

A New Look at the Books of Revelation & Daniel End-Time Prophecies
Part 4: The Abomination of Desolation & the Roman Destruction of Jerusalem

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A NEW LOOK AT THE BOOKS OF REVELATION & DANIEL END-TIME PROPHECIES

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PART 4

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION & THE ROMAN DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

As we have previously explained in Part 2 “The 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel”, Daniel 9:26-27 has two parts. The first part of each verse deals with Messiah Yeshua¹ (Jesus) and the New Covenant that He established in the middle of the 70th Week. The second part has to do with the Abomination of Desolation relating to the destruction of Jerusalem. The fulfillment of this prophecy has to do with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, marking the end of the nation of Judah and the beginning of almost 2000 years of Jewish exile. Additionally,

¹ The Hebrew name *Yeshua* is the shortened form of *Yehoshua* (Joshua), meaning “YHVH is salvation”. YHVH (*Yehovah*) is the name of God. Messiah (Hebrew: *Mashiach*) means “anointed” (Greek: *Christos*, or Christ). *Yeshua HaMashiach* means “Yeshua the Messiah”.

there were subsequent desolations of Jerusalem over the centuries as various peoples and empires ruled the Land of Israel.

“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off [killed] and have nothing, and the [Roman] people of the prince [Titus] who is to come will destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [Temple]. And its [Jerusalem’s] end will come with a flood [of Roman soldiers]; even to the end [Yeshua’s Second Coming] there will be war; desolations are determined” (Daniel 9:26).

“And he [Messiah Yeshua] will make a firm covenant [the New Covenant] with the many ~~for~~ one week [the 70th Week], but in the middle of the week he [Yeshua] will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering [by His once-for-all-time sin-atonement sacrifice]; and on the wing of abominations will come one [Rome] who makes desolate [destroys Jerusalem], even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one [Rome] who makes [Jerusalem] desolate” (Daniel 9:27).

Just before His crucifixion, Messiah Yeshua prophesied concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2). In this study, we will examine Yeshua’s prophecy regarding the Abomination of Desolation and its connection to Daniel 9:26-27.

YESHUA PROPHESES DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM TEMPLE

Just before Passover in A.D. 31, Yeshua prophesied that the Temple would be totally destroyed.² This prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.

And Jesus [Yeshua] came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He answered and said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one

² The crucifixion date A.D. 31 is a correction from our previous date of A.D. 30.

stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down” (Matthew 24:1-2)

And as He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” And Jesus [Yeshua] said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down” (Mark 13:1-2).

And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, “As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down” (Luke 21:5-6).

YESHUA WARNS ABOUT THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Yeshua’s disciples asked Him to explain more about the coming destruction of Jerusalem:

And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3).³

And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?” (Mark 13:3-4).

And they questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” (Luke 21:7).

³ The main focus of Yeshua’s prophecies is the destruction of Jerusalem that occurred about forty years after His crucifixion and resurrection, witnessed by the same generation.

Yeshua then begins to explain the conditions and events that will take place relating to the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). As to the sign of Jerusalem's impending destruction, Yeshua refers to the Abomination of Desolation:

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15-16).

“But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Mark 13:14).

The Greek word *bdelugma* (Strong's #946):

Describes that which is reprehensible or detestable to God, an “abomination”. In the NT it usually refers to some sort of idolatry.⁴

Yeshua warned His disciples that when they saw the Abomination of Desolation, meaning the abomination that would bring desolation, they were to understand that Jerusalem's destruction was near and flee the city. This warning would have been passed on to all members of the Jerusalem church.

Matthew's account shows us that Yeshua's reference to the Abomination of Desolation links directly to Daniel's prophecies:

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION WHICH WAS SPOKEN OF THROUGH DANIEL THE PROPHET, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15-16, emphasis added).

⁴ Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words, p. 2.

There is more than one prophecy concerning the Abomination of Desolation in the Book of Daniel, and we will examine each one more fully as this study continues. But for now, let's focus on Daniel 9:26-27, for this is the prophecy about Jerusalem's destruction by the Romans, and the particular Abomination of Desolation that Yeshua was referring to when He gave the signs of Jerusalem's imminent destruction along with the warning to flee to escape personal destruction.

and the [Roman] people of the prince [Titus] who is to come will destroy the city [Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [Temple]. And its [Jerusalem's] end will come with a flood [of Roman soldiers]; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined" (Daniel 9:26b).

and on the wing of abominations will come one [Rome] who makes desolate [destroys Jerusalem], even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one [Rome] who makes [Jerusalem] desolate" (Daniel 9:27b).

Significantly, Yeshua's prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem links back to Daniel's prophecy about His First Coming (Daniel 9:24-27).

"Abominations" refer to the idols of pagan worship, in this case, the idols of the pagan Roman armies. "Desolation" refers to a ruinous, laid waste, uninhabitable state. Yeshua was warning about the armies of Rome who would bring total destruction to the city, its inhabitants, and the Temple. This is confirmed by Luke's account:

"But WHEN YOU SEE JERUSALEM SURROUNDED BY ARMIES, THEN RECOGNIZE THAT HER DESOLATION IS AT HAND. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will

fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24, emphasis added).

When we compare Matthew’s, Mark’s, and Luke’s accounts, we can clearly see that Luke provides the key to understanding what the Abomination of Desolation refers to:

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15-16).

“But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Mark 13:14).

“But WHEN YOU SEE JERUSALEM SURROUNDED BY ARMIES, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city” (Luke 21:20-21, emphasis added).

Luke explicitly states that armies surrounding Jerusalem will be the sign that Jerusalem’s desolation (destruction) is imminent. Matthew and Mark refer to the armies as the Abomination of Desolation, meaning that the pagan idolatrous armies of Rome would bring total destruction and devastation to the city. The warning to flee the city prior to this terrible destruction is given in each of the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

In regard to these pagan Roman armies, Daniel 9:27 refers to the “wing of abominations”. The word “wing” is translated from the Hebrew word *kanap* (Strong’s #3671). This word can also be a metaphor for a “high place”. The “wing of abominations” can therefore also be translated

as “upon soaring heights will the ... abominations be”.⁵ The meaning conveyed is of idolatrous objects being placed in a high place of Jerusalem.

According to Luke’s account, Yeshua was clearly warning about the pagan armies of Rome surrounding the city. At the same time, there would be an opportunity for inhabitants of Jerusalem to flee. This could not happen once Roman armies occupied and destroyed the city in A.D. 70. However, this situation did occur in November A.D. 65, when Roman armies under Cestius Gallus briefly occupied the Upper City of Jerusalem prior to withdrawing.

The Upper City (western part of Jerusalem) was located on a higher elevation compared to the Lower City (south of the Temple Mount). Roman armies carried their idolatrous military standards with them and these would have been placed in Jerusalem’s Upper City, thus fitting the prophetic picture in Daniel 9:27.

Each Roman legion carried an eagle standard (*Aquila*, Latin for “eagle”).⁶ The eagle was a symbol of pagan Rome:

The *Aquila* was the eagle standard which was the supreme symbol because of its association with the god Jupiter.⁷

The eagle standard was: “Kept at an altar in the camp with the lamps burning throughout the night, it and the ground it stood on were considered sacred”.⁸

In addition, the emperor’s image (*Imago*, Latin for “image”) was carried on a pike with each legion.

The *Imago* which represented a three-dimensional gilt likeness of the Emperor as a constant reminder of the troop’s loyalty to him. An *imago* standard might also

⁵ ArtScroll Tanach Series, *Daniel*, p. 265.

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_legion

⁷ <http://www.roman-colosseum.info/roman-army/roman-standard.htm>

⁸ Stephen Dando-Collins, *Caesar’s Legion: The Epic Saga of Julius Caesar’s Elite Tenth Legion and the Armies of Rome*, p. 33.

depict astrological signs representing the period of the Zodiac under which the legion or unit had been formed.⁹

Prophetic significance of the eagle as a symbol of Rome can be found in the warnings Moses gave the Israelites – they would receive God’s blessings for their obedience but they would receive judgment for their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28):

“The LORD will bring A NATION AGAINST YOU FROM AFAR, from the end of the earth, AS THE EAGLE SWOOPS DOWN, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who shall have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. And it shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you” (Deuteronomy 28:49-52 emphasis added).

Deuteronomy 28:49-57 shows the Roman destruction of the cities of the Land of Israel, including Jerusalem. One of the terrible prophecies is of a mother eating her child because of severe famine caused by the siege of Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 28:56-57). The Jewish historian Josephus, who witnessed the siege and fall of Jerusalem to the Romans, records that this actually happened.¹⁰

The “holy place” referred to by Matthew is the holy city of Jerusalem.

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the **holy place** (let the reader

⁹ <http://www.roman-colosseum.info/roman-army/roman-standard.htm>

¹⁰ William Whiston, *Josephus: Complete Works*, pp. 578-579 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 3, Section 4).

understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15-16, bold emphasis added).

In this context, the Greek word *topos* (Strong’s #5117), translated “place”, refers to the city of Jerusalem:

The most basic meaning of *topos* is that of a designated area. ... an area of land. ... Luke can use *topos* as a synonym for a city in the sense of an inhabited place (Acts 16:3-4).¹¹

As we compare the parallel passages of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we can see that the “holy place” referred to is the holy city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the holy place/holy city because it is the place of God’s dwelling, the Temple. In contrast to the holy city are the unholy, idolatrous pagan armies of Rome.

ROMAN ARMIES RETREAT FROM JERUSALEM, BELIEVERS FLEE TO PELLA

Yeshua clearly warned that at some point Roman armies would surround Jerusalem, yet there would be an opportunity to escape for those who heeded His warning to flee the city prior to its destruction. A review of the historical events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem shows just such a situation arose.

Jewish rebellion against Rome intensified over time, culminating in the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70). There were reasons why some Jews believed they could actually defeat the Romans and achieve an independent state:

Contrary to the common sense view of the leaders of the Judaeian establishment that war with Rome was entirely hopeless, those promoting the rebellion saw

¹¹ In Acts 16:3, Luke uses the plural *topois* meaning “those places” or “those parts”, referring to cities in a particular area (*Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old & New Testament Words*, p. 514.)

matters quite differently and believed that they had a reasonable prospect of success. Aside from those who anticipated divine intervention in their behalf, there were others who had good reasons for viewing the Roman position in Judaea as quite vulnerable. Indeed, at the time, it was possible to make a case for the precariousness of the Roman position throughout the entire Middle East.¹²

Taking advantage of the perceived weakness of the Roman position, certain factions of Jews began rebelling against Rome. A band of Jewish Sicarii seized the Masada fortress, massacred its Roman garrison, and captured a weapons store for 10,000 men. During this same time period, sacrifices for the Roman emperor's wellbeing were discontinued (June 19, A.D. 65).

The rebellion escalated over the next several months. In response, Roman commander Cestius Gallus began his attack against Jerusalem on November 17, A.D. 65. After occupying the Upper City, he began attacking the walls of the Lower City. But after a week of fighting with no further gains, he withdrew his army to Caesarea.¹³

Believers understood Yeshua's warning and knew that the Roman armies would return and the city would be destroyed. Roman Church historian Eusebius (A.D. 263-339) records that they fled to Pella, about 17 miles south of the Sea of Galilee, east of the Jordan River.¹⁴

But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come there from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.¹⁵

¹² Martin Sicker, *Between Rome and Jerusalem: 300 Years of Roman-Judaeian Relations*, p. 147.

¹³ Sicker, p. 150.

¹⁴ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 191.

¹⁵ <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm> - Eusebius, *History of the Church*, Book 3, Chapter 5, Section 3.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION AND THE LITTLE HORN (DANIEL 8:9-14; 11:21-31)

As we have shown, Yeshua's warning about the Abomination of Desolation, referring to the pagan Roman armies that would bring total destruction and devastation to Jerusalem and the Land of Israel, relates to Daniel 9:26-27.

This Abomination of Desolation needs to be distinguished from another Abomination of Desolation also referred to by the prophet Daniel that had already occurred prior to the time of Messiah Yeshua.

“And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation”
(Daniel 11:31).

Daniel 11:21-30 details the rise of the Seleucid ruler of Syria, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes); his conquest of Egypt (against “the king of the south”, Ptolemy VI – verse 25); his return to his own land, Syria, and attack against “the holy covenant” of Israel, desecrating and plundering the Jerusalem Temple (verse 28). After his return to Egypt, Rome (Kittim) commanded his retreat (verse 30); enraged, he sent forces to attack Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple by sacrificing a pig to Zeus on the altar (verse 31).

Antiochus IV forbade the observance of the Biblical Sabbath and holy festivals, sacrifices and offerings, circumcision, and study of the Word of God (Torah). Copies of the Torah were destroyed and burned, and Jews were forced to take part in pagan sacrifices and eat swine flesh.

The prophecy of Daniel 11:31 states: “they will set up the abomination of desolation”. This prophecy was fulfilled when an altar to Zeus was set up on the altar of burnt offering in front of the Temple, and pagan sacrifices initiated there:

The climactic infamous deed was on Chislev [Kislev] 25 (16 December 167 B.C.) when the Temple in Jerusalem (as well as the Samaritan temple at Mt. Gerizim) became the place of the worship of the Olympian Zeus, offering swine's flesh on the altar of Zeus which was erected on the altar of burnt offering (Dan 11:31, 32; 1 Macc 1:1:41-64; 2 Macc 6:1-11). These were to be offered on the twenty-fifth of every month since that date was celebrated as the birthday of Epiphanes [Antiochus IV], hence the sacrifices were offered to him.¹⁶

In addition to Daniel 11:21-31, Daniel 8:9-14 also deals with Antiochus IV, who is represented by a "small horn" (verse 9):

And out of one of them came forth a rather small horn [Antiochus IV] which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land [Israel] (Daniel 8:9).

This set of prophecies describes the rise of Antiochus IV; his destruction of God's people (verse 10); his claim to be a god (verse 11) – Antiochus assumed the title *Theos Epiphanes*, meaning "god manifest"/"the manifest god";¹⁷ his stopping Temple sacrifices and offering of pagan sacrifices in their place (verse 11); and his destruction of the Hebrew Scriptures and executing anyone possessing them (verse 12).

His actions sparked the Maccabean Revolt, resulting in the establishment of the Jewish Hasmonean dynasty that ruled Judea from 164 to 63 B.C., when Judea came under Roman rule. On the 25th of Kislev (December 14th) in the year 164 B.C., the Temple was rededicated and daily sacrifices restored, exactly three years to the day the Temple had been desecrated.¹⁸

Daniel 8:13-14 gives us a prophecy relating to the oppression of the Jewish people, desecration of the Temple, and the restoration of Temple sacrifices and offerings:

¹⁶ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 193.

¹⁷ His enemies called him *Epimanes* (one Greek letter change from *Epiphanes*), meaning "mad man" or "insane" (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 192.)

¹⁸ The date is according to the Biblical Hebrew calendar, the 25th of Kislev; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 12, Chapter 7, Sections 6-7 (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 193).

Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place [Temple] and the host [God’s people] to be trampled?” And he said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place [Temple] will be properly restored” (Daniel 8:13-14).

There are two possible ways that this prophecy was fulfilled. The first is that the 2,300 evenings and mornings refers to 2,300 morning and evening sacrifices at the Temple. Given there were two daily sacrifices, this means a total of 1150 days, a little over 3 years. This interpretation does seem to fit the events leading up to the desecration of the Temple, which began prior to the actual establishment of the pagan altar. Another possible interpretation is that 2,300 evenings and mornings means 2,300 days, a little over 6 years. According to this interpretation, the oppression of the Jewish people began with Antiochus IV’s Egyptian campaign in 170 B.C.¹⁹ Perhaps this prophecy has a dual fulfillment and both interpretations are valid.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION AND THE ISLAMIC DOME OF THE ROCK ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT (DANIEL 12:11-12)

About 600 years after the Roman destruction of the Temple, Islam set up another Abomination of Desolation on the Temple Mount, the Dome of the Rock. The prophet Daniel prophesied concerning this abomination that would be set up at some point in time after the Temple was destroyed:

“And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished, and the abomination of desolation [Dome of the Rock] is set up, there will be 1,290 days [years]. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days [years]!” (Daniel 12:11-12).

The Hebrew word *yom* (Strong’s #3117) can be translated “day”, “time”, or “year”.

¹⁹ Ibn Ezra proposes both interpretations (ArtScroll Tanach Series, *Daniel*, p. 229).

It can denote: 1. the period of light (as contrasted with the period of darkness), 2. the period of twenty-four hours, 3. a general vague “time,” 4. a point of time, 5. a year (in the plural; 1 Sam 27:7; Ex 13:10, etc.).²⁰

As shown in #5 above, the plural of *yom*, *yomim*, can be translated “years” (as well as “days”). The word in Daniel 12:11-12 is *yomim*²¹ and we agree with the ArtScroll Tanach Series translation of Daniel 12:11-12 that translates *yomim* as “years” rather than “days”:

And from the time the daily sacrifice was removed and the mute abomination was emplaced, one thousand two hundred and ninety YEARS. Praiseworthy is he who awaits and reaches to one thousand three hundred thirty-five YEARS (Daniel 12:11-12, emphasis added).²²

Construction on the Dome of the Rock began in 687/688 and was completed in 691.²³ Counting 1335 years from 687/688 brings us to 2022/2023.²⁴ Will the Biblical year beginning Rosh HaShanah 2022 be the year that Ezekiel’s Temple stands on the Temple Mount (Ezekiel 40-43)? God chose the Temple Mount as the site of His dwelling place, the Temple. During the Millennial Kingdom/Messianic Age, the Temple will once again stand on the Temple Mount.

The Dome of the Rock is an abomination because Allah is not the God of the Bible. For a time, the Crusaders converted the Dome into a Roman Catholic Church (*Templum Domini*, Latin for “Temple of God”). That was also an abomination because the Church of Rome is the Apostate Church (“the apostasy”) established by the Roman Emperor Constantine (“the Man of

²⁰ R. Laird Harris, *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 370.

²¹ Jay P. Green, Sr., *The Interlinear Hebrew-Aramaic Old Testament*, Vol. 3, p. 2074.

²² ArtScroll Tanach Series, *Daniel*, p. 329.

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Jerusalem (Dates for the construction of the Dome are given as 687-691 by Slavik, Diane. 2001. *Cities through Time: Daily Life in Ancient and Modern Jerusalem*. Geneva, Illinois: Runestone Press, p. 60. ISBN 978-0-8225-3218-7. Some sources give the dates as 688-691.)

²⁴ Rosh HaShanah 2015 is also a key prophetic date – see “God’s Prophetic Timetable: Significance of Rosh HaShanah 2015” and “God’s Prophetic Sabbatical-Jubilee Timetable: Rosh HaShanah 1525 to Rosh HaShanah 2015” (<http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org>).

Lawlessness”) that the apostle Paul warned about in 2 Thessalonians 2 (See Part 6 “The Man of Lawlessness & the Apostasy – Emperor Constantine & the Roman Church”).

Pagan Rome had also set up an abomination on the Temple Mount, the temple to Jupiter (who the Greeks worshipped as Zeus). Tellingly, a statue known to be of the god Jupiter now sits in St. Peter’s Basilica and has been renamed “Peter”, although Peter never went to Rome and was buried in Jerusalem.²⁵

YESHUA’S PROPHECIES CONCERNING EVENTS LEADING UP TO JERUSALEM’S DESTRUCTION

End-Times prophecies include prophetic historical events occurring in the two-thousand-year period from Messiah Yeshua’s First Coming to His Second Coming. Bible history starts with Adam and Eve approximately 6000 years ago. God established the Abrahamic Covenant about 2000 B.C., the Mosaic Covenant about 1500 B.C., the Davidic Covenant about 1000 B.C., and the New Covenant in A.D. 31.

From this perspective of Biblical prophecy, the last 2000 years of Biblical time, counted from its start 6000 years ago, are the End Times. As a result of Adam and Eve’s sin, humanity became separated from God. According to God’s plan of redemption, Messiah Yeshua would be the Redeemer of the world. Speaking to Satan, God said:

And I will put enmity Between you [Satan] and the woman, And between your seed and her seed [Messiah Yeshua]; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel” (Genesis 3:15).

²⁵ There is no historical record that Peter went to Rome. In fact, the ossuary (bone box) with his name (“Simon Bar Yonah”/Simon Son of Jonah – “Simon Barjona” in Matthew 16:17) was discovered in 1953 on the Mount of Olives at the Dominus Flevit Church (see *The Discovery of Peter’s Tomb in Jerusalem* by F. Paul Peterson, <http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org/NewPDF/peters-jerusalem-tomb.pdf>)

With the understanding that End Times refers to the period beginning with Yeshua's First Coming, we will now study what Yeshua told His disciples about the events that would lead up to Jerusalem's destruction.

TEMPLE'S DESTRUCTION, END OF THE AGE, AND SIGN OF YESHUA'S COMING

As we have previously detailed, Yeshua prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed (Matthew 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6). The disciples questioned him further about this. From their location on the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple Mount, they had a panoramic view of the Temple and the city.

And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, WHEN will these things be, and what will be the SIGN OF YOUR COMING, and of the END OF THE AGE?" (Matthew 24:3, emphasis added).

And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, Tell us, WHEN will these things be, and what will be the SIGN when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:3-4, emphasis added).

And they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, WHEN therefore will these things be? And what will be the SIGN when these things are about to take place?" (Luke 21:7, emphasis added).

The disciples asked Yeshua when the Temple would be destroyed and what would be the sign of its impending destruction. They also asked Him about the end of the age and His (Second) Coming. Just like us, they wanted to know about the future and what would happen.

Yeshua warned not to be deceived and misled by false messiahs and false prophets (Matthew 24:4-5, 11; Mark 13:5-6; Luke 21:8). He warned that there would be wars and rumors of wars,

that nation would rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom (Matthew 24:6-7; Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9-10); famines and pestilence (disease) associated with war (Matthew 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11); earthquakes (Matthew 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11); and “great signs from heaven” (Luke 21:11).

FALSE MESSIAHS, WARS, FAMINE AND PESTILENCE

False messiahs and prophets were always among the people, even during the time of Yeshua. Those who failed to recognize the Messiah had already come followed false messiahs and false prophets, who led them to rebel against the Roman Empire in three major rebellions:

1. The First Jewish-Roman War (A.D. 66-73) – According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, who witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem, 1.1 million Jews were killed during the siege of Jerusalem, large numbers from disease following starvation. Another 97,000 were enslaved.²⁶ The Land of Israel was left desolate, the nation of Judah fell, Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, and the two-thousand-year exile and dispersion of the Jewish people began.
2. Kitos War (A.D. 115-117) – Jews in Judea, Syria, Cyprus, Cyrene (Libya), Egypt, and Mesopotamia rebelled against the Roman Empire, resulting in total destruction of Jewish communities in Cyprus and Cyrene and massive losses in Judea and Egypt.²⁷
3. Bar Kokhba’s revolt (A.D. 132-136; traditionally Tisha B’Av 135) – Simon Bar Kosiba was thought to be the long-awaited Messiah who would free the Jewish people from Roman oppression. Rabbi Akiva gave him the name Bar Kokhba, (Aramaic) meaning “son of a star”, from Number 24:17, a prophecy of Messiah. He led the Jewish rebellion against Rome, resulting in 580,000 Jews killed, 50 fortified towns and 985 villages razed. The pagan Roman city of Aelia Capitolina was built on the ruins of Jerusalem; a pagan temple to Jupiter built on the Temple Mount; Jews forbidden from entering the city (except on Tisha B’Av to mourn the

²⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Jewish-Roman_War (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 6.9.3.)

²⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kitos_War

destruction of the Temple); and the Land of Israel/Judea renamed Syria Palestina, after the ancient Philistine enemies of Israel.²⁸

“Nation against nation” and “kingdom against kingdom” describes the nation/kingdom of Judea rebelling against the nation/kingdom of Rome. The people were deceived and misled by false messiahs and false prophets who convinced them that they could win a war against the most powerful empire that had ever existed up until that time.

... an upsurge of Apocalyptists and others who went around and preached the approach of the kingdom of God, asserting that divine intervention would soon destroy the power of Rome, a teaching that further bolstered messianic expectations, especially that of providential deliverance from the Roman oppressor.²⁹

One of the false prophets told the people “that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance”.³⁰ Six thousand people who followed the direction of this false prophet – many of them women and children – were burned alive when the Romans started fires in the Temple and Temple complex buildings:

The soldiers also came to the rest of the cloisters that were in the outer [court of the] temple, whither the women and children and a great mixed multitude of the people fled, in number about six thousand. But before Caesar [General Titus] had determined anything about these people, or given the commanders any orders relating to them, the soldiers were in such a rage, that they set the cloister on fire; by which means it came to pass that some of these were destroyed by throwing themselves down headlong, and some were burnt in the cloisters themselves. Nor did any one of them escape with his life.³¹

²⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bar_Kokhba_revolt

²⁹ Sicker, p. 136.

³⁰ Whiston, p. 582 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5, Section 2).

³¹ Whiston, p. 582 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5, Section 2).

As this is being written, news is being reported of the discovery of a mass grave just outside the eastern wall of the Temple Mount that is thought to contain the remains of Jews (mostly women and children) massacred on the Temple Mount.

Liss "told the amazed audience that the film had been shot in a spacious, underground cavern in the area of the Mercy Gate [Sha'ar Harachamim in Hebrew, a sealed gate in the wall of the Old City, opposite the Mount of Olives, ed.], near the eastern wall of the Temple Mount, but just outside it," the newspaper reported. Liss raised the possibility that the skeletons were the remains of 6,000 Jews, mostly women and children, killed on the Temple Mount when the Romans destroyed the Second Temple.

The massacre is described in the writings of Josephus Flavius, who defected from the Jewish to the Roman side and witnessed the destruction.³²

Josephus tells us about another false prophet/false messiah named Jonathan, one of the Sicarii (violent, criminal element of zealots) who had fled the Romans from Israel to Cyrene and stirred the Jews up against Rome.

And now did the madness of the *Sicarii*, like a disease, reach as far as the cities of Cyrene; for one Jonathan, a vile person, and by trade a weaver, came thither, and prevailed with no small number of the poorer sort to give ear to him; he also led them into the desert, upon promising them that he would shew [show] them signs and apparitions...³³

The Romans pursued them out into the desert, slaughtered many of these unarmed individuals, and captured the rest, but Jonathan got away. He was later apprehended but not before causing the death of another three thousand (wealthy) Jews by falsely accusing them of rebellion against Rome. Jonathan then began accusing the innocent and wealthy Jews in Alexandria and Rome of

³² <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/158417#.UBhDPULN8qY> - "Remains of Jews Massacred on Temple Mount Found?" *Israel National News*, July 30, 2012.

³³ Whiston, pp. 604 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 7, Chapter 11, Sections 1-3).

rebellion, including Josephus. But this time, emperor Vespasian (father of Titus) realized Jonathan's deceit, and tortured and burned him alive for it.

FAMINE AND DISEASE DURING THE ROMAN SIEGE OF JERUSALEM

Famine and disease accompanies war, and many Jews died not only by the sword but also because of famine and disease during this terrible period of time in Jewish history. War results in famine because the land cannot be cultivated and crops harvested. In addition, enemy armies devour what food is available. Within Jerusalem, the vast food stores were burned by some of the zealots to force the people to fight against the Romans. This led to terrible famine conditions during the Roman siege.³⁴

Once Titus completely cut off the city by building a wall around its entire perimeter, famine widened its grips on the inhabitants. Josephus writes:

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 market-places like shadows, all swelled with 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, and a kind

³⁴ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book 5, Chapter 1, Section 4.

of deadly night, had seized upon the city; while yet the robbers [criminal elements] 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...³⁵

People resorted to eating dung from the sewers and cow-dung hills, and other kinds of inedible substances.³⁶ Evil individuals tortured their own people to discover hidden food:

They also invented terrible methods of torment to discover where any food was, and they were these: to stop up the passages of the privy parts of the miserable wretches, and to drive sharp stakes up their fundamentals! and a man was forced to bear what it is terrible even to hear, in order to make him confess that he had but one loaf of bread, or that he might discover a handful of barley-meal that was concealed...³⁷

Moses prophesied the siege of Jerusalem by Rome, represented by the eagle in Deuteronomy 28:49, resulting in parents eating their own children:

“Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy shall oppress you. The man who is refined and very delicate among you shall be hostile toward his brother and toward the wife he cherishes and toward the rest of his children who remain, so that he will not

³⁵ Whiston, p. 568 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 5, Chapter 12, Section 3).

³⁶ Whiston, pp. 570, 578 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 5, Chapter 13, Section 7; Book 6, Chapter 3, Section 3).

³⁷ Whiston, p. 564 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 5, Chapter 10, Section 3).

give even one of them any of the flesh of his children which he shall eat, since he has nothing else left, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy shall oppress you in all your towns. The refined and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and refinement, shall be hostile toward the husband she cherishes and toward her son and daughter, and toward her afterbirth which issues from between her legs and toward her children whom she bears; for she shall eat them secretly for lack of anything else, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy shall oppress you in your towns” (Deuteronomy 28:53-57).

Josephus records the horror of a woman killing and eating the child she had suckled at her breast.³⁸ Even after the siege was over, during the time the Jews were undergoing a selection process to be taken as slaves by Rome, 11,000 more died of starvation.³⁹

EARTHQUAKES

The Jordan Rift Valley is part of the Great Rift Valley that runs through Israel and East Africa. There are other fault lines running throughout Israel, including Jerusalem. The moment Yeshua died, there was an earthquake powerful enough to fracture the lintel beam of the Temple, causing the veil of the Temple to tear from top to bottom. Three days later, there was another earthquake when Messiah Yeshua resurrected. This time, tombs on the Mount of Olives opened:

And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints [believers] who had fallen asleep [died] were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city [Jerusalem] and appeared to many (Matthew 27:51-53).

The prophet Daniel also referred to the resurrection of the dead:

³⁸ Whiston, pp. 578-579 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 3, Section 4).

³⁹ Whiston, p. 587 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 9, Section 2).

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

Those who rose “to everlasting life” refer to the saved individuals from the time of Adam to Yeshua, whose souls had resided in the Sheol (Underworld) Paradise (Luke 16:22 “Abraham’s bosom”; Luke 23:43 “Paradise”). The souls of the unsaved remain in Sheol Torment/Hell until they resurrect for the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11). Although the saved souls had not yet acquired their new spiritual bodies like Yeshua did at the resurrection, they ascended out of Sheol Paradise and into Heaven with Yeshua.

According to Jewish tradition, the resurrection of the dead was to begin on the Mount of Olives – and it did. It is interesting that the following verse (Daniel 12:3) makes reference to those who “will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven”, for those who ascended with Yeshua into Heaven were enveloped in the Shekinah, the Glory Cloud of God (Acts 1:9).

At the time Yeshua prophesied about earthquakes, Mount Vesuvius had been dormant for hundreds of years. But beginning about A.D. 63, a series of earthquakes showed its reactivation, followed by the catastrophic eruption in A.D. 79 that destroyed the Roman cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii.⁴⁰

In light of Yeshua’s prophecies, it is interesting to note that Vesuvius became active about the time of Nero’s great persecution of believers, beginning in A.D. 64, two years before the start of the First Jewish Revolt against Rome. Also in A.D. 64, the theater in Naples (six miles from Vesuvius), where Nero made his public debut singing and playing the lyre, was hit by an earthquake and collapsed shortly after his recital.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 20, p. 275.

⁴¹ Chris Scarre, *Chronicle of the Roman Emperors*, p. 54.

CELESTIAL AND SUPERNATURAL SIGNS OF JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and GREAT SIGNS FROM HEAVEN (Luke 21:10-11, emphasis added).

According to Josephus, who witnessed Jerusalem's destruction, there were a number of strange supernatural signs preceding the city's destruction, including "great signs from heaven", just as Yeshua prophesied:

Thus there was **a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet (Halley's Comet A.D. 66), that continued for a whole year.** Thus also, before the Jews' rebellion (against Rome), and before those commotions which preceded the war (A.D. 66-70), when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus (according to the Syro-Macedonian calendar) [Nisan,] (the month of Nisan according to the Biblical Hebraic calendar, six days before the sacrifice of the Passover lambs on the fourteenth), and **at the ninth hour of the night (3 am), so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house (Temple),** that it appeared to be bright day-time; which light lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskilful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. At the same festival also, a (red) **heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb** in the midst of the temple. Moreover, the **eastern gate** of the inner, (court of the temple,) which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be **opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night (12 am, midnight).** Now, those that kept watch in the temple (Temple Guard) came thereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told

him of it; who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty was able to shut the gate again. This also appeared to the vulgar (common people) to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So these publicly declared, that this signal foreshewed the desolation that was coming upon them. Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one-and-twentieth day of the month of Artemisius, [Jyar,] (Iyar) a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, **before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities.** Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, **they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, “Let us remove hence”** (explanatory information in parentheses added; bold added for emphasis).⁴²

Josephus is a very reliable historian who lived during the time of these events. Given the reality of supernatural phenomena, supernatural signs warning of Jerusalem’s impending destruction no doubt occurred.

According to the Talmud, four supernatural signs occurred during the forty-year period before the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Yoma 39ab). Significantly, the number 40 in the Word of God signifies “a period of probation” – suspended judgment, time to allow for repentance, turning to God’s way of salvation.⁴³ The signs showed that the Temple

⁴² Whiston, p. 582 (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 5, Section 3).

⁴³ E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance*, p. 266.

sacrificial system was no longer acceptable to God as Messiah Yeshua had established the New Covenant and the New Priesthood:

1. The High Priest picked the lot designating the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) goat for the Lord in his left hand (inauspiciously) each year for forty consecutive years, indicating the nation's offering to God not being acceptable.

2. The scarlet cord on the Day of Atonement scapegoat failed to supernaturally turn white during these forty years, showing that the sins of the people were not forgiven. The scapegoat, upon which the sins of Israel were conferred, was thrown over the cliff to its death in the wilderness of Azazel. A crimson cord was tied to the horns of the scapegoat. Before the goat was sent into the wilderness, another part of the crimson cord was placed on the door of the Temple. Still another part of the cord was attached to the cliff from which the scapegoat was cast. The crimson cord supernaturally turned from crimson to white as a sign of the acceptance of the sacrifice and forgiveness of sin by God according to Isaiah 1:18, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool."

3. The westernmost light (closest to the Holy of Holies) of the temple menorah did not burn, understood as a sign that the Shekinah (God's Presence) had departed from the Temple.

4. The massive doors of the Temple spontaneously opened, interpreted by the Rabbis as a sign of the Temple's imminent destruction by fire, according to Zechariah 11:1, "Open your doors, O Lebanon, that a fire may feed on your cedars." (Note: the cedars of Lebanon were used in the construction of the Temple.)

PERSECUTION OF BELIEVERS IN MESSIAH YESHUA

Messiah Yeshua prophesied that those who believed in Him would be persecuted and killed as they took the Gospel to "the whole world", "to all the nations" (Matthew 24:9-14; Mark 13:9-

13; Luke 21:12-17). At that time, the Roman Empire ruled many nations and was considered the “whole world” as it was the known ancient world of the Mediterranean.

Yeshua told His disciples that they would be delivered up to “tribulation” and killed; that they would be delivered up to the courts, flogged in the synagogues, imprisoned, and give testimony before governors and kings (Matthew 24:9; Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12).

Note that “tribulation” in this context does not refer to a future seven-year tribulation period, but rather to the intense persecution including martyrdom experienced by His early followers. (As we have proven from the Word of God, the 70th Week of Daniel has already been fulfilled – see Part 2 “The 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel – The New Covenant Is the Covenant of Daniel 9:27”).

Yeshua spoke directly to His disciples about the persecution they would endure. Many of them were killed for following Yeshua and proclaiming the Gospel. The Book of Acts provides many accounts of persecution of followers of Yeshua. The Jews, especially the same corrupt religious leadership that condemned Yeshua to be executed, were the first to persecute and kill believers.

Stephen was the first to be martyred. The Roman authorities were not involved in his persecution and death. Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court made up of religious leaders and headed by the high priest – the same court that condemned Yeshua to death.

Like Yeshua, Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin on false charges of blasphemy and false witnesses testified against him (Acts 6-7). They drove him out of the city and stoned him to death (Acts 7:58). Because Stephen was judged by the Sanhedrin (“the Council”), who met on the Temple Mount, it is likely that Stephen was taken to the “place outside the gate”, referring to the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount, leading to the Mount of Olives, the same place where Yeshua was crucified.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ See Chapter 2 “The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion” (<http://www.messengers-of-messiah.org>) from our book, *The Rod of an Almond Tree in God’s Master Plan*.

From that day forward, a great persecution arose against believers. Saul (later called Paul) was commissioned by the Sanhedrin to silence Yeshua's followers and put them to death:

And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him [Stephen] to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles (Act 8:1).

God actually worked through this persecution so that believers would go to other areas because this helped to spread the Gospel, the Good News of Messiah Yeshua.

The first of the twelve disciples to be martyred was James, the son of Zebedee, who was called by Yeshua at the same time as his brother, John, to become a disciple (Matthew 5:21). James was "put to death by the sword" by Herod Agrippa I in about A.D. 44.

Now about that time Herod [Herod Agrippa] the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church, in order to mistreat them. And he had James [Jacob] the brother of John put to death with a sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also... (Acts 12:1-3).

Peter was put in prison during the feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread. Herod intended to have him executed after the Passover festival, but an angel of God freed him (Acts 12:6-11).

The Book of Acts also records the many persecutions Paul endured: thrown out of the Temple, arrested, imprisoned, attempts against his life, and held in custody for years at a time, tried before Roman authorities, etc. The religious authorities persecuted Paul just as he had once persecuted Yeshua's followers. Rather than be tried by the Sanhedrin, as a Roman citizen he had the right to appeal to Caesar, which he did.

In a vision, Yeshua appeared to Paul and told him that just as he had given testimony before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, he would also be giving testimony at Rome (Acts 23:11). There he was executed, not long before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

James, the brother of Yeshua, was also martyred around the year A.D. 61.⁴⁵ He was not one of the original twelve disciples but became a believer in Yeshua after the resurrection. He led the Jerusalem church and presided over the first Church Council in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15; 21:18; Galatians 2:9).

We have the account of what happened to James from Josephus.⁴⁶ The high priest at the time, Ananus, assembled the Sanhedrin illegally – after the death of the Roman procurator, before the newly appointed procurator, Albinus, had arrived. He took advantage of the situation to have charges of breaking the law brought against James and other followers of Yeshua. They were found guilty and stoned even though the justice-minded Jews complained about the illegality of what had been done.

The Roman Emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68) began the first persecution of Christians in Rome, falsely accusing them of starting the Great Fire that destroyed most of Rome in A.D. 64. Paul was martyred during this time, as were vast numbers of believers, who suffered all kinds of terrible tortures and death: torn apart by animals, crucified, burned as human torches, etc.⁴⁷ Many stories of martyrdom of the apostles and followers of Yeshua based on tradition are detailed in Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE WORLD

Yeshua told His disciples that the Gospel “must first be preached to all the nations”, showing that they would take the Gospel to all the nations prior to their deaths, just as He had commanded them to do (Matthew 28:19):

⁴⁵ *Zondervan All-In-One Bible Reference Guide*, p. 330-331.

⁴⁶ Whiston, p. 423 (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 20, Chapter 9, Section 1).

⁴⁷ Scarre, pp. 55, 57.

“But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. And **THE GOSPEL MUST FIRST BE PREACHED TO ALL THE NATIONS**. And when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 13:9-11, emphasis added).

Indeed, Yeshua’s disciples preached the Gospel to peoples of all the nations. The apostle Paul preached the Gospel in Asia Minor (Turkey), Greece, Rome, Spain, and according to tradition, as far as Britain, considered the remotest part of the Roman Empire (Act 1:8).

whenever I go to Spain — for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while (Romans 15:24)

Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain (Romans 15:28).

The apostle Peter went to Babylon, where there was a large Jewish population:

She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark (1 Peter 5:13, Babylon means Babylon, not Rome.)

Jews from all over the Diaspora, various regions of the Empire, heard the Gospel at Pentecost in Jerusalem in A.D. 31, following Yeshua’s resurrection and ascension into Heaven. All adult male Jews were required to be in Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost.⁴⁸ Upon returning to their homes scattered throughout the Roman Empire, they would have taken the message of the Gospel.

⁴⁸ Adult male Jews were required to be in Jerusalem for three Biblical festivals: Passover (Pesach)/Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost (Shavuot), and Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot).

“Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God” (Acts 2:9-11).

They came from all over: Mesopotamia (the Middle East), Asia Minor (Turkey), Egypt, North Africa, the city of Rome, the Greek island of Crete, even Arabia. There are also early church traditions about some of the other Apostles and where they went, such as Egypt and Asia Minor.

Messiah Yeshua told His disciples that the Gospel would be preached to the world before the “abomination of desolation” and “the end”, meaning the destruction of Jerusalem by Roman armies (Matthew 24:9-15; Mark 13:9-14; Luke 21:12-20):

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)” (Matthew 24:14-15).

As we have proven from the Word of God and history, it was just as Yeshua prophesied, the disciples and believers in Yeshua spread the message of salvation in Messiah Yeshua throughout the ancient world, far and wide. And then, just as Yeshua had prophesied, the armies of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple.

BELIEVERS HEED YESHUA’S WARNING, FLEE TO PELLA

“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader

understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15-16).

“But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Mark 13:14).

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24).

Luke gives us the clear meaning of the Abomination of Desolation as relating to armies that would bring desolation to the land, the people, and the city of Jerusalem. As long as there had been a nation of Israel/Judah, there had not been such a terrible time and horrible period of suffering and utter destruction. This event resulted in the two-thousand-year exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel. Not until 1948 was the nation of Israel re-established, and never again will God allow the nation of Israel to be destroyed.

Believers who saw the Roman armies under Cestius retreat from the city in November A.D. 65 understood that the Abomination of Desolation, referring to the pagan Roman armies that would bring utter ruin to Jerusalem, had come and would return. They fled the city to Pella:

The city earned a name in church history in AD 66 when Pella became a refuge for Christians who were fleeing Jerusalem because the Roman army was coming to quiet a Jewish revolution.⁴⁹

The Greek Bishop Eusebius (263-339) wrote the only surviving account concerning the first three hundred years of the church's history. Born in Palestine (Israel) and educated at Caesarea, he became the Bishop of Caesarea. His Ecclesiastical History contains ten books, a history from the beginning of the church to the defeat of Licinius in 324, just prior to the Council of Nicaea in 325. His work provides an authoritative and reliable account concerning the flight of members of the Jerusalem church to Pella.

According to Eusebius:

... the members of the Jerusalem church, by means of an oracle given by revelation to acceptable persons there, were ordered to leave the City before the war began and settle in a town in Peraea called Pella. To Pella those who believed in Christ migrated from Jerusalem ...⁵⁰

Pella, southeast of the Galilee area and about 60 miles northeast of Jerusalem, was located on the east side of the Jordan River in the area known as the Decapolis. Matthew tells us that great numbers of people from the Decapolis came to hear Yeshua during His ministry in the Galilee area (Matthew 4:25). In the area of Gadara, one of the towns of the Decapolis, Yeshua cast out the unclean spirits called Legion from a man who had been possessed (Mark 5:1-20). Therefore, when the Jerusalem believers fled to Pella, they were coming to an area that would already be familiar with Yeshua and the Gospel.

Significantly, Pella was a safe area because it was outside of Judea and Galilee, where the Romans waged their campaign against the Jewish rebellion. Jewish believers in Yeshua had

⁴⁹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4, p. 672.

⁵⁰ Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, p. 111.

never supported this rebellion and were considered traitors by their own people: traitors in following Yeshua and traitors in refusing to fight against the Romans.

Revelation 12 contains a prophecy about believers fleeing from Jerusalem to a place of safety for 1260 days (3 ½ years), also referred to as a “time and times and half a time”:

And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days (Revelation 12:6).

And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent (Revelation 12:14).

In Revelation 12:1-2, the Woman represents Israel and the Child represents Messiah Yeshua, who came from the Tribe of Judah of Israel. The Woman who fled into the wilderness represents faithful Israel: Jewish believers persecuted by Satan (the Dragon/Serpent) for their faith in Messiah Yeshua (Revelation 12:6, 13-17).

The “two wings of the great eagle” represent God’s protection and provision for His people:

“You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and (how) I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself” (Exodus 19:4).

“Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions” (Deuteronomy 32:11).

Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me in the shadow of Thy wings (Psalm 17:8).

How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings (Psalm 36:7).

Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in Thee; And in the shadow of Thy wings I will take refuge, Until destruction passes by (Psalm 57:1).

Let me dwell in Thy tent forever; Let me take refuge in the shelter of Thy wings. Selah (Psalm 61:4).

These verses show that the reference to “two wings of a great eagle” does not have to have a contemporary symbolic meaning, such as the “wings” of an airplane. At the time of the Exodus, there were no airplanes, but the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt by His power, provision, and protection.

Believers in Messiah Yeshua fled to Pella from Jerusalem in A.D. 66.⁵¹ In February A.D. 67, general Vespasian, commanding 60,000 Roman troops, began his campaign in Galilee to put down the Jewish rebellion. Later he appointed his son, Titus, in charge of the Roman legions. On the 9th of Av (August), Jerusalem fell to the Romans and the Temple was destroyed. The period of time from the beginning of the Roman campaign in A.D. 67 to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 is a total of 42 months, or 1260 days. This corresponds to 1260 days or a “time and times and half a time” (Revelation 12:6, 14).

For those who heeded Yeshua’s warning, there was adequate time to make preparations to leave the city. This was not the case for those who waited until the last possible moment for escape. Just before Passover in A.D. 70, Roman armies again surrounded Jerusalem, 60,000 strong under the Roman general Titus.

As Yeshua had warned, only those who fled immediately to the mountains at this time could possibly escape the coming destruction (Matthew 24:16-18; Mark 13:14-16; Luke 21:20-22).

⁵¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4, p. 672.

Fleeing to the mountains was a common way of escaping the enemy in those days, and archeologists have found evidence of people living in caves during this period of time in order to escape the Romans.

The Roman legions camped on Mount Scopus, the highest summit of the Mount of Olives (northern ridge), the ideal location for surveying the city. This has prophetic significance in regard to Daniel's prophecy regarding the Abomination of Desolation that Yeshua referred to when He prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem:

... and the [Roman] people of the prince [Titus] who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary [Temple]. And its end will come with a flood [of Roman soldiers]; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. ... and on the wing of abominations will come one [Rome] who makes desolate [destroys Jerusalem], even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one [Rome] who makes desolate" (Daniel 9:26b, 27b).

The reference to "on the wing of abominations" can also be translated "upon soaring heights will the abominations be"; "wing" figuratively describing a high place.⁵² This description fits the picture of Roman armies encamped on Mount Scopus prior to Jerusalem's destruction. As previously explained, it also fits the situation when Cestius had his Roman troops inside Jerusalem in the Upper City, before he retreated in A.D. 65. In both cases, we can see the prophecy being fulfilled.

Yeshua also warned not to enter the city before its destruction:

"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city" (Luke 21:21).

⁵² ArtScroll Tanach Series, *Daniel*, p. 265.

Further loss of life occurred because of a multitude of Jews entering the city for Passover. According to Eusebius:

But it is necessary to state that this writer records that the multitude of those who were assembled from all Judea at the time of the Passover, to the number of three million souls, were shut up in Jerusalem “as in a prison,” to use his own words.⁵³

The Romans waited until the day after Passover to begin bombardment of the walls.^{54,55} During the siege of Jerusalem, the Romans built a barrier around that city so that no one got out alive. Those who attempted to escape faced horrible deaths, including crucifixion.

LAWLESSNESS INCREASED IN JERUSALEM PRIOR TO ITS DESTRUCTION

The Gospel of Matthew records Yeshua’s words regarding the increased lawlessness that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:12). During the Jewish rebellion against Rome, conditions inside Jerusalem deteriorated greatly due to civil war among rival factions who sought to gain control of the city. They fought and killed each other, creating horrendous conditions for Jerusalem’s inhabitants. Blood ran even in the Temple area. As previously mentioned, one faction burned the food stores that could have lasted for years during the Roman siege, resulting in mass starvation. And criminal elements among the population tortured their own people in the most brutal ways to discover hidden food.

GREAT TRIBULATION FOR THE NATION OF JUDAH

Yeshua prophesied that there would be a period of “great tribulation” and “days of vengeance” for “this people”, referring to the Jewish people of that generation:

“because these are DAYS OF VENGEANCE, in order that all things which are

⁵³ <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm> *Church History*, Book 3, Chapter 5, Section 5.

⁵⁴ *History of the Jewish People: The Second Temple Era*, p. 187.

⁵⁵ This was the 40th Passover, counting from Passover A.D. 31 when Yeshua was crucified. The number 40 in the Word of God is associated with a period of probation (Bullinger, p. 266). God gave the inhabitants of the Land of Israel and Jerusalem 40 years to repent before judgment fell on the nation.

written may be fulfilled. Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be GREAT DISTRESS UPON THE LAND [OF ISRAEL], AND WRATH TO THIS PEOPLE, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22-24, emphasis added).

The prophet Daniel also prophesied concerning this great tribulation, “a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time”:

“Now at that time Michael [the archangel], the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be A TIME OF DISTRESS SUCH AS NEVER OCCURRED SINCE THERE WAS A NATION UNTIL THAT TIME; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book [of life], will be rescued” (Daniel 12:1, emphasis added).

Since the time the ancient nation of Judah had been established, there would never be such a terrible time of judgment and tribulation, but that time would be shortened for the sake of “the elect” – God’s people, the Jewish people.

“for then there will be a GREAT TRIBULATION,⁵⁶ such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short” (Matthew 24:21-22, emphasis added).

“For those days will be a TIME OF TRIBULATION SUCH AS HAS NOT OCCURRED since the beginning of the creation which God created, until now, and never shall. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have

⁵⁶ The Greek word *thlipsis* (Strong’s #2347) “denotes the results of being squeezed or put into a narrow place ... trouble, affliction, distress” (*Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 743).

been saved; but for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days”
(Mark 13:19-20, emphasis added).

Yeshua makes the clear statement: “because these are the days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written be fulfilled.” Yeshua has just answered the question asked regarding the time for all these events to be completed. It is clearly tied to the destruction of Jerusalem, the fall of the nation of Judah and the scattering of the Jewish people throughout the nations of the world, as prophesied in Daniel 9:26-27.

Josephus describes the complete destruction of Jerusalem. The Romans left only 3 towers as a witness of the once great city now brought to utter ruin for its rebellion against Rome:

Caesar [Titus] gave orders that they should now **demolish the entire city and temple**, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminence; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne, and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison; as were the towers also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valour had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall, **it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited** (emphasis added).⁵⁷

FOR THE SAKE OF THE ELECT THOSE DAYS SHALL BE CUT SHORT

For the sake of “the elect” the time of destruction was shortened:

“And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short” (Matthew 24:22).

⁵⁷ Whiston, p. 589 (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 7, Chapter 1, Section 1).

“And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days” (Mark 13:20).

In this context, “elect” refers to the Jewish people, chosen by God for His plan of redemption. God worked at that time so that there was a limit to the death and destruction of the Jewish people. Otherwise, they might have been virtually exterminated as a people. Had the siege lasted too long, there would have been no survivors. Another example of God limiting the destruction occurred when the false prophet John lied about the Jews of Rome and Alexandria rebelling against Rome. These Jewish populations could have been totally wiped out had God not exposed the lie, preventing the slaughter of these whole communities.

And there is no doubt that God has continued to work since that time to preserve the Jewish people through all the many persecutions and exterminations that have occurred throughout the world, throughout time.

God also promised that once the nation of Israel was re-established, the Jewish people would never again be removed from their land:

“When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. And I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares the Lord GOD (Ezekiel 39:27-29).

“And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I

will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary [Temple] in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever” (Ezekiel 37:25-28).

God has worked to progressively restore all the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. In 1967, as a result of the Six-Day War, Jerusalem was reunited and Judea and Samaria were restored to the nation of Israel. The Temple Mount, Old City, and Mount of Olives – which had been cut off at the time the nation of Israel was born in 1948 – were restored, along with Judea and Samaria, the Biblical heartland of the nation of Israel.

When Messiah Yeshua returns, Israel’s enemies will be destroyed, Israel’s borders will be greatly expanded, the Temple will be rebuilt, and the Messianic Age/Millennial Kingdom will begin with King Messiah Yeshua reigning from Jerusalem (Ezekiel 38-48):

And the glory of the LORD came into the house [of God, the Temple] by the way of the gate facing toward the east. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house [Temple]. Then I heard one speaking to me from the house [Temple], while a man was standing beside me. And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever” (Ezekiel 43:4-7a).

Never again will the Jewish people be removed from the Land of Israel. Therefore, we can clearly see that the “great tribulation” Yeshua spoke of had to do with the total destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple and the beginning of the 2,000-year exile of the Jewish people from their homeland, and is not about a future tribulation period.

THE ERROR OF THE 144,000 JEWS FLEEING TO PETRA

According to a popular prophecy teaching, there will be 144,000 Jews fleeing to Petra for protection during a future seven-year tribulation. This is an erroneous teaching for two main reasons. Firstly, the 70th Week of Daniel is about the New Covenant established by Messiah Yeshua and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, not about a future seven-year tribulation. Secondly, the Book of Revelation explicitly says that the 144,000 come from the 12 Tribes of Israel and are not limited to the Tribe of Judah, the Jews:

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand SEALED FROM EVERY TRIBE OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL: from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed (Revelation 7:4-8, emphasis added).

The number 144,000 represents all redeemed Israel.⁵⁸ The number 144,000 is the product of 12 x 12 x 1000. The Number 12 is highly significant in the Word of God – 12 Tribes of Israel; 12 Disciples; 12 Foundations and 12 Gates of the New Jerusalem. On the 12 Gates of the New Jerusalem are written the names of the 12 Tribes:

It [New Jerusalem] had a great and high wall, with TWELVE GATES, and at the gates twelve angels; and NAMES WERE WRITTEN ON THEM, which are those of the TWELVE TRIBES OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL (Revelation 21:12, emphasis added).

⁵⁸ The Tribe of Dan is not found in this list due to Dan's idolatry. The Tribe of Manasseh (descended from one of Joseph's sons) replaces the Tribe of Dan.

Messiah Yeshua is the King of Israel (John 1:49; 12:13), the Redeemer (Luke 24:21; Acts 5:31; Acts 13:23-24). Yeshua told His disciples to go to the “lost sheep of Israel”:

And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. ... These twelve Jesus [Yeshua] sent out after instructing them, saying, “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather GO TO THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL (Matthew 10:1, 5-6, emphasis added).

The “lost sheep of Israel” refers to descendants of the Northern 10 Tribes of Israel who had been scattered and assimilated in the Gentile nations after the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.). The disciples went to all the nations, taking the message of salvation in Messiah Yeshua to the Jews, the Israelites, and the Gentile (non-Jewish) peoples.

The apostle Paul, quoting the prophet Isaiah, tells us that a remnant of Israel, meaning all 12 Tribes, will be saved:

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE AS THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED (Romans 9:27).

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? ... In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice (Romans 11:1-2, 5).

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until

the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB” (Romans 11:25-26).

Redemption is through Israel’s Messiah Yeshua, with non-Israelites being grafted in to Israel (Romans 11):

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU.” So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. ... in order that in Christ [Messiah] Jesus [Yeshua] the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:8-9, 14).

PETRA WILL NOT BE A PLACE OF REFUGE FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Ruins of the ancient city of Petra are located south of the Dead Sea in what is now Jordan. Petra was the capital of the Nabatean Arabs from the end of the fourth century B.C. to A.D. 105, when it was incorporated into the Roman Empire.⁵⁹ Today, Petra is a place of ancient ruins, most notably a necropolis, a city of the dead. Petra in no way, past or future, fits the prophecy concerning Yeshua’s warning for His disciples and followers to flee Jerusalem prior to its destruction.

The error of Petra as a place of refuge during a future seven-year tribulation is based upon a misinterpretation of Daniel 11:41.

“He will also enter the Beautiful Land [Israel], and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon” (Daniel 11:41).

⁵⁹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4, p. 740.

According to this interpretation, this refers to a future Antichrist who will rule the world during a future seven-year tribulation. However, as we have previously shown, the 70th Week of Daniel has already been fulfilled and is not about a future seven-year tribulation (See Parts 2 “The 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel – The New Covenant Is the Covenant of Daniel 9:27”.) And nowhere in the Word of God is Petra named as a place of refuge.

The context of Daniel 11:40-44 has to do with the conflict over Jerusalem. Daniel Chapter 11 details certain key historical events with Jerusalem as the focal point of Biblical prophecy. Many empires and peoples have conquered Jerusalem down through the centuries: Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Christian Byzantines, Roman Catholic Crusaders, and Islamic Arabs, Mamelukes, and Ottoman Turks.

The lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon are today part of Jordan. Bedouins (nomadic Arab tribes) have inhabited this land for centuries. They do not live in cities or cultivate land, but move from place to place. This has given them independence from being conquered, occupied, or being under the government of any state.

The Empire of the Ottoman Turks was the last and greatest Islamic empire to seize control of the land of Palestine. This empire held Jerusalem for four hundred years (1517 to 1917) but the Bedouin tribes of Edom, Moab, and Ammon maintained their own independent way of life.

THE SECOND COMING OF MESSIAH YESHUA

After describing the conditions and events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, Messiah Yeshua tells us that His Second Coming will be an unmistakable event:

“For just as lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. ... and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:27, 30).

“And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory” (Mark 13:26).

“And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27).

Unlike the false messiahs He has warned about, Yeshua tells His disciples that His coming will be clearly evident to all. Significantly, Yeshua tells us that His coming will be “as lightning comes from the east, and flashes to the west”. This is a perfect description of the radiant glory of the Shekinah (Glory Cloud), a light brighter than the light of the sun (Isaiah 60:1) associated with Yeshua’s coming from Heaven above the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and moving west toward the Temple Mount. As He ascended into Heaven above the Mount of Olives, He will descend from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-12; Zechariah 14:4).

Mark tells us that sometime after the tribulation, referring to the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome, Messiah Yeshua will return. There is no indication of how long a period of time there would be from Yeshua’s First Coming until His Second Coming.

“But in those days, **after that tribulation**, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory” (Mark 13:24-26, emphasis in bold added).

Luke also refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, followed by an unspecified period of time referred to as “the times of the Gentiles”, and then the return of Messiah Yeshua:

“and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles **until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled**. And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars,

and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see **THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD** with power and great glory” (Luke 21:24-27, bold emphasis added).

From our perspective in history, we can see that the times of the Gentiles refers to a very long period of time when Jerusalem would be under the control and influence of the Gentile nations.

Matthew includes an obscure reference to vultures gathering where the corpse is:

“Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. But immediately after the tribulation of those days **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL** from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Matthew 24:28-29, bold emphasis added).

The problem with this verse is that the English translation seems to put the Second Coming following immediately after the “tribulation”. This idea seems to support the Second Coming of Messiah Yeshua immediately after a seven-year tribulation.

However, in the Greek text, the word “immediately” (Greek: εὐθὺς) is placed before, not after, the word “but” (δέ - may also be translated “yet” or “and”).⁶⁰ In addition, because there are no periods in the Greek text, it is a matter of interpretation where one sentence ends and the next sentence begins. By moving the period in the Greek text so that the sentence ends with the word “immediately”, we bring Matthew 24:28-29 into agreement with Mark and Luke:

“Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather immediately. But after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give

⁶⁰ *Concordant Greek Text*, p. 102. (New International Version, Amplified Bible, and King James Version omit translating the Greek word δέ.)

its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Matthew 24:28-29, alternative translation, bold emphasis added).

This understanding also brings Matthew 24:28-29 into agreement with Luke 24:9.

“And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but **THE END DOES NOT FOLLOW IMMEDIATELY**” (Luke 21:9, emphasis added).

As previously explained, the wars Yeshua referred to had to do with the Jewish rebellions against Rome, in particular the war that led to the destruction of Jerusalem. In this context “the end” refers to the end of the Age of Gentiles (Luke 21:24), which occurs when Messiah Yeshua returns to establish God’s Kingdom on Earth with His Throne in Jerusalem.

THIS GENERATION WILL NOT PASS AWAY UNTIL ALL THINGS TAKE PLACE

There is a transition from Yeshua’s prophecies regarding the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to His prophecies about His Second Coming. However, Yeshua did not indicate how long it would be from the time of Jerusalem’s destruction until He returned. Only from history can we now see that this period of time has been very long.

After Yeshua has described in detail the conditions and events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, He continues with prophecies concerning His Second Coming. Then He says:

“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32).

Is Yeshua referring to the generation that would see the destruction of the Temple or to the future generation that would see His Second Coming?

We must come to an understanding that is in agreement with the rest of the Word of God. Yeshua gave many details about the events and conditions that would take place leading up to

the destruction of the Temple, and as we have proven from history, these all occurred just as He prophesied. There is not as much detail about His Second Coming as there is about the generation that would live to see the destruction of the Temple. For these reasons, we agree with the interpretation of those scholars who interpret Yeshua's statement as referring to the generation of His own disciples, those who would see the detailed prophecies leading up to the destruction of the Temple take place.

This interpretation also fits the context of the preceding verses dealing with the parable of the fig tree as an analogy of the signs of Jerusalem's imminent destruction (Matthew 24:32-34; Mark 13:28-30; Luke 21:29-32). It is interesting and perhaps prophetically significant that Yeshua refers to summer being near in this regard, since the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed during the summer, August 4th, the 9th of Av.

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (Matthew 24:32-34, NKJV).⁶¹

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (Mark 13:28-30, NKJV).

Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom

⁶¹ The King James Version, New King James (NKJV), and New International Version correctly translate the Greek εστιν (*estin*) as “it is” – not “He is” in Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*, p. 81).

of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place” (Luke 21:29-32, NKJV).

Yeshua was telling His disciples and followers that when they saw “all these things”, He was referring to the detailed prophecies regarding the signs that Jerusalem would be destroyed. And that is exactly how the conversation began, with Yeshua telling His disciples that the Jerusalem Temple would be totally destroyed (Matthew 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6).

From the time Yeshua spoke these words until the Romans destroyed Jerusalem was a period of about 40 years, the same period of time the generation of Israelites wandered in the wilderness until they died because of their unbelief:

“For forty years I loathed that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways. Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest” (Psalm 95:10-11).

Likewise, the Jews had 40 years to hear the Gospel (Good News) about Yeshua the Messiah and to witness the miracles performed by God to confirm that wonderful truth.

The author of the Book of Hebrews quotes from Psalm 95, urging the Hebrews/Jews to respond to the Holy Spirit and receive Yeshua as Messiah, the only way of salvation, so as to enter the rest (shalom) of God:

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED ME BY TESTING ME, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, ‘THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART; AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS’; AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, ‘THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.’” Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one

of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ [Messiah], if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end; while it is said, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME.” For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:7-19).

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