

**THE STORY OF THE LAST  
DAYS OF JERUSALEM**



ROMAN EAGLES AND ENSIGNS

**THE STORY OF  
THE LAST DAYS  
OF JERUSALEM**

*from Josephus*

**BY**

**Alfred J. Church**

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## PREFACE

IN this story I have followed the narrative of Josephus, making many omissions but no other change of importance. It did not fall within the scope of my work to estimate his veracity and trustworthiness; but I may here say that a close acquaintance with his history will not incline the reader to put much confidence in his narrative on any point where interest or vanity may have tempted him to depart from the truth. In one matter, which is of such interest and importance that an account of it may be given here, he seems to have deliberately falsified history. The ingenuity of a German critic, Jacob von Bernays, detected in the *Chronicle* of Sulpicius Severus (a Christian writer, A.D. 350–420) a very slightly disguised quotation from one of the lost books of the *History* of Tacitus. The passage may be thus translated.

“Titus is said to have called a council of war, and then put to it the question whether he ought to destroy so grand a structure as the Temple. Some thought that a sacred building, more famous than any that stood upon the earth, ought not to be destroyed. If it were

preserved, it would be a proof of Roman moderation; if destroyed, it would brand the Empire for ever with the stigma of cruelty. On the other hand there were some, and among these Titus himself, who considered that the destruction of the Temple was an absolute necessity, if there was to be a complete eradication of the Jewish and Christian religions. These superstitions, opposed as they were to each other, had sprung from the same origin; the Christians had come forth from among the Jews; remove the root and the stem would speedily perish.”

In the interest, doubtless, of his Imperial patrons, the family of Vespasian, Josephus represents the destruction of the Temple as having been accomplished against the will of Titus.

I have to express my obligations to Dean Milman's *History of the Jews*, and to the article, "Jerusalem," by Mr. Ferguson, in the *Dictionary of the Bible*.

A. J. C.



## CHAPTER I

# OF THE BEGINNINGS OF THE JEWISH WAR

IN the fourteenth year of Nero Cæsar, Gessius Florus came down into the province of Judæa to be Governor in the room of Albinus. This Albinus had been evil spoken of for his greed and wrongdoing, but Florus far surpassed him in wickedness; for indeed he plundered whole cities and regions, nor did he refuse any man licence to rob his neighbours if only he might obtain for himself a share of the spoil.

In the beginning of the second year of Florus, Cestius Gallus, Proconsul of Syria, came to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Passover. And when the people thronged about him, making loud outcry against Florus, and praying that he would help them, Florus, who was standing at his right hand, mocked them. Nevertheless Cestius spake them fair, promising that he would speak for them to Florus, that he might deal more mercifully with them in time to come. And indeed Florus, going with him as far as Cæsarea, made many promises that he would behave himself more mercifully. Yet had he resolved in his heart that he would multiply his

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cruelties, that so he might drive the people into war. For he knew that, if there should be peace, the people would accuse him of his misdeeds to the Emperor, but that if there should be war, there would be no thought or remembrance of such things. Having, therefore, this purpose in his heart, he sent messengers to take seventeen talents out of the treasury of the Temple, pretending that the Emperor had need of them. But when the messengers showed their errand, immediately the whole City was in an uproar, the multitude of the people rushing to the Temple, and crying out against the tyranny of Florus. Some also of the young men went about with a basket, asking alms for the Governor as though he were a beggar. Florus, so soon as he heard these things, marched to Jerusalem with an army of horse and foot. And when the people came forth to meet him, for they would fain have pacified him, he repulsed them with violence, and commanded his soldiers to disperse the crowd. And the next day, sitting on the seat of judgment, he called before him the chief men of the City and bade them deliver up to him them that had been their leaders in the tumult, and them that had insulted him. But when he found that the guilty were not given up to him, for indeed all were guilty, not heeding the excuses and entreaties of the multitude, he gave over to his soldiers the Upper City to plunder, bidding them also slay whomsoever they might meet; which thing they did so zealously that all Jerusalem was filled with robbery and murder. Also Florus seized men of renown in the City, of whom some were Roman knights, and commanded that they should

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be shamefully beaten before his judgment seat, and afterwards crucified.

Now it chanced that in these days Berenice, sister to King Agrippa, was in Jerusalem, who being greatly troubled at the doings of the soldiers, sent certain of her body-guard and captains many times to Florus, entreating him that he would have mercy upon the people. But Florus paid no heed to them; nay, when the Queen went herself and stood barefooted before his tribunal, neither he nor his soldiers regarded her, but put the prisoners to the torture, and slew them even before her eyes; and doubtless they would have slain her also, but that she escaped with her guard into the palace, and there abode for that night in great fear of death.

The next day the multitude of the people were gathered together in the market-place of the Upper City, lamenting over them that had been slain, and crying out against Florus. Nevertheless when the princes and the priests besought them that they would give no occasion to the Governor, they went peacefully to their homes. But he, desiring to stir up strife, sent to the chief men of the City, and said to them:—"If ye now be earnest for peace, go forth, and meet the soldiers that are now coming to the City, and salute them as friends." But he sent privately to the centurions, commanding that the soldiers should not take any heed of the salutations of the people. And this they did; for when the people, coming forth from the City with the priests and chief men, greeted them with all friendship, they answered nothing. This stirred up great wrath in the multitude,

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so that they cried out against Florus; whereupon the soldiers made at them with their clubs, chasing them back to the City, and many fell under the clubs, and yet more were trampled by the crowd.

Nevertheless when Florus would have taken possession of the Temple, the people cast stones and javelins upon the soldiers from the roofs of the houses, and beat them back; also they broke down the cloisters that were between the Tower of Antony and the Temple; which when the Governor perceived, he ceased from his purpose; and in a little space he departed to Cæsarea, leaving one cohort only for a guard to the City. Afterwards he sent letters to Cestius, accusing the Jews, and laying to their charge the very things which he had himself done against them; which letters when Cestius had read, he sent one of his captains to Jerusalem to inquire into the truth of these matters. And when this man was come he went through the whole City, beginning at Siloam, taking with him one attendant only—for the chief of the people had persuaded him, through King Agrippa, that he should do this. And when he had seen that the people were peaceably disposed, he went up to the Temple, in which place many were assembled. And having praised them and exhorted them to live quietly, he returned to Cestius.

But the chief of the people took counsel with King Agrippa, whether they should send orators to accuse Florus before Cæsar. This the King liked not, but was minded rather to exhort the people that they should submit themselves to the Romans. The multitude, therefore, being assembled on the terrace, Agrippa

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stood forth and spake to them many words concerning the power and greatness of the Romans, and how that they were now masters of the whole world, and persuaded them that they should submit themselves quietly. And when he had made an end of speaking, he lifted up his voice and wept, as also did Queen Berenice his sister. Thereat the people were much moved; and they cried out, "We war not against the Romans, but against Florus, for the wrong that he hath done to us." To this King Agrippa made answer, "Not so, if one look to deeds rather than to words. Your tribute ye have not paid, and ye have broken down the cloisters between the Tower of Antony and the Temple. These things ye have not done against Florus, but against Cæsar. Do ye therefore pay the tribute and build again the cloisters."

In these things the people hearkened unto the King, for they began to build the cloisters, and paid also to them that were appointed to this office what was wanting of the tribute, even forty talents. But when the King would have them render obedience to Florus, till there should come down another Governor in his room, the people reviled him, and bade him depart forthwith from the City, and some even cast stones at him. So Agrippa departed to his own kingdom.

After no long space the Jews openly rebelled against the Romans. A certain Eleazar, the son of Ananias, persuaded the people that it should not thenceforth be lawful to receive any offerings from strangers. And this was indeed the beginning of war, for they rejected the offerings of Cæsar. Then the chief men, when they had sought to turn the people from their purpose but

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had prevailed nothing, sent messengers to Florus and to Agrippa that they should send soldiers to Jerusalem, for that now there was a manifest rebellion. Florus, indeed, was well pleased that it should be so, and took no heed; but Agrippa sent three thousand horsemen, by whose help the chief men took possession of the Upper City. On the other hand, Eleazar and the rebels occupied the Temple. For seven days these fought against each other, and neither had the upper hand. But on the eighth day, being the festival of Wood-carrying (for on a certain day every man of the Jews was wont to bring wood for the fire upon the altar), certain of the people that are called Zealots came into the Temple. Then the rebels drove the soldiers of the King out of the Upper City, and burnt the house of Ananias, the high priest, and the palaces of the King and of the Queen, and the books in which were written the names of such as owed aught to the money-lenders. The next day they also took the Tower of Antony, and slew them that kept it; and afterwards they laid siege to the palace of Herod. And when they had assailed this for certain days but could not take it, they made a covenant with the soldiers of the King that these should come forth and suffer no injury; but with the Romans that were in the palace they would make no agreement. These, therefore, fled into the towers, for Herod had built three, the names whereof were Hippicos and Phasaelis and Mariamne. But, after awhile, being reduced to great straits, they surrendered themselves, under promise from the rebels that no man should be put to death. Nevertheless so soon as they had come forth and had laid down their

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arms, for this also had been agreed, the rebels fell upon them and slew them all, save Metilius, their captain, for him they spared when he had promised that he would receive circumcision. And this great wickedness was wrought upon the Sabbath day.

## CHAPTER II

# OF THE DOINGS OF CESTIUS

WHEN tidings of these things were brought to Cestius it seemed good to him to march against the rebels. Wherefore he gathered together an army, taking the twelfth legion and auxiliaries, both horse and foot, and twelve thousand men from the three kings, to wit, Antiochus and Agrippa and Sohemus, of which twelve thousand the half were archers; and besides, many came of their own accord from the cities round about, who, though they knew but little of war, were full of zeal and hatred against the Jews; with Cestius was King Agrippa, who was a guide to the army, and also furnished it with food and with fodder for the horses.

Cestius, having burned certain cities on his way, and put their inhabitants to the sword, came near to Jerusalem, and began to pitch his camp at Gabao, which is distant six miles or thereabouts from the City. But when the Jews heard that the enemy was now approaching, they left keeping their feast and made haste to meet them; nor did they make any account of the Sabbath, though on this day they are wont to do no manner of work. Being thus very bold, by reason of their numbers, and full of courage and zeal, they



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fell, without keeping any order, upon the Romans; nay, so fierce were they that they broke through the line, making a great slaughter; and but that the horsemen came to the help of such as stood firm, with such also of the infantry as were not over-weary with their march, it had gone hard that day with Cestius and his whole army. Of the Romans there fell five hundred and fifteen; but of the Jews twenty-and-two only. After this the Jews went back to the City, and Cestius remained in the place for three days, the Jews watching him to see what he would do.

Then King Agrippa, seeing that the Romans were in no small danger from the multitude that was gathered in the hill country round about, judged it to be expedient to send yet again ambassadors to the Jews, who should promise to them in the name of Cestius pardon for that which was past, and peace for the time to come. For he hoped that some at the least would hearken to these words, and that so there would be made a division among them. And this, indeed, the rebels feared, for they set on the ambassadors or ever they had spoken a word, and slew one and wounded the other; and when some of the people showed indignation at such doings they drove them back to the City with clubs and stones.

When Cestius saw that they were thus divided among themselves he fell upon them with his whole army, and driving them before him, pursued them to Jerusalem. And having pitched his camp at Scopus, which is distant seven furlongs from the City, he remained quiet for three days, for he hoped, it would

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seem, that the inhabitants would surrender themselves to him; only during these days he sent to gather provisions from the villages that were round about. On the fourth day he set his army in array and marched into the City. Nor did the rebels seek to hinder him; for being astonished at the strength and good order of the Romans, they fled from the outer parts of the City and betook themselves to the Temple and fortified places. Then Cestius, having burned certain parts of the suburbs, came to the Upper City, and pitched his camp over against Herod's palace; and doubtless, if he had so willed, he might have conquered the rebels forthwith and so put an end to the war; but one Priscus, that was second to him in command, and certain of the captains of the horsemen, having been bribed with money by Florus, persuaded him that he should not attack the rebels. And so the war was prolonged to the utter destruction of the City. Also Ananias, the son of Jonathan, and other of the chief men of the City, had conference with him, promising that they would open the gates; trusting to whom, he sat still and did nothing. But the rebels getting a knowledge of this purpose of Ananias and his companions, cast them down from the walls, and dispersed all such as favoured them.

Cestius seeing this, gave command to the army that they should assail the Temple and the palace; and this they did for five days, but prevailed nothing. But on the sixth day Cestius, taking with him certain picked men of the legion, and archers, with them attacked the Temple from the north. These also at the first were driven back, but afterwards making a tortoise of their shields, they

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came close to the walls without suffering any damage and were about to put fire to the gate of the Temple. Now the manner of making a tortoise is this. They that are in the front set their shields stoutly against the walls,



THE TORTOISE

and to these others coming close join their shields, and to these again others. These shields being closely fitted together are as the shell of a tortoise, neither can any darts pierce through them. When the rebels saw these things they were in great fear and were about to fly, and the people were made to open the gates, and to give up the whole City to Cestius. And assuredly, if he had persevered in his undertaking, all would have gone well. But doubtless it was of God that this day brought not an end to the war. For indeed Cestius, as though he knew not the fear of the rebels, nor the temper of the people, how they would willingly receive him, suddenly called back the soldiers, and though he had suffered

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no great loss, contrary to the expectations of all men, departed from the City. And the rebels, seeing him thus retreat, a thing beyond all their hopes, took courage, and fell upon the rear of his army, slaying many, both horse and foot. That night Cestius abode in his camp at Scopus, but the next day he went yet further from the City, giving great encouragement to the enemy, who followed after his army and slew the hindmost, casting also javelins from either side of the way. And neither did they that were in the rear of the army dare to turn against them that assailed them, fearing the great numbers of the enemy; nor did the main body drive back them that set upon them from either side of the way, for they feared to break up their order. Also the Romans were heavily armed, but the Jews lightly equipped and ready for such kind of fighting, whence it came to pass that they suffered much loss but did no harm to the enemy.

This day there were slain with others, Priscus, that commanded the sixth legion, and Longinus, the tribune, and Æmilius Jucundus, captain of a troop of horse. And so, after much toil and loss of baggage, they came to their first camp, that is to say, the camp of Gabao. There Cestius abode two days, not knowing what he should next do. But on the third day, seeing that the number of the Jews grew greater continually, and that the whole country round about was filled with the enemy, he thought it best to depart. And that his flight might be the easier, he gave command that the soldiers should leave behind them all such baggage as might hinder them in their march; also that they should slay

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all the mules and beasts of burden, save such as carried the arrows of the artillery—for these things they kept, not only for their own using, but also because they feared that, falling into the hands of the Jews, they should be turned against themselves. So Cestius came to Bethhoron. Now, while the Romans were in the open country, the Jews held back, but so soon as they were come to the going down of Bethhoron, where the way is narrow, they fell upon them. And some hastening to the other end of the pass kept them from going out, and others from behind drove them down the road. Nor did the whole multitude cease to shower darts upon them till they seemed, as it were, to cover the army with them. And while the foot-soldiers stood still, not knowing how they should defend themselves, the horsemen were in a worse strait. For they could not keep their ranks and move forward by reason of the javelins that were cast against them, and the rocks on either side, being very steep and such as no horses could mount, hindered them from attacking the enemy. And on the other hand were very steep places, over which there was great peril of falling. Being therefore overwhelmed with these perils, they thought no more of defending themselves, but wept and cried aloud like men that are driven to despair, while the Jews shouted aloud for joy and for fury against their adversaries. And indeed, they were within a little of destroying both Cestius and his whole army, but that the night coming on, the Romans made their way back to Bethhoron, where the Jews, surrounding them on all sides, watched for their coming forth.

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But Cestius, seeing that he could not make his way by force, devised means by which he might fly. He chose four hundred of the bravest of his soldiers, and set them on the rampart of the camp, bidding them display the standards, that so the Jews might believe the whole army to be in the camp. And when he had done this, he himself departed in silence with the rest of his army. So soon as it was morning the Jews fell upon the camp; and when they had slain the four hundred, they pursued after Cestius. But he had been marching during no small part of the night, and now that it was day made all the speed that he could, insomuch that the soldiers cast away the battering rams and the catapults, and many other implements of war, all of which things the Jews took and used afterwards against them that had left them. And when the Romans had reached Antipatris the Jews ceased from pursuing them, and returning gathered together the implements of war, and spoiled the bodies of the dead, and collected great store of plunder, and so returned, with shouts and songs, to the City. Many Romans and auxiliaries fell in this fight, to wit of infantry five thousand and three hundred, and of horsemen three hundred and eighty.