

The First Jewish Revolt against Rome

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When Jews of the Roman province of Judea initiated a revolt against Rome in ca. AD 66, the results were catastrophic and had lingering effects on both Jews and Christians. While the revolt occurred some three decades after the lifetime of Jesus, it is nonetheless important for understanding the development of early Christianity and the text of the New Testament. There are also significant connections between the First Jewish Revolt and some of the prophecies in the New Testament, most notably the Olivet Discourse recorded in Matthew 24 (compare Mark 13; Luke 21:5–37; Joseph Smith—Matthew). This chapter will review the major impetuses for the Jewish Revolt, summarize its major events and figures, and sketch its lasting impacts on both Judaism and Christianity.

Josephus the Jewish Historian

The Jewish historian Josephus (ca. AD 37–100) is the primary source for the events leading up to and during the Jewish Revolt. Born in Jerusalem as Joseph ben Matthias, he was a son of a priest and a descendant of the Hasmoneans. He was well educated, having spent time learning from ascetic groups such as the Essenes. When he was twenty-six years old, he traveled to Rome and was impressed with its size and grandeur as the dominant regional power. He became an important writer and scholar, somewhat bridging the gap between the Jews and Romans. By the end of his career, he had written four key works: *Jewish Antiquities*, a summary of Jewish history for the non-Jewish world; *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, his

autobiography; *Against Apion*, an apologetic work defending Jewish belief against aspects of Greek thought; and *Jewish War*, the key account of the Jewish Revolt. While his eyewitness account of the revolt is a vital source of information, a number of historians have come to question his motives and agenda since he began the war as a Jewish general in the Galilee but later surrendered to the Romans and became a Roman citizen and friend of Titus and Vespasian—Roman generals during the revolt and later emperors of the Roman Empire. His traitorous actions raise suspicions about his purpose and reliability in writing his later account of the revolt, *Jewish War (Bellum Judaicum)*. Many are quick to accuse him of enriching himself on a project of Roman propaganda;¹ however, eminent Josephus scholar Steve Mason believes this perspective may misinterpret Josephus's intentions. While Josephus did gain some advantages from his close work with the Romans, he did not necessarily gain much more than others in similar situations. Other Jews also received Roman citizenship, and teachers regularly received a stipend, accommodation, and relief from taxation. In addition to these common benefits, Josephus did receive some land in Judea, but nothing extravagant.² While Josephus's work was flattering toward Vespasian and Titus (such deference was common among contemporary historians), Mason argues that it was not written merely as propaganda. Rather, having been on both sides of the conflict, Josephus uniquely knew issues from both camps and seems to be trying to strengthen his fellow Jews facing increasing tension from the extreme patriotism in Rome. It "appears to be a coherent response to a hostile postwar situation for Judeans in the 70s."³

Causes of the Jewish Revolt

What caused the Jewish Revolt? It is nearly impossible to point to one precipitating factor, so a review of various causes leading up to the outbreak of war is necessary. Of course, there never would have been a Jewish revolt if the Romans under Pompey had not conquered the region in 63 BC and incorporated Judea into the Roman Empire. In any event, the Jews did not rebel until more than 130 years later. While they could have resisted Roman rule and taxation from the beginning, many Jews from the time of Roman arrival until the revolt accommodated themselves to the Romans.⁴ In fact, the Romans initially ruled the area under a local vassal king, Herod (see Matthew 2; Luke 1). Herod bears responsibility for bringing a new elite to power while effectively ending the old order under the Hasmoneans, the descendants of the great Maccabees whose zealousness ignited Jewish aspirations for independence and religious revival.

This new elite worked closely with the Romans, thereby sowing seeds of disapproval among other Jewish groups and segments of the Jewish populace. These seeds germinated for several decades until they burst forth from the soil of discontent as Jews turned against their fellow Jews who they felt had betrayed their traditions and leadership. Thus, some see the revolt in a lengthy trajectory of zeal for God against those deemed disloyal to him, a kind of holy war. From Phineas in Moses's time (Numbers 25:6–11), to the Maccabees preceding the Roman arrival, to the Zealots of the revolt (the Zealots are also known variously as the

Fourth Philosophy, *sicarii*, and Jewish nationalists),⁵ this defensive attitude out of loyalty to God and his commandments led to strong militaristic responses. As part of this religious zeal, some looked for a messiah or deliverer who could liberate the people from the Romans as the Maccabees had done earlier against the Greeks. Yet this catalyzing religious zeal does not explain why the revolt broke out when it did, especially since the group that came to be known as “Zealots” was actually opposed by many religious leaders in Jerusalem, such as the high priests.⁶ Why did it take more than a century after Roman arrival for the Jews to revolt?

For a chronologically closer cause of the revolt, some scholars point to the inept, corrupt, and harsh Roman procurators stationed over Judea in the first century—especially those following the death of the Herodian ruler Herod Agrippa I in AD 44 (see Acts 12). When Jewish-pagan hostilities throughout Judea grew stronger, especially in Caesarea Maritima, rebellion naturally followed. Primary texts recount the procurators’ injustices and insensitivity toward the Jews, which built up Jewish frustration at not having their interests protected. This brewing frustration fed into the hands of extreme religious/nationalistic Zealot leaders in Jerusalem, like Eleazar, who felt emboldened enough to withhold the daily sacrifice for the emperor.⁷ When the Roman auxiliary garrison was massacred in Jerusalem, Emperor Nero had little choice but to respond with force⁸ administered by Vespasian and then Titus.

Besides these political conflicts with the government, there were plenty of issues with Jewish society that fed the discontent. The later rabbinic literature highlights societal hatred and ills, such as a breakdown of values and materialistic concerns, as major causes for the revolt.⁹ Other socioeconomic factors exacerbated by a famine in AD 48 (Acts 11:28), heavy taxation, and population increase—all of which put greater demand on resources—led to higher incidents of brigandage, a greater rift between the rich and poor, and economic instability.¹⁰ In addition, several general causes played a role in the backdrop to this conflict: the presence of Roman officials, the tension between Jewish tradition and Greco-Roman influence (Hellenism), and messianic expectations. According to the Roman writer Suetonius, as well as Josephus, these messianic expectations included an oracle, or the belief spread throughout the Orient that it was time for someone arising from Judea to rule the world. The inhabitants of Judea took this to refer to themselves, but in hindsight it was interpreted as portending Vespasian’s rise to emperor.¹¹ Beyond these general causes, more immediate causes fanned the flames of these latent general issues and led to a violent rebellion. These immediate causes included tension between Roman procurators and Jewish leaders, economic strife, and inner-Jewish strains. What proved to be different with this revolt compared to the earlier Maccabean revolt in 167 BC and the later Bar Kokhba revolt in AD 132 was the lack of organization, planning, and leadership. A review of pivotal moments in the Jewish/Roman relationship and their concomitant effect on early Christians will illuminate the mounting frustration and discontent and the resulting disorganization that precipitated the Jewish Revolt against Rome in the mid-first century.

Roman/Jewish Relations

By AD 66 the Jews had been under varying forms of Roman control for over a century. With the exile and death of most of the Herodian family, Roman officials had increasingly become the face of occupation in the land. Gessius Florus (reigned ca. AD 64–66), installed as procurator of Judea by Nero in AD 64, exacerbated tensions between the Jewish and local Hellenistic communities. Rather than listening to Jewish complaints of harassment and discrimination and impartially addressing them, he often punished the accusers and profited thereby.¹² The last straw for many Jews came when Florus took seventeen talents from the Jerusalem temple treasury.¹³ Jewish protests of his theft led to the arrest of Jewish leaders, thousands of whom were whipped and even crucified despite many of them holding Roman citizenship.¹⁴ Despite efforts by the Herodian elite (Berenice and Agrippa II, see Acts 24–26) to prevent escalation and to seek more just treatment by Florus, their calls went unheeded and eventually the crowds turned against them, expelled them from Jerusalem, and burned their palaces.¹⁵ The Jewish population of Jerusalem exploded in anger at Florus's actions and the Zealot leaders capitalized on this opportunity to rally the populace to their side.

The Zealots, perhaps originating in protests over Quirinius's tax reform in AD 6, had been seeking to expel the Romans so they could be solely under God's rule. Josephus also referred to some rebels as *sicarii*, or "dagger-men" or "dagger-wielders," because their secret assassinations terrorized their fellow countrymen (in hopes they would join the fight against the Romans) as well as the Romans.¹⁶ Menahem ben Yehuda and Eleazar ben Ya'ir were key Zealot leaders. Eleazar, a priest, had been primarily responsible for halting the daily sacrifice to the emperor.¹⁷ He was supported by the lower priests and revolutionary leaders against the traditional high priestly authorities, thus turning it partly into a class struggle. Eleazar was able to take control of the temple and lower city of Jerusalem, thereby shutting out the high priests from the temple. Menahem came from a father and grandfather who both also zealously resisted the Romans and Herodians. When the revolt began, he led some forces to Masada along the Dead Sea and attacked a Roman garrison there, capturing a large cache of weapons.¹⁸

Emboldened from his victory, Menahem marched toward Jerusalem, took over the Antonia Fortress with its forces from Herod Agrippa II, and besieged Herod's Palace and towers. The attack on the Roman garrison in Jerusalem was matched by a gentile attack on Jews in Caesarea that resulted in twenty thousand deaths.¹⁹ Various cities suddenly ignited in Jew-versus-Gentile attacks throughout the Galilee and Golan and along the Phoenician coast (the area under Herod Agrippa II largely escaped these violent outbursts). Menahem, who had early successes against the Romans, may have become too overbearing with royal pretensions and was killed by fellow revolutionaries. Jewish infighting continued as various leaders vied for control of the city and the revolt, particularly between moderates (who were primarily aristocratic Jerusalemites that were more cosmopolitan and pro-Roman and wanted to capitulate to Rome) and resisting Zealots. (Keep in mind that this narrative is told and propagated by Josephus, who may have colored the story with his agenda and personal

bias. While scholars largely accept Josephus's narrative, it behooves us to remember the anti-Zealot perspective from which he wrote.)

Roman Military Response to the Revolt

The Romans responded to these initial Zealot victories by sending military reinforcements from Syria.²⁰ What was expected to be an easy Roman victory (the initial march into Jerusalem was successful) turned into disaster when the Romans suddenly retreated toward the coast and were ambushed near Beth Horon, losing some six thousand troops and a significant amount of equipment.²¹ There was now no turning back for the Jews, and many pro-Roman Jews fled Jerusalem. On the other side, the Romans had to reassess their response and decided to send in a very strong military force under the experienced leadership of Vespasian.

Vespasian came from an equestrian family and gained fame as a military leader in the conquest of Britain.²² Following his military victories in Britain, Vespasian spent time governing in Africa, managing his finances on his estate, and even hiding from Emperor Nero for fear of his life. Eventually, he was selected to lead a sizeable army to put down the revolt in Judea. Alongside his son Titus and four legions, Vespasian began the counterattack in the Galilee. While this region was not where the recent unrest had started, it made strategic sense for the Romans coming from the north to secure that region first. The Jews knew what was happening and worked to defend the Galilee region. Many Galileans fought because of hatred for the large, gentile-influenced cities there such as Sepphoris and Tiberias. Older settlements resented newer ones, and the indigenous population held animosity toward the foreigners. Yet even with these sentiments, there was no unanimity on war with Rome. When war did finally break out, Jews were little match, especially on the battlefield, for the initial brunt of Vespasian's forces. One of the local generals, Josephus, prepared the city of Yodfat (or Jotapata), and though they held out for forty-seven days (the third-longest siege of the revolt after Jerusalem and Masada), the Jews there eventually fell in bloody defeat and enslavement. It was at this point that Josephus defected to the Romans and began chronicling the war from the other side.²³

With the fall of Galilee, thousands of refugees and Zealots fled to Jerusalem, and by late spring of AD 68, all the areas around Judea—Perea and Idumea—were securely in Roman hands. Yet right when the revolt could have been snuffed out, Nero died and a succession crisis broke out in Rome, thereby also ending Vespasian's mandate for leading the war in Judea. A nearly two-year reprieve for the Jerusalem inhabitants came as Rome faced its own struggle over leadership, with Vespasian ultimately coming out on top and marching into Rome as its next emperor in AD 69. Meanwhile, the Jewish leadership of the revolt suffered its own conflicts, becoming bifurcated between moderates ruling in Jerusalem and revolutionaries trying to upend Roman control and influence. The Zealots spread terror throughout the city as the moderates made efforts to stem their tide.²⁴ The Zealots then invited the Jews of Idumea to join them. Butchery among the populace, including moderate leaders and

the high priest, ensued. Those who could escape deserted Jerusalem. At this high point of Zealot control, their coalition fell apart with various groups controlling different parts of the city and temple complex.

Siege of Jerusalem

In the midst of such revolutionary discombobulation, the Roman siege of Jerusalem continued under the leadership of Vespasian's son Titus. During the seven-month siege by four Roman legions, the Zealots became more desperate in their efforts to turn their compatriots to their cause and even resorted to burning the city's food supply to force others to join the fight. With little food and under siege, the inhabitants of Jerusalem starved, tried to escape, or waited for the inevitable end. Josephus described in ghastly detail the effects of the siege:

The Jews, unable to leave the City, were deprived of all hope of survival. The famine became more intense and devoured whole houses and families. The roofs were covered with women and babies too weak to stand, the streets full of old men already dead. Young men and boys, swollen with hunger, haunted the squares like ghosts and fell wherever faintness overcame them. To bury their kinsfolk was beyond the strength of the sick, and those who were fit shirked the task because of the number of the dead and uncertainty about their own fate; for many while burying others fell dead themselves, and many set out for their graves before their hour struck. In their misery no weeping or lamentation was heard; hunger stifled emotion; with dry eyes and grinning mouths those who were slow to die watched those whose end came sooner. Deep silence enfolded the City, and a darkness burdened with death.²⁵

With great difficulty, the Roman forces finally regained control of the Antonia Fortress and turned their sights on the temple. Titus offered peace overtures to the Jewish forces inside the temple complex, allowing some, particularly from the upper classes and priestly families, to leave. Owing to a lack of animals, the Jews, for the first time during the revolt, discontinued their daily sacrifices at the temple. Josephus describes Roman leaders discussing whether they should destroy the temple or leave it as a monument to the Roman victory,²⁶ but it is unclear whether Titus intended to destroy the temple or whether its destruction simply happened in the course of the battle. Fighting continued mercilessly with great losses on both sides. The Roman battering rams failed against the massive stones surrounding the temple. Fire was finally set to the temple gates, leading to the eventual destruction of the magnificent sanctuary in AD 70. (According to the Jewish calendar, this happened on the 9th of Av, traditionally the same day Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians and commemorated as Tisha B'Av, one of the saddest days in the Jewish calendar.) The Romans finally overcame the weakened Jewish forces, and a bloodbath ensued with incredible carnage throughout the city. Josephus said that around the altar "the heap of corpses grew higher and higher, while down the Sanctuary steps poured a river of blood and the bodies of those killed at the top slithered to the bottom."²⁷ Eventually the Romans were able to dismantle the



Overturned Stones W. Side of Temple Mount (Courtesy: Lincoln H. Blumell).

temple, destroy the temple complex, and push the massive stones off the Temple Mount and onto the market street below, where they still rest. The destruction of the Jerusalem temple was devastating for the Jewish community and led to a new worship focus by the rabbis without the temple and its associated cultic system—what came to be known as Rabbinic Judaism.

The rest of Jerusalem proceeded to fall into Roman hands as the Romans rejected any bids for surrender and burned large sections of the city. Only the rebel-held Masada proved challenging for the Romans, but eventually it fell, culminating in a mass suicide among the remaining rebels;²⁸ and by this last gruesome act thus ended the first Jewish Revolt against Rome.



View of Roman Siege Ramp of Masada (left) and Roman Base Camp (top center left) (Courtesy: Lincoln H. Blumell) Overturned Stones W. Side of Temple Mount (Courtesy: Lincoln H. Blumell).

New Testament Prophecies of the Temple's Destruction

Although the Jewish Revolt and subsequent destruction of the Jerusalem temple happened three decades after the time of Jesus, the New Testament records significant prophecies and

teachings of Jesus about the fate of this magnificent edifice. These prophecies were even brought back during Jesus's trial in an attempt to find Jesus's words inflammatory and revolutionary when one witness claimed, "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days" (Matthew 26:61). After one visit to the Temple Mount, Jesus made the ominous declaration to his apostles that not one stone of the temple would be left upon another, but rather they would be thrown down (see Matthew 24:2; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:2–3; Luke 21:6). Naturally concerned, the apostles later asked Jesus, "When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3). It seems they wondered if the two events went together: the destruction of the temple and Jesus's return leading to the end of the world. Their questions led to a lengthy response by Jesus now recorded in Matthew 24 (compare Mark 13; Luke 21) and sometimes referred to as the "Olivet Discourse" because it was delivered on the Mount of Olives. This chapter underwent a major revision as part of the Joseph Smith Translation project and was eventually canonized in the Pearl of Great Price as Joseph Smith—Matthew.²⁹

One of the major results of Joseph Smith—Matthew is the reordering of some verses so that everything before verse 21 deals with the time period immediately following Jesus's ministry while everything after verse 21 prophesies of events connected with Jesus's second coming and the end of the world. Verse 21 functions as the transitional verse that separates these events: "Behold, these things I have spoken unto you concerning the Jews; and again, *after* the tribulation of those days which shall come upon Jerusalem . . ." (emphasis added).

Following verse 21, Jesus warns of tribulation and destruction that will come upon the Jews and Jerusalem. Jesus talks about false Christs and false prophets who would lead to great iniquity and persecution of the righteous. Perhaps here he is alluding to the leaders of the Zealots and others who led the people astray through their charismatic but misguided leadership. Josephus alleges that some of the Jewish leaders' claims misled the people and were responsible for thousands of deaths. "There was formed another group of scoundrels, in act less criminal but in intention more evil, who did as much damage as the murderers [the *sicarii*] to the well-being of the City. Cheats and deceivers claiming inspiration, they schemed to bring about revolutionary changes by inducing the mob to act as if possessed, and by leading them out into the desert on the pretense that their God would show them signs of approaching freedom." Josephus then describes how various groups of people followed these leaders into the wilderness only to be brutally killed when government officials responded to their rebellions.³⁰ Later on, Josephus pinned the responsibility of thousands of deaths within the city to false prophets when the Roman soldiers set fire to the cloister where thousands, including women and children, had sought refuge and either burned to death or died jumping headlong from the structure.

Their destruction was due to a false prophet who that very day had declared to the people in the City that God commanded them to go up into the Temple to receive the signs of their deliverance. A number of hireling prophets had been put up in recent days by the party chiefs to deceive the people by exhorting them to await help from God, and

so to reduce the number of deserters and buoy up with hope those who were above fear and anxiety. . . . So it was that the unhappy people were beguiled at that stage by cheats and false messengers of God.³¹

It is certain that because of all these factions and false leaders, the violent actions and cruel treatment of even their fellow Jews surely witness that the love of many waxed cold as Jesus said it would (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:10). Josephus included many descriptions of the extremes Jerusalem inhabitants would go to take food from their family members and neighbors.³² Any who tried to desert to the Romans faced even worse circumstances. Josephus stated that “the entire City was the battleground for these plotters and their disreputable followers, and between them the people were being torn to bits like a great carcass. Old men and women, overwhelmed by the miseries within, prayed for the Romans to come, and looked forward to the war without, which would free them from the miseries within.”³³ Josephus’s summary statement captures the awful situation: “To give a detailed account of their outrageous conduct is impossible, but we may sum it up by saying that no other city has ever endured such horrors, and no generation in history has fathered such wickedness.”³⁴

Within the Olivet Discourse, Jesus also reiterates a prophecy from Daniel about the “abomination of desolation,” which seems to point toward a time when the temple reaches such corruption that it will be destroyed: “When you, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, then you shall stand in the holy place” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:12; this prophecy seems to have multiple fulfillments; it is repeated again among the signs of Jesus’s second coming in verse 32: “And again shall the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, be fulfilled”). The only way to avoid the impending destruction, Jesus taught, is to stand in the holy place—not the Jerusalem temple, because it will be destroyed, but places designated by God for spiritual and physical refuge. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus commands those who are in Judea to flee into the mountains and not return to take anything from their houses (1:13–15). It will be a time of great tribulation “on the Jews, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, such as was not before sent upon Israel, of God, since the beginning of their kingdom until this time; no, nor ever shall be sent again upon Israel” (1:18). But as terrible as those sorrows will be, the Lord will shorten their days for the elect’s sake according to the covenant so not everyone will be destroyed (1:19–20). Although the Christian community would survive and continue, some of its key leaders—like Peter and Paul—met martyrs’ deaths in Rome during the time of the Jewish Revolt as Nero used Christians as scapegoats for some of the problems he faced in the capital. It truly was a time of severe tribulation for the early Christian community.

Doctrine and Covenants 45

It is interesting to note that a revelation very similar to Joseph Smith—Matthew was given again in our day through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Now canonized as section 45 of the Doctrine and Covenants, this revelation likewise warns against not being prepared for the end, but it goes on to promise great things for the righteous. Yet even this revelation seems

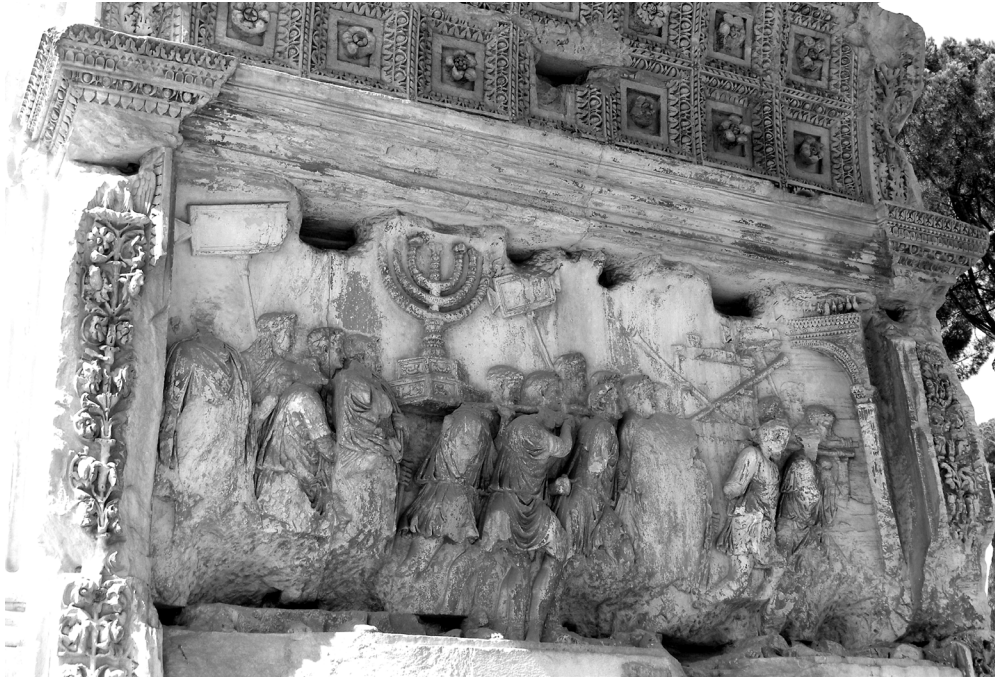
connected to the reordered version found in Joseph Smith—Matthew: “And now, behold, I say unto you, it shall not be given unto you to know any further concerning this chapter, until the New Testament be translated, and in it all these things shall be made known; wherefore I give unto you that ye may now translate it, that ye may be prepared for the things to come” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:60–61). Joseph Smith commenced the Joseph Smith Translation project on Matthew 24 the day after section 45 was received, March 8, 1831. Thus, for the Saints of this last dispensation, this prophecy provides signs of future events while also strengthening hope in the fulfillment of prophesied promises in the face of strong persecution. Section 45 also strengthened connections between past, present, and future since it represented continuation of God’s eternal plan that had been revealed before Christ, by Christ to his first apostles, and now through the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is simply the everlasting gospel manifest in different dispensations. Regardless of the time period, the message is the same: steadfastness in Christ brings God’s blessings and helps avoid the harsh, but just punishment for sinners. But just as Jesus’s early apostles and followers relied on this prophecy for guidance, the Saints of Joseph Smith’s day relied on the Joseph Smith Translation version of this prophecy for the full picture of future events associated with Jesus’s second coming.

Impact of the Jewish Revolt on Early Christians

The early Christians in Jerusalem were not willing participants in the Jewish Revolt against Rome but were caught up in the turmoil because of their proximate location and their similarities to Jews. In Roman eyes there was probably little to distinguish them from the Jews. According to early Christian tradition recorded by Eusebius of Caesarea³⁵ and Epiphanius,³⁶ the Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem fled around the beginning of the revolt and made their way east across the Jordan River and north to Pella, one of the cities of the Decapolis.

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; and as if holy men had utterly abandoned the royal metropolis of the Jews and the entire Jewish land, the judgement of God at last overtook them for their abominable crime against Christ and His apostles, completely blotting out that wicked generation from among men.³⁷

This flight could have been in response to Jesus’s prophetic injunction to flee during the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:16). While these early Christian sources were earlier deemed reliable, some scholars today question their veracity.³⁸ They doubt that the Christians were able to move freely through the land when the Romans were suppressing a rebellion, and it is unclear why they would be freely received by a Greek city. Josephus also recounted that Pella had already been destroyed,³⁹ so where were they arriving? Instead, some scholars believe these traditions were invented by early Jewish Christians in an effort to strengthen their legitimacy by drawing direct connections with Jerusalem’s Christian



Relief from the Arch of Titus Showing the Spoils of the Jerusalem Siege (Courtesy: Lincoln H. Blumell).

community. If they did not flee to Pella, it leaves open the question of what happened to the Christians in Jerusalem and whether they perished alongside their Jewish neighbors.

In some early Christian sources it appears that the Christians returned to Jerusalem after the Roman destruction in AD 70. Eusebius lists the bishops of the Jerusalem community up until Hadrian (ca. AD 132), all of whom had Jewish background: James, Simeon, Justus, Zacchaeus, Tobias, Benjamin, John, Matthias, Philip, Seneca, Justus, Levi, Ephrem, Joseph, and Judas.⁴⁰ Following the Second Jewish Revolt in AD 132, the list of bishops reveals gentile backgrounds.

Conclusion

The First Jewish Revolt in ca. AD 66 was an enormously tragic event for the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem, resulting in the loss of many lives and the destruction of the temple. The Jews sought for independence from the Romans who had been their overseers for over a century. Various factors combined to ignite the rebellion in AD 66—corrupt procurators, economic struggles, breakdown of values, heavy taxation, religious fervor, and inner-Jewish factional strife. Encouraged by an early victory against a Roman army, the Jews may have become overly confident that their revolt could succeed. But a much stronger army was sent against them; there was nothing the Jews could do to stop it. Fractured leadership and lack of planning and organization doomed the revolt. The revolt became a violent nexus between religious zeal and politics. What had begun as hope for God's deliverance and lib-

eration from the Romans turned into a catastrophe, with failures on the battlefield and the love having waxed cold among the people. Furthermore, the temple was desecrated by revolutionaries long before the Romans further desecrated and destroyed it.

From a Christian perspective these events were significant because of prophecies recorded in the New Testament regarding future tribulations among the Jews and the loss of the temple. The Olivet Discourse is one of the most important and lengthy prophecies by Jesus about both impending and distant future events. Joseph Smith's revision of this discourse, now known as Joseph Smith—Matthew, helps clarify the time frame of the events and associated signs. It provides a window on not only the events surrounding the Jewish Revolt but also future events pertaining to the Second Coming. Just as the early Christians had to heed the words of the prophecy and flee to holy places to avoid the “abomination of desolation,” so true Christians in the last days will need to stand in holy places for refuge. In such a manner, the elect of the covenant and those who are steadfast will be blessed even in the midst of great tribulation.



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Further Reading

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Notes

1. E.g., Eric D. Huntsman, “The Reliability of Josephus : Can He Be Trusted?,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1996): 392–395; and Henry St. John Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1929).
2. Flavius Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* 417–429.
3. Steve Mason, “Josephus and Judaism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*. ed. Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and William Scott Green (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1999), 2:546–63, esp. 547–53. For one of the most comprehensive treatises on the revolt, see Steve Mason, *A History of the Jewish War*, A.D. 66–74 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

4. For some of these issues, see Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome, A.D. 66–70* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
5. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.9–10; and Josephus, *Jewish War*, trans. G. A. Williamson (London: Penguin Books, 1981) 2.13.254–255.
6. See Lincoln H. Blumell and Haley Wilson-Lemmon, “Zealots,” in *T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Daniel M. Gurtner (forthcoming).
7. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.17.409–410.
8. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.17.452–455.
9. See *Yoma* 9b.
10. See Goodman, *Ruling Class of Judaea*, 1–3.
11. See Suetonius, *Life of Vespasian* 4.5; Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.5.312–313.
12. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.14.277–279, 292.
13. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.14.293–295.
14. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.14.305–308.
15. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.17.425–426.
16. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.13.254–257.
17. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.17.409–410.
18. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.8.433–434.
19. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.18.457.
20. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.18.510.
21. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.19.551–555.
22. Suetonius, *Life of Vespasian* 4.1–2.
23. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.7.387–392.
24. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.10–11.162–195.
25. Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.12.512–515.
26. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.5.249–253.
27. Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.4.259.
28. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.9.389–401.
29. Joseph Smith—Matthew adds nearly 450 new words, roughly a 50 percent increase in text size, but there is only one verse (55) which has no correlation in the King James Bible and three verses are repeated.
30. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.13.258–263.
31. Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.5.285–288.
32. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.10.429–434; 5.12.515–516.
33. Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.1.27.
34. Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.10.442.
35. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3.
36. Epiphanius, *Refutation of All Heresies* 29.7; *On Weights and Measures* 15.
37. Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, trans. G. A. Williamson (New York: Dorset Press, 1984), 111. Epiphanius also addresses this flight in the context of discussing the heretical Ebionites: “from there [Pella] it originated after the migration from Jerusalem, after all the disciples had settled in Pella, because Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and to depart, since it was about to suffer siege” from *Panarion* 29.7.8; see also 30.2.7.
38. For an overview of this issue, see Craig Koester, “The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1989): 90–106.
39. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.181.1.
40. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.7.