take heed that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. 9 And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified; for this must first take place, but the end will not be at once."

Luke 21:20-22: 20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has

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come near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it; 22 for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.

Reader, please understand—this is not an exhaustive list of all the prophecies concerning the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. There has been much debate and discussion over the many verses in the Old Testament that speak of God's judgment on the nation of Israel.

The Scriptures I've chosen to include here were selected with care. They span a wide range of time and point to a very specific location. My goal is to show that this event was clearly and repeatedly foretold—across centuries—so that we might recognize just how intentional it was in the unfolding of God's greater plan.

Our Heavenly Father often speaks directly to us—and His Word is a guiding light, full of instruction, correction, and direction. Right here, in these passages, we have over 1,400 years of prophecy pointing to one moment in time. God Himself references it. That alone tells us something: this event, and the city in which it took place, hold a special place of significance in the story of redemption.

So now, let us turn to Josephus.

The year is A.D. 66. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus have already taken place. The movement known as

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“The Way”—what we now call the Church—is still in its infancy, quietly growing and spreading throughout the Roman Empire, mostly among the Gentiles.

But what’s happening in Israel? What’s the situation on the ground from an “outside-the-Church” perspective?

This is where Josephus comes in. A Jewish priest, soldier, and historian, Josephus was not a follower of Jesus—but he was an eyewitness to the events that unfolded in Jerusalem. His writings give us a rare and detailed look into what was happening in the nation of Israel during this volatile and prophetic time.

Before Rome ever marched in, the internal state of the Jewish people was already unraveling—spiritually, politically, and socially. Division, rebellion, and corruption were tearing the nation apart from within. The signs were everywhere, for those willing to see them.

Let’s step into the world of A.D. 66—and let Josephus show us what he saw.

CHAPTER 2

By Flavius Josephus

Introduction to “The Jewish War” (A.D. 66–70)

The war between the Jews and the Romans was, in my opinion, the greatest conflict not only of that era but perhaps of all time between cities or nations. Many people have tried to write about it. Some weren't even involved and just repeated secondhand stories full of contradictions, dressed up in fancy language. Others were there but let their bias—either to flatter the Romans or criticize the Jews—distort the facts. Their works swing between praise and blame, but they rarely tell the truth.

That's why I—Josephus, son of Matthias, a priest from Jerusalem who fought at the beginning of the war and later became a witness to it all—have decided to write a clear, honest account. I first wrote this in my native language for people in Upper Syria and now I'm translating it into Greek for the wider Roman world.

This conflict was massive. At the time, the Roman Empire was already dealing with internal problems, and the Jewish rebels took advantage of the unrest. The whole eastern part of the empire was at risk. The rebels hoped that Jews living across the Euphrates would join them. Meanwhile, the Romans were dealing with threats in Gaul and unrest

among the Celts. When Emperor Nero died in June A.D. 68, things became even more chaotic. Many tried to grab power, and soldiers were eager for the kind of political shakeup that might bring them personal gain.

I believed it would be wrong to let the truth get lost. I had already worked hard to make sure people in distant regions—like the Parthians, Babylonians, Arab tribes, and Jews beyond the Euphrates—knew the real story of how the war began, how it unfolded, and how it ended. But many Greeks and Romans still only had access to biased or made-up accounts.

Some writers claim to write history, but they're not very reliable. They try to make the Romans look heroic, but they insult the Jews at the same time. That doesn't make sense. If the Jews were so weak, why does defeating them prove Roman greatness? These authors ignore how long the war lasted, how massive the Roman army was, and how prestigious the generals were—especially considering the effort it took to capture Jerusalem. If all that is downplayed, then what credit do the Romans really deserve?

I'm not trying to glorify my people or downplay the power of Rome. I'm just going to report the facts fairly on both sides. I'll also allow myself to mourn the tragedy my country went through. Even Titus Caesar, the general who captured Jerusalem, admitted that the city's destruction was caused not by Rome, but by internal Jewish conflict. He

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sympathized with the innocent citizens and even delayed his assault on the city, hoping the rebels might change course.

If anyone criticizes me for blaming the tyrants or expressing grief over my homeland's suffering, I ask them to understand that compassion sometimes goes beyond what a historian is "supposed" to feel. Of all the cities under Roman rule, Jerusalem had reached the highest glory and then fell to the lowest despair. I honestly believe no other nation in history has suffered like the Jews did during this time—and since the damage came from within, it's impossible not to feel sorrow.

As for Greek writers of my time, I find it strange that during such extraordinary times they prefer to write about ancient empires like Assyria and Media, as if we don't already have enough from earlier historians. These modern writers lack both the judgment and the skill of their predecessors. At least those earlier historians wrote about their own times, which made their accounts clearer and more trustworthy. If they lied, their readers would know.

Writing a true history of recent events—especially one that hasn't been recorded before—is a worthy task. It's not just about reshaping old material. A good historian uses fresh sources and builds their own narrative structure.

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So, after spending much money and effort, I a foreigner present this history to both Greeks and Romans. Meanwhile, many Greek writers, who are quick to speak up when it benefits them personally, remain silent on matters of real historical value. They leave it to less knowledgeable writers to talk about the deeds of rulers. As for me, I will at least respect the truth, even if others ignore it.

CHAPTER 3

The Seeds of War Under the Last Roman Governors

The Rise of the Sicarii (A.D. 52–60)

Later, the emperor Claudius appointed Felix, the brother of Pallas, as governor (procurator) over Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Peraea. At the same time, King Agrippa's territory was expanded. He was moved from Chalcis to a larger kingdom that included regions previously ruled by Philip, such as Batanaea, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Lysanias's kingdom, and the province once ruled by Varus. Claudius ruled for 13 years, 8 months, and 20 days before he died in A.D. 54. He was succeeded by Nero.

Nero later added four more cities to Agrippa's rule: Abila and Julias in Peraea, and Tarichaea and Tiberias in Galilee. He left Felix in charge of the rest of Judea. Felix arrested Eleazar, a notorious gang leader who had terrorized the region for twenty years. Along with many of his men, Eleazar was sent to Rome for trial. Felix also crucified countless other bandits and punished many ordinary people who were believed to be helping them.

The Rise of the Sicarii

But just as the countryside was being cleared of these outlaws, a new group of killers emerged in Jerusalem. They were known as the Sicarii, and they carried out

assassinations in broad daylight in the city center. They especially targeted people during festivals, hiding small daggers under their clothes and blending into the crowds. They would stab people they considered enemies, then disappear into the chaos, even pretending to be horrified by the murder to avoid suspicion.

Their first victim was Jonathan the high priest, and after that, killings became common. People were so terrified, they felt like they were living on a battlefield. No one trusted anyone—not even friends—because death could come at any moment. Still, despite all the fear and precautions, the Sicarii managed to keep killing. They were fast, clever, and hard to catch.

The Country Falls into Deeper Chaos

As if that weren't enough, another dangerous group appeared. These weren't assassins, but they were just as harmful. They were false prophets and deceivers who claimed to be inspired by God. They stirred up the people with talk of revolution and led large groups out into the desert, claiming that God would show them miraculous signs of deliverance.

Governor Felix saw this as a threat—possibly the start of an open rebellion. So he sent in both cavalry and infantry, and many of these people were killed in the crackdown.

The Egyptian False Prophet

Things got even worse for the Jews when a false prophet from Egypt showed up. He was a con man who had convinced a lot of people that he was a real prophet. He managed to gather about 30,000 followers, most of them tricked into believing he had divine power. He led them from the desert to the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem.

His plan was bold and dangerous: he wanted to storm Jerusalem, defeat the Roman soldiers stationed there, take over the city, and make himself ruler. He had a group of armed men ready to force their way in with him.

But Felix, the Roman governor, found out about the plot in time. He quickly marched out with Roman troops, and many local citizens joined him to defend the city. In the battle that followed, the Egyptian leader escaped with a few of his men, but most of his followers were killed or captured. The rest scattered and snuck back home.

Rebellion Spreads Like a Disease

But even after that uprising was put down, new problems kept breaking out—like a disease spreading through the body. This time, bandits and fake prophets joined forces. They urged people to rebel against Roman rule, telling them it was time to fight for freedom. Anyone who refused to join the revolt was threatened with death, and those who

remained loyal to Rome were attacked and forced to switch sides.

These groups split up and roamed the countryside in gangs. They robbed the homes of the rich, murdered their owners, and burned down villages. Their violent rebellion spread quickly, infecting all of Judea with chaos and fear.

Riots in Caesarea (Around A.D. 59)

As the rebellion in Judea got worse, another major conflict broke out in Caesarea, a city with both Jewish and Syrian (Greek) populations. The Jewish residents claimed the city should belong to them because King Herod, a Jew, had founded it.

The Syrians didn't deny Herod's role, but they argued that the city was built as a Greek city, pointing out that Herod had filled it with Greek-style statues and temples—things no Jewish king would do if he had meant it to be a Jewish city.

The argument between the two sides became so intense that Felix decided to send representatives from both communities to Rome, so they could present their case directly to Emperor Nero.

Festus (Procurator of Judea, A.D. 60–62)

When Festus took over from Felix as governor of Judea, he went after one of the main sources of chaos: the bandits and

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rebels. He captured many of them and had a good number executed. His time in office marked a serious attempt to restore order.

Albinus (Procurator, A.D. 62–64)

But the next governor, Albinus, was a completely different story—and far worse. He was deeply corrupt and didn't even try to hide it. In his official role, he stole private property, extorted money from the people, and heavily taxed the entire nation.

He even made money off criminals. If someone had been imprisoned for robbery by local councils or previous governors, Albinus would accept bribes from their families to release them. The only people left in jail were those too poor to pay.

During his time in power, the revolutionary movement in Jerusalem got a new boost. Some of the influential troublemakers bribed Albinus to ignore their crimes, while the rowdier part of the population joined in with the lawless behavior.

Every criminal and thug began gathering their own personal gangs. They acted like local warlords or mob bosses, using their followers to rob innocent people. The victims were too afraid to speak out, and those who weren't attacked tried to stay on the good side of these criminals just to stay safe.

People were too terrified to speak their minds, and lawlessness ruled the city. It was during this time that the seeds were planted for Jerusalem's eventual destruction.

Gessius Florus (Procurator, A.D. 64–66)

As bad as Albinus was, his successor, Gessius Florus, made him look almost virtuous by comparison.

At least Albinus committed his crimes quietly. Florus, on the other hand, openly flaunted his cruelty and corruption. It was like he thought his job wasn't to govern the province but to act as a public executioner.

He was cruel where mercy was needed, shameless in the face of scandal, and completely indifferent to truth and justice. He didn't just extort individuals—he robbed entire cities, destroyed entire communities, and encouraged others to loot as long as he got a share. His greed left the land in ruins, and many people were forced to flee their homes and take refuge in foreign lands.

The People Cry Out to Cestius Gallus

While Cestius Gallus, the Roman governor of Syria, was still busy with his duties in the region, no one dared to send complaints about Florus. But when Cestius visited Jerusalem around the time of Passover, a massive crowd—nearly three million people—gathered to beg for his help.

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They cried out about their suffering, blamed Florus for ruining the country, and pleaded with Cestius to step in. Florus stood right there with Cestius and mocked the crowd's pain, showing no remorse.

Cestius eventually managed to calm the crowd and promised to speak to Florus, urging him to govern more fairly. After that, he left to return to Antioch.

Florus Schemes to Start a War

Florus accompanied Cestius as far as Caesarea, pretending to be cooperative and reasonable. But in reality, he was already plotting to push the Jews into open rebellion.

Why? Because he feared that if peace continued, the people would eventually report his crimes to the emperor. But if he could trigger a full-blown revolt, the chaos of war would cover up his own corruption.

So, in the days that followed, Florus deliberately made things worse for the people, increasing their suffering and tension, hoping to provoke a violent uprising that would protect him from being held accountable.

CHAPTER 4

What Sparked the War: Ending Sacrifices for the Emperor

Summer, A.D. 66

While tensions were already high, a group of rebels took things further by launching a surprise attack on the Roman garrison at Masada, a fortress near the Dead Sea. They killed the Roman soldiers stationed there and took over the fort, placing their own men in charge.

Around the same time, a major incident happened in the Temple in Jerusalem. A bold young priest named Eleazar, the son of the high priest Ananias, was in charge of Temple operations. He convinced the priests to stop accepting sacrifices from non-Jews—especially the customary offerings made on behalf of the Roman Emperor.

This was a huge deal. It basically meant cutting religious ties with Rome, and many saw it as the first official act of rebellion. The high priests and respected elders begged Eleazar and his followers not to do this, but they refused. They felt empowered by how many people supported them, especially the more extreme revolutionary factions, and they strongly believed in Eleazar's leadership.

The Moderates Try to Stop the Rebellion

Seeing how serious things were becoming, the high priests, leading Pharisees, and prominent citizens held an emergency meeting. Realizing they might already be too far down a dangerous road, they decided to try and reason with the rebels one last time.

They gathered a large crowd in front of the bronze gate of the Temple and spoke out strongly against the growing rebellion. They called the decision to stop sacrifices for the Emperor both reckless and unnecessary, pointing out that their ancestors had always accepted offerings from outsiders. In fact, many of the decorations and gifts in the Temple had come from non-Jews, and no one had ever thought that was wrong before.

They warned that refusing sacrifices from Rome would look like a religious insult, and could give the Romans the impression that the Jews wanted to cut ties completely with the empire. If that happened, they said, the Romans might not let them offer sacrifices at all, even for their own people, and Jerusalem could lose its place in the empire entirely.

They brought in religious experts to confirm that accepting sacrifices from foreigners had always been part of Jewish tradition, but none of the rebels would listen. Even the

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priests who served in the Temple supported the rebellion and ignored the appeals for peace.

The City Becomes Divided

Realizing they couldn't stop the uprising and that they'd probably be the first to suffer when Rome responded, the city's leaders tried to protect themselves. They sent two delegations—one to Florus, the Roman governor, and one to King Agrippa II—asking for military help to stop the rebellion before it got out of control.

Florus, who secretly wanted a war (because it would distract from his own crimes), ignored the request. But Agrippa, who genuinely wanted to protect both the Jews and the Romans, responded quickly. He didn't want to see Jerusalem or the Temple destroyed, and he knew chaos wouldn't help his own position either.

So, Agrippa sent 3,000 cavalry soldiers from his nearby territories—Auranitis, Batanaea, and Trachonitis—under the command of Darius and Philip (son of Jacimus).

Civil War Breaks Out Inside the City

With these reinforcements, the moderates—made up of the high priests, city leaders, and regular citizens who wanted peace—took control of the upper city (the wealthier, more secure part of Jerusalem).

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Meanwhile, the rebels held the lower city and the Temple area.

And so, Jerusalem itself became a divided battleground, with Jews fighting other Jews as the Roman war loomed just around the corner.

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Early Jewish Victory: A Roman Army Defeated at Beth-Horon

This early Roman defeat—humiliating and unexpected—reminds historians of a similar disaster Rome suffered long ago at the Caudine Forks during its wars with the Samnites.

Cestius Gallus Moves In (A.D. 66)

With Jewish uprisings breaking out everywhere, the Roman governor of Syria, Cestius Gallus, decided he couldn't afford to sit back any longer. He left Antioch and marched toward Ptolemais (modern-day Acre), assembling a massive force:

- The Twelfth Legion, fully manned
- 2,000 elite troops from each of the other Roman legions
- 6 infantry cohorts
- 4 cavalry squadrons

In addition to his Roman troops, he had thousands of allied soldiers sent by nearby client kings:

- Antiochus: 2,000 cavalry and 3,000 infantry, all archers
- King Agrippa: the same number of infantry and just under 2,000 cavalry

- Sohemus: 4,000 troops (1/3 cavalry, 2/3 archers)

They were also joined by local militias from surrounding cities. These weren't trained like the Roman regulars, but their hatred of the Jews and eagerness to fight made up for their lack of discipline.

King Agrippa himself joined Cestius as an adviser and guide on the campaign.

Roman Successes in the North

The Romans made quick and easy gains at the start:

- Galilee surrendered almost without a fight
- Joppa (a port city) was attacked by land and sea, captured, and burned to the ground
- Roman victories piled up everywhere they went

Cestius Marches Toward Jerusalem

From Antipatris (near modern-day Tel Aviv), Cestius moved on to Lydda. But the city was practically empty—almost everyone had traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (a major Jewish holiday in October). Only about 50 people were still in town, and Cestius had them killed. Then he burned the city and kept marching.

He made his way through the steep mountain pass at Beth-Horon and set up camp at Gibeon, which was about 6 miles (50 furlongs) from Jerusalem.

A Successful Jewish Attack Just Outside Jerusalem

When the Jews saw that the war was finally coming close to their beloved city, they quickly stopped celebrating and grabbed their weapons. Even though it was the Sabbath—a day they usually treated with great respect and rest—they didn't care about that that day. Their strong emotions pushed them into battle with loud shouts and a bit of chaos.

They attacked the Romans with such force that they broke through their lines, killing many along the way. If the Roman cavalry and some infantry hadn't come to help and regrouped to support their broken line, Cestius and his entire army could have been in serious trouble. The Romans lost 515 soldiers (400 foot soldiers and the rest cavalry), while the Jews only lost 22.

After their direct attack was stopped, the Jews pulled back into the city. But Simon, the son of Gioras, attacked the Romans from behind as they were retreating to Beth-Horon. He killed many of the soldiers at the back and captured lots of their supply mules, which he brought back into the city.

Cestius stayed put for three days, but the Jews took control of the high ground and guarded the passes, clearly ready to act if the Romans tried to move again.

Failed Attempt to Negotiate with the Jews

At this point, Agrippa realized that with so many enemies controlling the mountains around, even a Roman army was in a dangerous spot. He decided to try talking with the Jews to see if they could make peace. He hoped either to convince all of them to stop fighting or at least to separate the ones who didn't want to keep battling from the rest.

So, he sent two men the Jews knew well, Borcaeus and Phoebus, to offer a treaty from Cestius. The offer promised the Jews would be forgiven for their past actions if they laid down their weapons and joined the Romans.

But the rebels were afraid that if the promise of forgiveness spread, many people would switch sides. So, they attacked Agrippa's messengers violently. They killed Phoebus before he could say anything, and though Borcaeus was hurt, he managed to escape. When some people spoke out against this brutal attack, the rebels chased them with stones and clubs, forcing them back into the city.

Cestius Takes the Bezetha Suburb

Seeing that the Jewish rebels were divided and weaker because of their own internal fights, Cestius brought all his troops together, defeated the enemy, and chased them back to Jerusalem. He set up camp on a hill called Scopus, about seven furlongs (less than a mile) from the city. For three days, he didn't attack, hoping the people inside might

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surrender. During this time, he sent soldiers to nearby villages to gather food.

On the fourth day, October 30, A.D. 66, he arranged his forces and moved into the city.

The people inside were controlled by the rebel leaders. Scared by the Romans' strict discipline, the rebels gave up some suburbs and pulled back into the city center and the Temple. Once inside, Cestius burned the Bezetha district, the New City, and the Timber Market. Then he moved to the upper city and camped near the royal palace.

If Cestius had decided to push through the city walls right then, he could have taken Jerusalem quickly and ended the war. But the camp commander, Tyrannius Priscus, and most of the cavalry officers had been bribed by Florus and stopped him from attacking. Because of this, the war dragged on for a long time, leading the Jews to suffer a terrible, irreversible defeat.

Attack on Jerusalem

At the same time, some important citizens—led by Ananus, son of Jonathan—sent a message to Cestius, promising to open the city gates for him. But Cestius didn't trust them completely and hesitated to accept the offer, partly because he was suspicious and partly because he was angry about it. When the rebels found out about this planned betrayal,

they pulled Ananus and his group off the city walls and threw stones at them, forcing them back into their homes.

Then the rebels took their positions on the towers and started throwing missiles at the Romans who were attacking the walls. For five days, the Romans attacked from every side but couldn't break through.

On the sixth day, Cestius led a group of his best soldiers, along with archers, to attack the north side of the Temple. The Jewish defenders fought back hard from the portico, pushing the attackers away many times. But eventually, overwhelmed by the rain of missiles, they were forced to retreat.

The Roman soldiers then used their shields to create a protective cover against the walls, stacking them in layers to form a shield "tortoise" that deflected the enemy's missiles. Protected like this, the Romans dug under the wall and prepared to set fire to the Temple gate.

A terrible panic spread among the rebels. Many started sneaking out of the city, thinking it was about to be captured. This gave hope to others inside, who moved closer to the gates, ready to open them and welcome Cestius as a friend.

If Cestius had pushed on with the attack, he probably could have taken the city right then and ended the war. But for some reason—maybe because of the rebels' evil actions

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and God's disfavor—even the holy Temple wasn't spared, and the war was not meant to end that day.

Cestius's Unexpected Retreat and the Jewish Pursuit

For some reason, Cestius didn't realize how desperate the people inside Jerusalem were or how angry the crowd was. Suddenly, without losing any battles, he called his troops back and unexpectedly gave up on taking the city. This surprised everyone.

As the Romans were retreating, the Jewish fighters grew brave and attacked the Roman rear, killing many soldiers on horseback and on foot.

That night, Cestius camped on Mount Scopus. The next day, as he continued his retreat, the Jews kept chasing him. They attacked the Roman rear and both sides of the marching column, throwing missiles from the flanks. The Roman soldiers at the back didn't dare turn around to fight the attackers behind them because they thought they were facing a huge army. They also didn't fight off the enemies on their sides because the Romans were heavily armored and worried that opening their ranks would let the lightly armed Jews rush in.

Because of this, the Romans took heavy losses without being able to fight back. Along the way, many soldiers fell, including important officers like Priscus, the general of the sixth legion, Longinus, a tribune, and *Æ*Emilius Jucundus, a

squadron commander. They also lost most of their supplies. Eventually, the survivors barely made it back to their camp at Gibeon.

Cestius stayed there for two days, unsure of what to do next. On the third day, seeing that the enemy had grown much stronger and that Jews were everywhere around him, he realized waiting longer would only make things worse and increase the enemy's numbers.

The Fight at the Pass of Beth-Horon

To speed up their retreat, Cestius ordered his soldiers to get rid of everything that was slowing them down. They killed all the mules, donkeys, and pack animals—except those carrying weapons and war machines. They held onto these because they needed them, and also didn't want the Jews to capture them and use them against the Romans.

Then Cestius led his army toward Beth-Horon. In the open areas, the Jews didn't bother them as much, but when the Romans reached the narrow mountain paths on the way down, the Jews attacked from all sides.

One group got ahead of the Romans and blocked their way out. Another pushed the soldiers at the back down into a ravine. Meanwhile, the main Jewish force lined up along the cliffs above and rained down missiles on the Roman formation.

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The Roman foot soldiers were powerless to defend themselves, but the cavalry—soldiers on horseback—were in even worse trouble. They couldn't move forward in an organized way under the constant barrage of darts, and charging uphill on horses was impossible.

On both sides of the road were steep cliffs and ravines. Horses and riders slipped and fell over the edges. The Romans had nowhere to run and no way to fight back properly. They were trapped and helpless, and they groaned and cried out in despair.

The Jews, wild with excitement and anger, shouted and cheered in victory.

Cestius and his army would have been almost completely wiped out if night hadn't come. Under the cover of darkness, the Romans managed to escape to Beth-Horon.

The Jews took control of the whole surrounding area and kept watch to block any Roman attempts to break out.

Cestius's Escape

Realizing he couldn't just retreat openly anymore, Cestius came up with a clever plan to escape. He picked about 400 of his bravest soldiers and put them up on the roofs, telling them to shout the camp's watchwords loudly. This was meant to trick the Jews into thinking the whole Roman army was still there.

Meanwhile, Cestius quietly led the rest of his men to move away about thirty furlongs (around 3.5 miles) during the night.

At dawn, the Jews discovered the camp was empty except for the 400 soldiers still shouting. They quickly attacked and killed those soldiers with spears, then started chasing after Cestius.

Cestius had managed to get far ahead during the night and sped up even more at sunrise. His men, panicked and terrified, abandoned the big siege weapons like catapults, which the Jews then captured and later used against the Romans.

The Jews chased Cestius all the way to Antipatris, but when they couldn't catch him, they stopped and took the abandoned machines, looted the dead Romans, and collected whatever they could find. Then, singing songs of victory, they headed back to Jerusalem.

The Jews lost very few men, but they killed 5,300 Roman foot soldiers and 480 cavalry. This happened on the 8th of the month Dius, in November, A.D. 66—during Nero's twelfth year as emperor.

Cestius Reports to Nero

After Cestius's disastrous retreat, many important Jewish leaders started leaving the city, like swimmers abandoning a sinking ship. For example, brothers Costobar and Saul,

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along with Philip (son of Jacimus, King Agrippa's camp commander), escaped Jerusalem and joined Cestius.

At their request, Cestius sent Saul and his group to Emperor Nero in Achaia to tell him about the troubles they were facing. They also blamed the governor Florus for starting the war. Cestius hoped that by making Nero angry at Florus, he could protect himself from blame.

Jewish Preparations for War

When the Jews who had chased Cestius returned to Jerusalem, they persuaded or forced the remaining pro-Roman supporters to join their side. They gathered in the Temple and chose several generals to lead the war effort.

Joseph, son of Gorion, and Ananus, the high priest, were put in charge of the city's defense, especially the work of repairing the city walls.

Eleazar, son of Simon, had control over the Roman loot and public money taken from Cestius, but the people didn't give him a leadership role at first. They were suspicious because he seemed to want to become a dictator, and his followers, the Zealots, acted like his personal guards.

However, over time, because of the city's financial needs and Eleazar's scheming, the people gradually accepted his authority in all matters.

Jerusalem Before the Siege

By the spring of 67 A.D., the unrest in Galilee had been brought under control, and the Jews, putting aside internal conflicts for the time being, turned their focus toward preparing for war with the Romans.

In Jerusalem, High Priest Ananus and other leading men—those who weren't pro-Roman—worked on repairing the city walls and stockpiling weapons and siege equipment. Across the city, weapons and armor were being made, and large groups of young men were undergoing scattered, unorganized military training. The whole city was busy, but chaotic.

Meanwhile, those in the moderate party—people who had hoped for peace—were deeply discouraged. Many of them saw disaster coming and didn't hide their sorrow. There were also various omens and signs, which the peace-lovers took as warnings of doom. But the war-hungry rebels chose to interpret those same signs as good news, twisting them to fit their hopes.

Even before the Romans arrived, Jerusalem already looked like a city headed for destruction.

Ananus, for his part, wanted to slow down the war preparations and persuade the more extreme revolutionaries—especially the Zealots, as they were known—to adopt a more reasonable approach. But their

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aggression and fanaticism were too much for him to control.

What happened to Ananus will be revealed as the story continues.

CHAPTER 6

The Fall of Jotapata and the Capture of Josephus

Capture of the Town through Information of a Jewish Deserter

The defenders of Jotapata had held out bravely through 47 grueling days of siege. But on that final day, the Roman siege ramps finally rose above the walls. That same day, a Jewish deserter came to Vespasian with inside information. He told the Roman general that the defenders were exhausted, few in number, and barely holding on. He revealed that during the last watch of the night—when soldiers were most tired and often fell asleep—the city would be most vulnerable.

At first, Vespasian didn't trust the deserter. He knew the Jews were fiercely loyal to each other and had seen one prisoner from Jotapata die under torture rather than betray his city. But the deserter's story seemed believable, and even if it was a trap, the risk seemed worth taking. Vespasian had the man detained, just in case, and prepared a surprise nighttime assault.

Just before dawn, Roman soldiers moved in silently. Titus—Vespasian's son—and a Roman tribune named Domitius Sabinus led the first wave, sneaking in and killing

the sentries. More soldiers followed, including tribune Sextus Calvarius and the officer Placidus.

The Romans took the citadel without a fight. A thick morning mist helped hide their movements, and most of the defenders were asleep. By the time the city realized what had happened, the Romans were already inside, killing everyone they found. The first warning many Jews had that the city had fallen was when they were being attacked.

The Romans showed no mercy. They slaughtered people as they drove them down the steep hills from the citadel. The narrow streets made defense impossible. Some of Josephus's most elite men even chose suicide, seeing no chance of survival or victory.

In the following days, the Romans searched caves, hiding places, and tunnels. They spared no one except women and infants. They took about 1,200 prisoners, and the total number of Jews killed during the siege and storming of Jotapata was estimated at 40,000.

Vespasian ordered the city destroyed and its forts burned. Jotapata fell in July 67 A.D., during the 13th year of Emperor Nero's reign.

Josephus Hides—and Is Found

The Romans, eager to capture Josephus, began a thorough search. He was a high-profile leader, and his capture would be a major victory. Josephus had slipped away just before

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the city fell, with what he believed was divine help, and hid in a deep pit that opened into a wide, hidden cave.

There, he found 40 others in hiding, along with enough food to survive for some time. He stayed hidden during the day and at night tried to find a way to escape—but the Romans were watching every exit. For two days, he remained undetected.

On the third day, a woman from the group was caught and revealed his location. Vespasian quickly sent two officers, Paulinus and Gallicanus, to offer Josephus safe conduct and urge him to surrender.

Josephus didn't trust them. He thought the Romans might be setting a trap and feared punishment for having fought so fiercely against them. So, Vespasian sent a third officer—Nicanor—who had once been a close friend of Josephus.

Nicanor spoke kindly, assuring Josephus that the Romans admired his bravery and didn't want to harm him. If Vespasian had really wanted him dead, Nicanor argued, he would have just ordered it—he wouldn't send an old friend to deceive him.

Josephus was still unsure. As the Roman soldiers began to lose patience and prepared to burn the cave, Josephus heard their angry threats and remembered dreams he had had—visions from God, he believed—showing him the future fall

of the Jewish people and the rise of the Roman emperors. He had long believed he was meant to deliver a divine message.

So he prayed silently: “Lord, if it is Your will that the Jewish nation fall and that the Romans rise, and if You have chosen me to reveal these things, then I surrender willingly—not as a traitor, but as Your servant.”

Josephus’s Men Turn Against Him

But when the other Jews in the cave heard that Josephus planned to surrender, they were furious. They accused him of cowardice and betrayal.

“You, of all people, should not fear death,” they said. “You persuaded many to die for freedom, and now you want to live as a Roman slave? How can you accept mercy from those you fought so hard against? If you won’t die by your own hand, we’ll kill you ourselves—either you die with honor, or you die as a traitor.”

They drew their swords and surrounded him.

Josephus, trying to avoid a fight, argued with them. He gave a long speech against suicide, saying life was a gift from God that should only be given back when God chooses to take it. He explained that dying naturally brought eternal peace, but suicide led the soul into darkness and disgrace.

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But his words meant nothing to them—they were already set on dying and furious with him. They raised their swords, prepared to strike.

Josephus, now fighting for his life, tried everything to stop them. He called some of them by name, gave orders like a general, begged others, grabbed hands, stared them down. In the chaos, his authority still carried weight. Some froze, some lowered their swords, and some even dropped them.

Though moments from death, he managed to delay them. Even then, they still held him in enough respect to hesitate.

The Drawing of the Lots and Josephus's Survival

Cornered and desperate, Josephus remained calm and resourceful. Trusting in divine providence, he proposed a solution to the impossible situation: rather than each man committing suicide, they would draw lots. The one who drew the first lot would be killed by the next, and so on—so that no man would die by his own hand, and no one could back out once the chain began.

This grim game of fate seemed acceptable to the others. The lots were cast.

One by one, each man submitted to death, trusting that their leader, Josephus, would be joining them soon. But, whether by chance or divine intervention, Josephus was left with just one other man. Unwilling to kill his last companion—

or to die himself—Josephus used all his persuasion to convince the man to surrender with him.

He agreed.

Josephus Brought Before Vespasian

Now captured, Josephus was brought by Nicanor to stand before Vespasian.

The Roman camp buzzed with emotion. Soldiers and officers crowded to get a glimpse of the infamous Jewish commander. Some cheered his downfall, others shouted for punishment, while many were struck by the sheer reversal of fortune: the warrior who had resisted so fiercely was now a prisoner, standing helpless in the hands of his enemies.

Even Vespasian's officers, some of whom had lost men during the siege, were moved to compassion.

But no one was more affected than Titus, Vespasian's son. Seeing Josephus now, stripped of power and glory, yet still composed and dignified, Titus was struck by the tragic unpredictability of war. Just days ago, Josephus had led armies; now he stood in chains.

Titus pleaded with his father on Josephus's behalf. Vespasian agreed to spare his life—for the time being—and ordered him closely guarded, with plans to send him later to Emperor Nero.

Josephus's Prophecy

When Josephus heard that he was to be sent to Nero, he made a bold request: a private audience with Vespasian.

With only Titus and two trusted friends present, Josephus made a prophecy.

He said: “Vespasian, you think you've captured a simple prisoner. But I come to you as a messenger of destiny. If I had not been sent by God, I would have died before surrendering. But you must know—you are destined to become emperor, and so is your son.

Bind me now, if you will, but not as a common prisoner. Keep me safe—not for Nero, but for yourself. For you, Vespasian, will soon rule land and sea and all humanity. And if I'm lying, may God hold me to account for using His name falsely.”

At first, Vespasian dismissed the speech as a clever plea for mercy. But over time, he began to reconsider.

He was already feeling stirrings of ambition. Other omens had suggested his rise. And Josephus, it turned out, had a reputation for predicting future events accurately.

One of the Roman officers scoffed: “If you're such a prophet, why didn't you predict the fall of Jotapata—or your own capture?”

But Josephus calmly replied: “I did. I told the people of Jotapata that the city would fall in 47 days. I told them I would be taken alive.”

Vespasian quietly asked surviving prisoners if this was true. They confirmed it.

Josephus Under Guard—but with Honor

Although Vespasian did not yet release Josephus from chains, he began treating him with increasing honor. He gave him clothing and valuables and ensured his welfare.

Josephus remained under guard, but he was no longer treated as an enemy—rather, as a man marked for something greater.

And Titus, continuing to be deeply moved by Josephus’s character and composure, became one of his strongest advocates in the Roman camp.

CHAPTER 7

Reception at Jerusalem of the News of the Fall of Jotapata

When news of Jotapata's fall finally reached Jerusalem, it struck the city like a thunderclap. The scale of the disaster seemed so immense—and the complete absence of any survivors to recount it—led many at first to doubt the reports. No soldier, no refugee had escaped to confirm what had happened. Instead, it was Rumour herself—ominous and vague—that arrived first, bringing only the blackest of tidings.

Gradually, as fragments of truth began to spread from neighboring regions, disbelief gave way to grim acceptance. The news, though confirmed, did not come without embellishment. Most notably, Josephus was said to have perished in the final assault. This false report triggered a profound wave of mourning.

Every household in Jerusalem seemed to be in grief. Some wept for lost sons or husbands who had fought in Jotapata. Others for friends or guests who never returned. But **all** mourned Josephus. For thirty days, the air in Jerusalem was filled with wailing and the sound of dirges; flute-players were hired to lead formal lamentations, and public mourning gripped the city with a heavy hand.

A Sudden Turn in Public Sentiment

But when the truth eventually surfaced—that Josephus was alive, had surrendered, and was now in Roman custody, treated not with contempt but with respect and favor by Vespasian and his officers—the national sorrow turned instantly to outrage.

Jerusalem, still burning with revolutionary fervor, now erupted with accusations.

Some denounced Josephus as a coward, others as a traitor. Many saw his surrender as the ultimate betrayal of the Jewish cause. His survival—once a source of national grief when thought lost—was now regarded with fury, a symbol of dishonor. The dirges gave way to curses.

This was more than emotional backlash. The people of Jerusalem, already embittered by repeated military failures and disillusioned with their prospects, needed a scapegoat. And Josephus, once their brilliant general, now seen fraternizing with the enemy, became the perfect target.

A City Consumed by Fury and Misguided Resolve

Jerusalem was already teetering on the brink of chaos. Its leaders were fractured. Zealot factions were growing stronger. And the sting of defeat only stoked the flames of fanaticism.

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Rather than tempering their resistance with caution, the mounting failures made the people more reckless. Where wisdom would have urged prudence, they doubled down on aggression. Each setback only ignited another doomed campaign. The hatred for Josephus became fuel for further war.

And so the city fell deeper into unrest. Reason gave way to rage. Grief twisted into vengeance. And the cry for blood—Roman and Jewish alike—grew ever louder.

CHAPTER 8

The Murder of High Priest Ananus and Zacharias after a Fake Trial

During the winter of A.D. 67–68, the Zealots, a radical Jewish faction, invited the Idumaeans (from Edom) to help them fight against the supporters of High Priest Ananus. The Idumaeans managed to sneak into Jerusalem during a thunderstorm at night. Once inside, they killed about 13,000 people on the opposing side. However, they soon regretted their involvement and left the city.

But before leaving, the Idumaeans, still full of rage, turned from the Temple to the city itself. They looted homes and killed anyone they came across. They soon decided that killing regular people was a waste of time, so they went after the chief priests. The main group attacked and quickly captured and killed them. Standing over their bodies, they mocked Ananus for supporting the people and Jesus (another leader) for speaking publicly against them. They even refused to bury the bodies, which was shocking for the Jews, who were usually very strict about proper burials—even for criminals.

The killing of Ananus marked the beginning of the city's fall. His death was the turning point that led to the destruction of the walls and eventually the Jewish state itself.

Ananus was highly respected. He came from a noble family, held a high position, and was known for his integrity. He treated even the poorest people as equals and valued freedom and democracy. He always put the public good before his own interests. He wanted peace, understood that Rome was too powerful to defeat, and tried to prepare the Jews for war in a smart and realistic way. If he had lived, the Jews might have reached an agreement with the Romans, or at the very least, would have been able to resist much longer under his leadership. He was a powerful speaker and was beginning to win influence over even his enemies.

Alongside him was Jesus, another respected leader, though not as prominent as Ananus.

Their deaths seemed to reflect a divine judgment. Perhaps God, disgusted with the city's corruption, wanted to cleanse it through fire. The very men who once wore holy garments, led important religious ceremonies, and were honored by visitors from all over the world, now lay naked, unburied, and left for dogs and wild animals. It was as if virtue itself mourned their loss, defeated by evil. That was how Ananus and Jesus met their end.

After killing them, the Zealots and Idumaeans turned back to the people and slaughtered them like animals.

The Fake Trial and Murder of Zacharias

Eventually, the Zealots grew tired of randomly killing people and pretended to hold trials. One of their targets was Zacharias, son of Baris—an important and wealthy man who hated injustice and supported liberty. They wanted him dead, both to silence his opposition and to seize his wealth. So they summoned seventy of the city's leading citizens to act as judges in a staged trial at the Temple. They accused Zacharias of plotting with the Romans and betraying the nation. They had no proof, only their own word, which they claimed was enough.

Zacharias knew he had no real chance of escape, but he didn't stay silent. He stood up, dismissed the ridiculous charges, and then turned the tables by exposing the Zealots' crimes and criticizing the chaos in the city.

The Zealots were furious, barely able to keep from attacking him on the spot. But they held back, wanting to see if the judges would rule fairly or protect themselves. Surprisingly, all seventy judges sided with Zacharias and declared him innocent, even though they knew it might cost them their lives.

The Zealots erupted in anger at this outcome. Two of them immediately attacked Zacharias and killed him right there in the Temple. Mocking him, they said, "Here's our verdict

and your real release,” and threw his body into a ravine. Then they struck the judges with the flat sides of their swords and drove them out of the Temple, sparing their lives only so they could go tell everyone in the city how powerless they had become.

How Josephus Was Freed - Summer A.D. 69

By this time, everything seemed to be going Vespasian’s way. He began to believe that his rise to power wasn’t just luck but that some higher power was guiding events—and that it was his destiny to become emperor of the world.

As he thought about the signs that had pointed to his future rule, one stood out: Josephus, the Jewish commander and historian, had boldly called him “emperor” even while Nero was still alive. Vespasian realized it was wrong that Josephus, who had made such a prediction, was still being held as a prisoner.

So he called together his top general, Mucianus, along with other commanders and close friends. He reminded them how fiercely Josephus had fought against them at Jotapata, and how much trouble he had been. Then he brought up Josephus’s prediction—how he had once thought Josephus was just saying whatever he could to save his life, but now, looking back, it seemed like something greater had been speaking through him.

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“It’s shameful,” Vespasian said, “that someone who predicted my rise to power and spoke the words of God is still being treated like a captive.” Then he ordered that Josephus be freed.

The Roman officers, seeing how generously Vespasian rewarded even a former enemy, began to hope they might receive great honors too.

Titus, Vespasian’s son, stepped in and added, “If we’re going to set Josephus free, we should also make sure he’s not marked by disgrace. If we just unlock his chains, it still looks like he was a prisoner. But if we break them with an axe, it’s a sign that he was wrongfully chained in the first place—like it never happened.”

Vespasian agreed. A servant came forward and broke Josephus’s chains with an axe. In this way, Josephus gained both his freedom and his dignity, all because of the prediction he had made. From that point on, people took his ability to see the future seriously.

CHAPTER 9

A Roman Setback Gives False Hope - May, A.D. 70

After the Romans had taken control of the second wall, they were soon driven out again. This unexpected success gave the defenders inside the city a huge boost in confidence. They started to believe the Romans would never dare return—or if they did, that they themselves would be unbeatable. But their confidence was misplaced. Because of their wrongdoing, God had allowed them to become blind to reality.

They didn't realize that the Romans still had plenty of troops left—far more than those who had been pushed back. Nor did they notice that famine was quietly creeping in. For now, the rebels could still live off the city's resources, draining the last of what was left. But honest and decent people were already suffering from hunger, and many were beginning to die from lack of food.

The rebel factions, however, didn't care. In fact, they saw the suffering and death of ordinary people as a good thing. They believed only those who were totally against peace and willing to keep fighting the Romans deserved to survive. Anyone else was seen as useless, and the slow death of their opponents was something they welcomed.

That's how they treated their fellow citizens. As for the Romans outside the walls, the rebels blocked the breach by using their own bodies as shields, doing everything they could to stop the enemy from breaking through again.

For three days, they held their ground and fought fiercely. But on the fourth day, after a powerful attack led by Titus, they couldn't hold out any longer and were forced to retreat again. Once Titus regained control of the wall, he immediately destroyed the entire northern section and set up Roman guards in the towers on the southern side. Then he began preparing for the next step: attacking the third and final wall.

CHAPTER 10

The Daily Sacrifice Stops. Josephus Pleads with the Jews

Titus ordered his soldiers to tear down the Antonia fortress and make it easier for his whole army to climb up to the Temple. On July 17, A.D. 70, he heard that the daily sacrifices—the ones that were supposed to be offered to God without interruption—had stopped because there weren't enough people left to perform them. This made the people inside the city very discouraged.

So, Titus sent Josephus to deliver a message to John, the rebel leader. Josephus was told to tell John that if he loved fighting so much, he could come out with as many fighters as he wanted and keep fighting—but he shouldn't drag the whole city and the Temple down with him. He warned John not to pollute the Holy Place or sin against God. Titus promised John that he could have the sacrifices started again if he allowed any Jews, he chose to do them properly.

Josephus wanted everyone to hear this message—not just John—so he spoke in Hebrew and pleaded with the people to save their country, stop the destruction of the sanctuary, and restore the usual sacrifices to God.

The crowd listened in silence, feeling hopeless. John, however, shouted insults at Josephus and said he would

never be afraid of being captured because the city belonged to God.

Josephus shouted back: “Oh really, you’ve kept it pure for God? The Holy Place isn’t defiled? You think God is still getting His usual sacrifices? If someone took away your daily food, you’d see them as an enemy—but you expect God to help you while you’ve stopped His eternal ceremonies? And you blame the Romans, who have actually respected our laws so far and are trying to make you restore the sacrifices you stopped? Who wouldn’t be heartbroken to see strangers and enemies fixing what you’ve neglected, while you, a Jew, treat God’s commands worse than your enemies do?

“Still, John, it’s not shameful to admit you’re wrong—even at the last minute. If you want to save your country, look at the example of King Jeconiah from old times. When the Babylonians came, he chose to leave the city and go into exile with his family instead of letting the enemy destroy the holy places. Because of that, all Jews honor him and remember him forever. That’s a noble example, even if it’s risky to follow. And I promise you the Romans will pardon you if you do. Remember, I’m your fellow Jew—I’m on your side. You should listen to who’s giving you this advice.

“I know you’re angry and yelling insults at me—and maybe I deserve it for trying to help when fate seems against us,

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for trying to save people God has already judged. Everyone knows the old prophets' warnings—that the city would fall when people started killing their own countrymen. Look around—the city and Temple are full of dead Jews. It's God Himself, working with the Romans, bringing fire to cleanse His Temple and ruin to this city weighed down with sin.”

CHAPTER 11

The Temple Catches Fire

“There won’t be a single stone left on another; everything will be torn down.”

Titus, wanting to keep his soldiers safe, had ordered the gates of the outer Temple court to be set on fire. The flames spread from the gates to the surrounding covered walkways. But during a war meeting, it was decided that the main part of the Temple—the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies—had to be saved. Titus argued, “If the Temple burns down, the Romans lose. If it’s saved, it will be a proud jewel of my Empire.” Still, despite his efforts to stop the fire, it kept spreading.

On that day, the Jews were too tired and shocked to fight back. But the next day, around mid-morning, they gathered their strength and courage, rushed out through the eastern gate, and attacked the Roman guards protecting the outer court of the Temple.

The Romans stood firm, shielding themselves with their shields and closing ranks like a solid wall. But it was clear they couldn’t hold for long against the large, determined Jewish attack. Watching from the Antonia fortress, Caesar saw the line about to break, so he sent in his best cavalry to

help. The Jews couldn't hold against the cavalry's charge; many fell, and the rest retreated.

Whenever the Romans pulled back, the Jews attacked again, only to be pushed back once more when the Romans turned and charged. Finally, around mid-afternoon, the Jews were overwhelmed and forced back inside the inner court of the Temple.

Titus then went back to Antonia, planning to launch a full attack on the Temple at dawn the next day and surround it completely. But it seemed that God had already decided the Temple's fate. The very day was the tenth of the month Lous, the same day it had once been burned before by the Babylonian king years ago.

This time, though, the fire was started by the people of the city themselves. After Titus pulled back, the rebels took a short break, then attacked the Romans again. A fight broke out between the Jewish guards protecting the sanctuary and the Romans trying to put out the fire in the inner court.

The Romans defeated the Jews and chased them all the way to the sanctuary.

At that moment, one Roman soldier, without waiting for orders and without fear, seemed driven by some mysterious force. He grabbed a burning piece of wood, was lifted up by a comrade, and threw the flaming brand through a

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golden window on the north side, which led to the rooms around the sanctuary.

As the fire flared up, the Jews screamed out in horror. They rushed to try and save the Temple, forgetting all about protecting themselves or saving their strength—because the very thing they had fought so hard to protect was now burning.

Titus was resting in his tent after the battle when a messenger suddenly burst in with urgent news. Jumping up immediately, Titus hurried to the Temple to try to stop the fire. His generals followed him, and behind them came the excited soldiers, making a loud, chaotic noise as a huge army moved in a disorderly way.

Titus tried to stop the fighting and order everyone to put out the flames—he shouted and waved his hand—but no one listened. His commands were drowned out by the roar of battle and the soldiers' own anger and excitement. When the soldiers joined the fight, nothing could stop their energy or anger. They acted like they had only one leader: their own passion.

Crowded around the entrances, many soldiers were trampled by their own comrades. Others stumbled on the still-hot, smoldering ruins of the walkways and were crushed just like those they were fighting against. As they got closer to the sanctuary, they ignored Titus's orders

completely and even shouted to each other to throw more burning wood into the flames.

The Jewish rebels were now powerless to save the Temple. All around, there was slaughter and people running away. Most of those killed were innocent civilians—weak, unarmed people who were slaughtered wherever they were caught. Around the altar, bodies piled up; blood flowed down the steps of the sanctuary; and the dead slid down the slope from where they had been struck.

Caesar couldn't control his wild soldiers, and the fire was spreading fast. He and his generals went inside the building and saw the holy sanctuary and all its treasures—things even better than what people had heard about from outsiders, and just as impressive as their own people said. The fire hadn't reached the inside yet but was burning the outer parts. Titus, thinking the building could still be saved, rushed out and tried to convince the soldiers to put the fire out. He told his officer Liberalius to use clubs to stop anyone who didn't listen. But the soldiers were too angry, full of hate against the Jews, and excited by the fight. They also hoped to steal treasure because they believed the inside was full of money and saw gold all around.

Then, when Caesar tried to stop the soldiers, one of the men who came in with him actually pushed a burning stick into the gate's sockets in the dark. Suddenly, flames shot up from inside. Caesar and his generals had to pull back, and

nobody was left to stop the people outside from starting the fire. So, even though Caesar didn't want it, the sanctuary ended up burning down.

Even though we have to deeply mourn the loss of the most amazing building anyone has ever seen or heard about—whether you think about how it was built, its size, the richness of every detail, or the importance of its holy places—we can still find some comfort in knowing that nothing can escape fate. This is true for buildings and works of art just like it is for living things. It's actually pretty amazing how perfectly fate works out, because, as I said, the temple was destroyed on the exact same month and day as when it was burned down long ago by the Babylonians.

At that time, the poor people were fooled by fake prophets and self-appointed messengers from God. They ignored or didn't believe the clear signs warning them that disaster was coming. It was like they were stunned and blind to the obvious warnings from God.

For example, a star that looked like a sword appeared over the city, and a comet stayed visible for a whole year. Before the rebellion and war broke out, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, at the ninth hour of the night, a bright light shone around the altar and the sanctuary, lighting everything up like daytime for about half an hour. People

who didn't understand thought it was a good sign, but the religious experts immediately saw it as a warning of what was to come.

During the same feast, a cow brought in for sacrifice gave birth to a lamb right in the middle of the Temple. Also, the eastern gate of the inner courtyard—which was huge, made of brass, and took twenty men to close securely—was seen opening all by itself around midnight. The Temple guards ran to tell the captain, who managed to shut it again with difficulty. People who didn't know better thought this meant God was opening the gates to blessings, but the wise understood it meant the Temple's security was falling apart and the open gate was a sign that destruction was near.

Not long after the festival, on the 21st day of the month Artemisium, something unbelievable happened. Before sunset, people all over the country saw chariots and armed soldiers flying through the clouds, gathering around cities. At the Pentecost feast, the priests entering the inner court at night heard strange noises and a voice that sounded like a crowd saying, “We are leaving.”

Even more worrying was what happened four years before the war. The city was peaceful and prosperous then, during the festival when Jews build temporary shelters called tabernacles. A man named Jesus, son of Ananias—a rough peasant—started shouting in the Temple: “A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds; a

CHAPTER 11

voice against Jerusalem and the sanctuary, a voice against bridegrooms and brides, a voice against all the people.” He went through the street’s day and night, repeating this.

Some leaders got angry and beat him badly, but he never stopped shouting his warning. He didn’t say a word in his defense or explain himself. They brought him before the Roman governor, Albinus, who had him whipped severely. Still, Jesus didn’t ask for mercy or cry. Instead, after each whip, he just repeated, “Woe to Jerusalem!” When Albinus asked who he was and why he kept saying that, Jesus said nothing, only kept crying out his sad warning. Eventually, Albinus decided he was crazy and let him go.

For more than seven years, Jesus kept repeating his “Woe to Jerusalem!” warning without resting or losing strength. He didn’t curse those who hurt him or thank those who gave him food—just kept repeating his sad cry. At festivals, his cries were loudest.

Then, during the siege, after seeing his warnings come true, he finally stopped. While walking along the city wall and shouting “Woe once more to the city and the people and the Temple,” he added, “And woe to myself also,” just before a stone from a war machine hit him and killed him instantly. So, he died with those grim words still on his lips.

If we think about all of this, we can see that God really does care about people. He gives plenty of warnings and signs

ahead of time to show the way to safety. But people often bring destruction on themselves because of their own foolishness and the bad choices they make.

Take the Jews, for example. After they tore down the Antonia Fortress, they rebuilt the Temple as a square—even though their own prophecies clearly said that the city and the Temple would fall when the Temple became four-sided.

But the thing that pushed them most toward war was a prophecy in their sacred writings that said someone from their land would become ruler of the world around that time. They believed this meant someone from their own people would rise to power. Many of their wise men misunderstood the prophecy. In reality, it was referring to Vespasian, who ended up becoming Emperor—on Jewish soil.

Still, no matter how clearly fate shows itself, people can't escape it—even if they see it coming. The Jews gave some of the signs a positive spin and dismissed others as nonsense, but in the end, the destruction of their country and themselves proved how wrong they were.

CHAPTER 12

The Final Scene: The Fall of the Upper City – Jerusalem in Flames - September, A.D. 70

The Romans, having finally broken through the last of Jerusalem's defenses, raised their flags on the towers and celebrated with cheers and songs of victory. Compared to the brutal beginning of the war, the end had come surprisingly easily. They were almost in disbelief that they had taken the last part of the city without a fight and found no enemy left to resist them.

Once inside, they stormed through the narrow streets with swords drawn, killing anyone they came across. They set fire to homes, even those where people were hiding. In many houses, they found entire families already dead from starvation. Horrified by these scenes, the soldiers sometimes left without taking any loot. But while they pitied the dead, they showed no mercy to the living — cutting down everyone in their path. The streets became so full of bodies that they were blocked, and so much blood was spilled that it actually put out some of the fires.

By evening, the slaughter slowed, but as night fell, the fires spread uncontrollably. When morning came — the eighth day of the month Gorpiæus (September) — Jerusalem was burning.

It was a tragic end for a city that, if it had experienced as many blessings as it had now faced horrors, would have been considered the most fortunate of all. She didn't deserve such suffering — except perhaps for having raised a generation so destructive that it brought about her own downfall.

Of all the city's defenses, it was the towers that impressed Titus the most when he finally entered Jerusalem. Ironically, these incredibly strong fortifications had been abandoned by the rebel leaders in a moment of madness.

Titus was struck by their size and strength — massive towers built with enormous stone blocks, perfectly fitted together. Their width and height were awe-inspiring. Looking at them, he said, “We must have had God on our side in this war. Only God could have driven the Jews out of fortresses like these. No human force or siege weapon could have taken them.”

He made similar comments to his companions that day, amazed by how such mighty structures had fallen without a final fight. He also freed all the prisoners who had been held by the rebels in these fortresses.

Later, when he gave the order to destroy the rest of Jerusalem, tearing down the city and leveling the walls, he made one exception: he left those towers standing. They were to serve as a reminder — not just of the city's strength,

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but of the extraordinary luck and divine favor that had helped him overcome what should have been an unbreakable defense.

CHAPTER 13

The Temple Treasures in the Roman Victory Parade

Among all the treasures taken from Jerusalem, the items looted from the Jewish Temple were the most eye-catching in the Roman triumphal procession. These sacred objects — including the table for the showbread, golden incense cups, and silver trumpets — were proudly displayed. They can still be seen today carved into the Arch of Titus in Rome, a lasting monument to the Roman victory.

While the rest of the captured treasures weren't organized in any particular order, the Temple items stood out above all. There was a massive golden table, weighing many talents, and a large golden lampstand — unlike anything commonly seen in Roman life.

This lampstand had a unique design: a solid base supporting a central shaft, from which three curved branches extended on each side, forming a kind of trident shape. Each of these seven arms held a beautifully crafted lamp. The number seven was deeply significant to the Jewish people, symbolizing sacredness and completeness.

Finally, following all the material spoils, the Romans carried the most important object of all: a scroll containing the Jewish Law — the Torah. It was the final symbol of their triumph over not just a nation, but a culture, a faith,

CHAPTER 14

Jerusalem After the Destruction of A.D. 70

By Tim W Gould

The year A.D.70 wasn't just a major event in Jewish history—it changed the course of world history. When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Second Temple, it marked the end of an era. Everything shifted from that moment forward.

But what happened next? Did the city disappear? Did the people vanish? Was Jerusalem ever rebuilt? And what became of the Temple?

Let's take a walk through the centuries and see what unfolded.

The Aftermath of the Destruction (A.D. 70)

By the time the Roman general Titus led his legions into Jerusalem, the city was already on the brink. Civil war had torn it apart from within. Starvation and infighting had weakened the people. Then the Romans laid siege, broke through the walls, and finally burned the Temple to the ground.

The destruction was total: The Second Temple—renovated into a magnificent structure by Herod—was utterly destroyed. Jerusalem was left in ruins, with tens of

thousands killed. The Temple Mount, the heart of Jewish worship, was defiled and dismantled. Survivors were either killed, enslaved, or scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

This wasn't just the end of a war—it felt like the end of the world for the Jewish people.

A Partial Rebuilding... Under Roman Rule (A.D. 70–132)

After the destruction, the Romans didn't immediately abandon the city. Over the next few decades, they allowed some rebuilding—but only for their own purposes. Jerusalem became a Roman administrative and military center, not a Jewish city. And the Temple? It was never rebuilt.

For the Jewish people, this was a time of deep mourning and uncertainty. Without the Temple, the entire sacrificial system outlined in the Law of Moses came to a halt. Worship began to shift—from Temple rituals to synagogue gatherings, Scripture readings, and prayer. A new kind of Jewish life was beginning to emerge.

The Bar Kokhba Revolt and the Final Blow (A.D. 132–135)

About 60 years later, hope stirred again.

A man named Simon Bar Kokhba led a large-scale Jewish revolt against Roman rule. Many believed he could be the long-awaited Messiah. For a brief moment, the Jews reclaimed parts of Judea—and even Jerusalem.

But Rome struck back with brutal force. By A.D. 135, after crushing the rebellion, Emperor Hadrian made sure there would be no next time:

Jerusalem was destroyed again—this time, completely leveled. The city was renamed *Aelia Capitolina*, after Hadrian and the Roman god Jupiter. A pagan temple was built on the Temple Mount. Jews were banned from entering the city—except once a year, on the anniversary of the Temple’s destruction, to mourn.

At that point, Jerusalem ceased to be a Jewish city in any meaningful way. The land was left desolate. The Jewish people were scattered farther across the empire in what came to be known as the Diaspora.

What About the Temple?

The Second Temple was never rebuilt. For nearly 2,000 years, the Temple Mount remained a place of longing and

The Fall of Jerusalem by Josephus in Modern English

controversy. Kingdoms rose and fell, empires came and went, and control of Jerusalem passed through many hands:

- In the 4th century, the Roman Empire became Christian under Constantine.
- In the 7th century, Muslim armies took over, building the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount.
- During the Crusades, Christians briefly recaptured the city—but lost it again.
- Eventually, the Ottoman Empire ruled the region for centuries.

Through all of this, the Temple was never rebuilt. Jerusalem never truly returned to the Jewish people—until the modern era.

The Modern Return: Israel and Jerusalem (20th Century)

After centuries of exile, persecution, and unimaginable suffering—including the Holocaust—the Jewish people began returning to their ancient homeland in the early 20th century.

In 1948, the State of Israel was declared. But Jerusalem was still divided. The Old City—including the Temple Mount—remained under Jordanian control.

Then, in 1967, during the Six-Day War, Israel captured the Old City and regained access to Jerusalem's most sacred

site: the Western Wall, the last remnant of the Second Temple complex.

For the first time since A.D. 70, the Jewish people had sovereignty over their holy city.

Even so, the Temple remains unbuilt. And the Temple Mount remains one of the most contested religious sites in the world—sacred to Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike.

What Does It All Mean?

From the ashes of A.D. 70 to the rebirth of modern Jerusalem, history has followed a long, painful arc—but one filled with prophetic meaning.

The fall of Jerusalem was foretold by Jesus. It closed one chapter of God’s plan—and opened another.

Yet even in destruction, God wasn’t finished.

Jerusalem has risen again—physically, politically, and spiritually. The Temple hasn’t been rebuilt, but the longing still burns in the hearts of many. For some, this ongoing yearning is a sign: God’s plan is still unfolding.

And one thing’s clear—The story of Jerusalem is far from over.

Jerusalem: God’s Chosen City, Past, Present, and Future

Jerusalem isn’t just another ancient city—it’s a city at the heart of God’s redemptive story. From Genesis to

Revelation, Jerusalem plays a central role in God's dealings with humanity. It's the stage for key biblical events, the symbol of God's covenant promises, and the future epicenter of His eternal kingdom.

So, what does the Bible say about God's future plan for Jerusalem—and what does the city mean for all mankind?

1. Jerusalem: The City God Chose

Throughout Scripture, we see that Jerusalem was uniquely chosen by God. God didn't randomly pick this city. He planted His name there. Jerusalem represented His presence among His people, and His desire to dwell with them.

2. Jerusalem in the Life of Jesus

Jerusalem is also central to the life and mission of Jesus: It was in this city that the New Covenant was sealed. And it's where the early church began—empowered at Pentecost (Acts 2).

3. Jerusalem in Prophecy: A City of Conflict and Peace

The prophets foresaw both trouble and triumph for Jerusalem.

A City of Conflict: This reflects what we see today: Jerusalem is a global flashpoint, a city of religious tension and political controversy.

A City of Redemption: But the story doesn't end in conflict. Jerusalem will one day become the seat of Messiah's kingdom, a place of peace and justice for all nations.

4. The Millennial Kingdom: Jesus Reigns from Jerusalem

According to Revelation 20 and other prophetic passages, Jesus will return to establish a thousand-year reign—often called the Millennial Kingdom—with Jerusalem as His capital. This is a time when Jerusalem will no longer be a city of war, but a beacon of divine peace and leadership.

5. The New Jerusalem: A City for All Eternity

The Bible ends—not with destruction—but with a renewed, eternal city: the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21–22 describes a glorious city coming down from heaven:

“The Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...” (Revelation 21:2)

There is no temple in it—because God and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22).

There's no more death, mourning, or pain. God wipes away every tear (Revelation 21:4).

People from every nation are there—redeemed and restored. This is the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan: Jerusalem becomes the eternal home of God and His

people—not just for Israel, but for all mankind who trust in Jesus our Messiah.

So, What Does Jerusalem Signify for the World?

Jerusalem isn't just about the past. It's not merely a Jewish city or a religious capital. In the Bible, it symbolizes:

a. God's dwelling with humanity

From the very beginning, God's presence in Jerusalem showed that He wanted to be close to His people. The temple was more than a building; it was God's way of saying, "I am with you" (Exodus 25:8, 1 Kings 8:10-11). Later, the Bible tells us that through Jesus, God Himself comes to live among us in a whole new way (John 1:14). Jerusalem reminds the world that God doesn't stay distant—He draws near.

b. His covenant faithfulness

Jerusalem is a reminder that God keeps His promises. He chose the city to plant His name there and promised it would be a place for His people (1 Kings 11:36). Even when the city fell into sin, God never abandoned it. The prophets reassured Israel of His faithfulness, promising restoration and hope (Isaiah 62:6-7, Jeremiah 31:38-40).

c. The hope of redemption

Jerusalem also points to the bigger story of salvation. Jesus wept over the city because it had missed the chance to

recognize Him (Luke 19:41-44), but His life, death, and resurrection brought redemption for all people. The city becomes a symbol of God's plan to save and renew His people, offering hope that brokenness can be restored (Romans 11:26-27).

d. The coming of true justice and peace

The prophets envisioned a Jerusalem where righteousness reigns and peace fills the streets (Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:1-4). This isn't just an ideal; it points to the ultimate fulfillment when God establishes His kingdom on earth, a place where nations live in harmony under His rule.

Ultimately: a glimpse of God's eternal kingdom

All these symbols—God's presence, faithfulness, redemption, and peace—point beyond the earthly city to the New Jerusalem described in Revelation (Revelation 21:1-4). This is where heaven meets earth, where God dwells with His people forever, sorrow and death are gone, and Jesus reigns in perfect justice and love.

So Jerusalem isn't just a city; it's a living picture of God's plan for the world—a reminder that He wants to dwell with us, redeem us, and bring true peace that lasts forever.

God's Plan for Jerusalem Is Still Unfolding

From Abraham to the prophets, from Jesus to Revelation, the story of Jerusalem reveals God's heart—for His people, for justice, for restoration, and for relationship.

Today, the city still stirs hearts and headlines. But according to the Bible, its future is secure—not because of politics or military might, but because of God's unshakable promises.

As believers, we don't just look back to what happened in Jerusalem. We look forward—to the day when Our King returns, the city is made new, and the story comes full circle.

The story of Jerusalem is the story of redemption—and it's a story for all of us.

And every day brings a little brighter light than the day before!

Prologue: The God Who Keeps His Promises

When you stop and look at the story of Jerusalem, it's hard not to see how steady God's hand really is. The rise and fall of that city, the scattering of its people, and their return to the land — it's all living proof that God does exactly what He says He'll do.

Long before it ever happened, the prophets warned that Jerusalem would fall. They spoke of a day when the Temple would be torn down and the people carried off. Centuries later, in A.D. 70, it happened just like they said. The city burned, the people scattered, and it seemed like the story was over.

But God wasn't finished. The same Bible that spoke of Jerusalem's fall also promised her restoration. And in 1948 — nearly two thousand years later — Israel became a nation again. Think about that. A people scattered across the world suddenly brought back to life, their language restored, their homeland reborn. That's not coincidence — that's faithfulness.

Moments like these remind us that we can trust the Author of this story. The same God who kept every promise before will keep every promise still ahead. He hasn't forgotten what He said. He hasn't lost control.

So when we look at today's world and wonder how all this will end, we don't have to panic — we can rest. The same God who watched over Israel through judgment and restoration will also bring about the final chapters He's written: peace, redemption, and a New Jerusalem where He'll dwell with His people forever.

Every fulfilled prophecy is a reminder that we're not just reading history — we're living in a story written by a faithful God. And if He's been faithful this far, we can be sure He'll see it through to the end.

And that rest — that peace of knowing you're part of His story — begins with one simple step of faith. It's saying "yes" to Jesus, asking Him to be your Lord and Savior. When you do, you step into the family of God. You become part of the people He calls His own, included in every promise and every hope He's ever spoken. The same faithful God who kept His word to Israel will also keep His word to you.

So as we conclude this short history, we can see how God has always had a purpose and a plan. Even in our daily lives, we can draw comfort knowing that when things feel crazy, hectic, painful, lonely, or hurtful, the same God who had a purpose and plan for Jerusalem has a purpose and plan for you.

Prologue

Even in the pain we can't understand right now, God is with us through it. He is not the author of our suffering — any more than He authored the destruction of Jerusalem — but He gives us the same assurance that, despite our bad choices, despite our struggles against Him, despite our falling into sin, He continues to carry out His plan for us.

And when the real hard times come — when the pain of innocent suffering faces us, as it did for so many who perished at the hands of the Romans — God still whispers to our hearts:

“Trust Me. I am working where you cannot see. I am doing things you do not yet understand. But one day, you will see the wonders of My work.”

This is my prayer for you — that as you look at God's faithfulness through history, you'll find renewed faith in His faithfulness toward you. May you rest in the truth that His plan is still unfolding, and His promises still stand.