

Cestius Humiliated by the Zealots (AD 66)

War Chronology – Part 3

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- April 13, 2014

Opening Remarks:

- A. Welcome to another Then and Now podcast where we study the Bible and History from a full preterist worldview.
- B. Last time we looked at several of the events which set the stage for the Jewish war with Rome, including the actions of Eleazar b. Ananias to rebuff Gessius' Florus attempt to get all the gold out of the temple, as well as take over full control of the temple to use as his fortress, and to stop the daily sacrifices on behalf of Caesar and all Gentiles. Cestius Gallus and Agrippa II responded by bringing their troops down to Judea to engage the rebel forces. We noted that the attempt by Menahem to take over the leadership of the rebellion failed after he made the mistake of killing Eleazar's father, which in turn only provoked Eleazar to avenge his father's death by killing Menahem.
- C. This time we need to take another look at the botched attempt by Cestius Gallus to crush the Zealot rebellion before it became too strong for a quick and easy solution. As a consequence of his defeat by the Zealots, the rebel forces were emboldened and much better equipped with men, weapons, supplies, and funds, which enabled them to survive another seven years until Masada finally fell.
- D. Before we get into our study, let's pray:

To Him Who sits on the throne in the Unseen realm, Who created all things by the breath of Your mouth through Your Sovereign Will and for Your Holy purposes. Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, Who was, and is, and will be for all ages. Worthy are You to receive ALL blessing, glory, honor, power, and dominion. Help us in these studies to rightly understand Your Holy Word, so that we can correctly apply it to our lives, and serve others in a way that will bear much fruit and bring much glory to You for all ages to come. We pray this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. [Psa 33:6; Rev 4:8, 11; 5:12-13]

Introduction

Here is a brief summary of the significant events that happened here at the beginning of the rebellion. You may want to print this list on a separate page and keep it in front of you as you listen to the podcast:

Summary of the Events in This Session

- Aug 66** – Menahem overpowered the Roman garrison at Masada and seized weapons
- Aug 66** – Eleazar stopped all sacrifices for all Gentiles, including those for Caesar
- Aug 66** – Moderates demanded the sacrifices be restored, but Eleazar refused
- Aug 66** – Moderates fought the Zealots for seven days with no success
- Aug 66** – Sicarii joined the Zealots and enabled the Zealots to capture upper city
- Aug 66** – Eleazar and his soldiers captured the Tower of Antonia
- Sep 66** – Menahem returned from Masada and helped Zealots attack the Moderates
- Sep 66** – Menahem killed Ananias b. Nedebaeus (father of Eleazar b. Ananias)
- Sep 66** – Menahem seized the leadership, but Eleazar had him killed
- Sep 66** – Eleazar tricked the Romans to leave the palace towers and then killed them
- Sep 66** – On the same day and hour, Caesarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants
- Sep 66** – Many retaliatory attacks on both sides (Greco-Syrians versus the Judeans)
- Sep 66** – Agrippa II was in Antioch with Cestius Gallus assembling their troops
- Oct 66** – Cestius Gallus arrived in Ptolemais with the Twelfth Legion and Agrippa
- Oct-Nov 66** – Roman troops reduced all the resistance in Galilee before going to Judea
- Nov 66** – Zealots assembled in Jerusalem during Sukkot to prepare for Cestius' attack
- Nov 66** – Cestius took his army to Beth-Horon and lost 515 soldiers there
- Nov 66** – Cestius attacked Jerusalem but withdrew after only five days
- Nov 66** – Cestius retreated to Beth-Horon where his army was badly beaten (lost 5300)

Negotiations Failed and Factional Fighting

Aug 66 – **The men of power (the moderates) tried to persuade Eleazar to restore the sacrifice on behalf of the emperor and all Gentiles**, but he would not listen to them. Josephus says he himself was a part of the group that tried to persuade Eleazar to restart the sacrifices (*Life* 19) and stop the rebellion.

It is also worthy of note here that even though the aristocratic upper class participated in the war and supported the war effort, it was the priests in the Temple (led by Eleazar) who were the driving force behind the revolt, especially in its early stages. We see that clearly here in this incident where the "men of power" tried to influence Eleazar to restore the sacrifices, but he refused. Eleazar had the Temple and the priesthood under his control (including the temple treasury). He controlled the military and the purse strings. That is like being Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Treasury at the same time. Basically a dictator. The moderates in the upper city had very little power compared to Eleazar.

Goldberg (on his Josephus.org website) says this: "As Martin Goodman argues in *The Ruling Class of Judaea*, revolution could not have taken place without the active participation of the upper classes. Josephus is highly reluctant to name the aristocratic instigators of the revolt, most likely because they were friends and acquaintances, and perhaps also because he wanted to disguise his own active participation. But there is no mistaking the fact that the revolt was driven by the priests of the Temple" [<http://josephus.org/warChronology1.htm>].

Josephus said that **many of the high priests and principal men** urged Eleazar not to omit the sacrifice on behalf of the Romans, but Eleazar and his priestly followers would not yield to them. [*Wars* 2.408-421 (2.17.2)] Yossipon described it this way:

Nero Caesar ... sent a gift of offerings and sacrifices to the House of God to offer up in his name as had done the kings of Roma who ruled before him. But **Elazar ben Anani** the priest stood up and cast out Nero's gift from the House of God, saying: "We will not profane the sanctuary of our Lord with the gifts of foreigners." Then he **sounded the shofar** and **arrayed for war** against a Roman army force that was stationed on duty to watch over Jerusalem... [Sepher Yosippon, ch. 64]

The wealthy and powerful got together and conferred with the high priests, as did the leaders of the Pharisees. Josephus said that they considered this **cessation of the peace offerings as putting everything at risk, and escalating the conflict beyond the point of no return**. So they assembled all the citizens of Jerusalem before the gate of the temple court (of the priests) and expressed their outrage at **this rebellious act** which would surely provoke the Romans to war.

Josephus was a part of that group of moderates and priests who tried without success to stop the revolt (*Life* 19). They stated to Eleazar and his men that they considered this action as **totally unjustifiable**, and reminded them that all previous generations had adorned the temple with the donations of foreigners, and had always accepted what had been presented to them by foreign nations, especially Rome. They stated that this action of stopping the peace offerings was "**the highest instance of impiety,**" and was "**bringing up novel rules of strange divine worship.**" They were running the risk of having their whole country condemned for impiety by not allowing any foreigners except Jews alone to sacrifice or worship in the temple. They were rejecting both the sacrifices and oblations of not only Caesar but all Romans and all Gentiles.

This action was causing even the Jewish people to fear that their own sacrifices might be rejected as well, or that it would cause the Romans to destroy the temple and end the sacrificial system altogether. Josephus says that the seditious inside the Temple **paid no attention to these words** by the leaders and went on with their war preparations while **neglecting to perform all of their normal and proper sacerdotal duties** [*Wars* 2.409-417 (2.17.3-4)].

Aug 66 – Finally, when the men of power (the moderates) saw that their appeal to Eleazar to resume the daily sacrifice was rejected, **they sent ambassadors (Simon b. Ananias, Costobar, Saul, and Antipas) to Florus and Agrippa asking for reinforcement troops** to help them put down the growing rebellion. Gessius Florus ignored their request, hoping that the revolt would get worse, so that the Romans would come in force and wipe out the Jews, but Agrippa sent 3000 horsemen [*Wars* 2.172-174 and 2.409-421 (2.17.3-4)]. Using these troops, the men of power seized the upper city (Mount Zion), while the rebels continued controlling the lower city and the temple [*Wars* 2.418-423 (2.17.4-5)].

Av 6-13, AD 66 – **Seven days of battle** between the pro-Roman forces in the upper city and the rebel forces in the lower city and Temple area. The dates for these seven days of fighting were given by Josephus as Av 6-13 (**Aug 26 – Sept 2** in AD

66), since he tells us that the next day afterwards was the **Feast of Xylophory** which fell on Av 14. [*Wars* 2.422-425 (2.17.5)]. Even though Agrippa II had sent 3000 horsemen, it was too little and too late. (*Wars* 2.173-4, and 2.411-421; *Life* 19). With the help of Agrippa's forces, the leading citizens, the chief priests, and all the peace-loving moderates occupied the Upper City. The Lower City and Temple Area was under the control of rebel forces. There were seven days of fighting between these two forces, with neither of them gaining significant advantage. This was Jewish men spilling Jewish blood inside the city of Jerusalem where it ought not to be. This was an abomination of the Holy City.

Av 14, AD 66 – Sicarii reinforced the rebel priests in the Temple. On the eighth day, after those seven days of fighting, there was a feast of wood-carrying. Some Sicarii sneaked in among the supposedly unarmed people who had to pass through the moderates to go into the temple, and thus were able to join forces with the rebels in the temple. Thus the rebel forces were reinforced to renew their attack on the moderates who were protected by Agrippa's forces. The Sicarii and other lower class citizens posing as worshipers tricked the pro-Roman soldiers into letting them enter the temple for the feast of Xylophory which fell on Av 14 (Sept 3) [*Wars* 2.422-425 (2.17.5-6)], but once inside they joined the rebel forces. These reinforcements greatly empowered the rebel priests under the command of Eleazar b. Ananias. Emboldened by this sudden influx of new recruits, the Zealots broke forth from the temple area and attacked the pro-Roman forces. They forced the supporters and troops of Agrippa out of the upper city, including the pro-Roman High Priest **Ananias b. Nedebaeus** (father of Eleazar b. Ananias), all of whom fled to Herod's palace where they were guarded by the Royal and Roman soldiers. Then the rebel forces **burned the house of Ananias, the palace of Agrippa, and the Archive Building** where all the **debt records** were kept. This latter action endeared the Zealots to all the poorer folks whose debts had now been abolished. A lot of them joined the Zealots, growing the ranks of the rebels even more. [*Wars* 2.426-427 (2.17.6)]

Aug 26, 66 – The Tower of Antonia was attacked by the rebels on the next day (15th of Lous or Av - late August, or Sept 5th acc. to F. F. Bruce), and after a two-day siege were able to overpower and kill the Roman garrison. From here onwards the Tower of Antonia was under the control of the rebel forces until the Roman forces under Titus recaptured it late in the siege (AD 70). Next the rebel forces attacked Herod's Palace, where they persisted day and night for several days trying to starve out the defenders. [*Wars* 2.430-432 (2:17.7)]

Av 15 (Sep 4) AD 66 – Josephus went to the Temple to stay there with his fellow priests, for fear of being associated with the pro-Roman party in the upper city and killed. [*Life* 20]

Aug 66 – It would have been risky to leave Judea and Jerusalem and flee to safe havens outside Palestine after the rebellion had begun. The Zealots were recruiting everyone to stay and support the war effort. They were watching the gates to prevent easy exit. Not only Florus was moving troops in the area, but also the Zealot

leaders Menahem and Eleazar were positioning their troops at Masada and inside Jerusalem as well. Armies were not only encircling Jerusalem, they were inside Jerusalem taking control of the city away from the Romans and Agrippa's loyalist forces. All refugees would have needed to leave Jerusalem long before this.

Sept 66 – Menahem returned from Masada where his soldiers had broke open Herod's armory there and taken all the weapons out to arm his own men. He returned triumphantly like a king to Jerusalem, where he assumed command of the rebel forces attacking Herod's palace where Agrippa's troops, the moderates, and Romans were camped. [*Wars* 2.433-434 (2.17.8)]. Menahem was the son or grandson of Judas the Galilean who had attempted a revolt back in AD 6. This was a dynasty of Zealots who had urged the Jews for two generations to stop paying taxes to Rome, and fight for their independence. This was known among Jews in the first century as the *Fourth Philosophy* (besides the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes). Now that the revolt had begun, this was the day for which they had waited. Menahem believed he was the right man to lead the Zealots for such a time as this.

Sep 25, 66 – Menahem allowed Agrippa's men and the loyalist Jews safe passage out of Herod's palace, but the Roman soldiers fled to the three palace towers (Hippicus, Phasael, and Mariamme). The palace was then burned. This occurred on the sixth of the month Gorpiaeus (Elul - September in AD 66). [*Wars* 2.437-440 (2.17.8)]

Sep 26, 66 – Menahem killed Ananias b. Nedebaeus (former high priest, and father of Eleazar) and his brother **Hezekiah** (who were moderates). This Ananias was high priest (AD 47-58) at the time of Apostle Paul's trial in AD 58 (cf. Acts 23). After Ananias had **lawlessly** ordered Paul to be struck on the mouth, Paul then predicted that God was about to strike Ananias (Acts 23:3), and sure enough about eight years later he was killed by Menahem [*Wars* 2.441 (2.17.9)]. Josephus says that Ananias was caught near the canal in the palace grounds where he had been hiding, and was killed on the next day after the rebels had taken control of the palace and the Romans had fled to the three towers (on the seventh day of the month Gorpiaeus or Elul - September in AD 66). This victory over the moderates inflated the ego of Menahem so much, Josephus says, that Menahem believed himself to have no rival in the leadership of the revolt, and became overbearingly tyrannical. Eleazar and his men could not tolerate Menahem's arrogance, so they formed a conspiracy to kill him and regain control of the rebel forces [*Wars* 2.442-443 (2.17.9)].

Sep 66 – Menahem put on royal garments and pompously went up into the temple to worship with some of his armed men as bodyguards. While he was in the temple, Menahem was attacked by the priestly rebels under the command of Eleazar (who was the son of the Ananias killed by Menahem). Eleazar's forces captured and killed Menahem in revenge for killing Eleazar's father, and totally disrupted Menahem's forces in Jerusalem. A few of them escaped to Masada where they remained until the end of the war (e.g., Eleazar b. Yair, a relative of Menahem, was supposedly among those who fled to Masada at this time). This completely put an end to

Menahem's role in the revolt. Eleazar had now regained total control of the Zealot forces in Jerusalem. [*Wars* 2.442-448 (2.17.9)]

Sep - 66 – Josephus left the temple and rejoined the chief priests and leading Pharisees to consult with them about what needed to be done. They ended up joining with the rebels, at least ostensibly, since as priests they needed access to the temple to perform their priestly duties, and the temple was under the control of Eleazar and his soldiers. Many of the priests went along with Eleazar, so that they could continue their function as priests in the temple. [*Life* 21]

Sep - 66 – Eleazar and his forces tricked the Roman garrison to leave the three palace towers. Eleazar promised to spare their lives if they would abandon the fortress and lay down their arms. But as soon as the Romans came out and laid down their arms and started walking away, Eleazar and his men fell upon them and slaughtered them, in breach of their agreement. To make matters worse, this massacre of the Roman garrison happened on a Sabbath day, when Jews were forbidden from fighting. Josephus says, "the city was all over polluted with such abominations." The people in Jerusalem made public lamentation over this treacherous (**lawless**) killing of the Roman soldiers, and mourned in dread of the Roman reaction, or divine vengeance for breaking the Sabbath [*Wars* 2.450-456 (2.17.10); *Life* 5 22-23] The inhabitants of Jerusalem grieved and even the moderate leaders were lamenting the consequences that they would now suffer because of this crime of Eleazar and his soldiers [*War* 2.455 (2.17.10)].

Sep - 66 – Jews Massacred in Caesarea. The divine vengeance did not long delay, for "on the very same day and hour" that Eleazar had killed the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem, Josephus says there were over 20,000 Jews slaughtered by the Greco-Syrian population in Caesarea. **Caesarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants.** Florus captured any Jews who fled from Caesarea and sent them to the galley ships. [*Wars* 2.457 (2.18.1)]. And the news of this rebellion had already reached Cestius Gallus in Syria, and he was preparing his troops for the march to Jerusalem [*Wars* 2.454-455 (2.17.10) and *Life* 5-6 and 22-24].

Sep - 66 – Jewish Response to Caesarea Massacre. This wipe out of the whole Jewish community at Caesarea enraged the Jewish people and provoked them to retaliatory action. The Jews quickly assembled militia bands and attacked numerous villages of the Syrians and neighboring cities, killing the Greek-Syrian residents of any cities where the Gentiles were in the minority: such as Philadelphia, Sebonitis, Gerasa, **Pella**, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Gaulonitis, Kedasa, Ptolemais, Gaba, Caesarea, Sabaste/Samaria, Askelon, Anthedon, Gaza, and Cyprus. Note that **Pella** was one of the cities attacked by these Zealot bands. This attack occurred in AD 66 after the Christians had supposedly already fled there (AD 62-64). But the true Christians were raptured out of there two or three months before this massacre, so there were no true Christians left there in Pella by the time of this attack. There were armies encircling cities all over Palestine at this time.

Sep - 66 – The Syrians retaliated and killed all the Jewish inhabitants within their cities. Immediately upon the outbreak of the rebellion, Gentile communities loyal to Rome began plundering, evicting or slaughtering their Jewish inhabitants. Non-Jewish citizens of Scythopolis killed 13,000 of their Jewish inhabitants [*Wars* 2.18.3 (2.466ff)]. There was further violence against Jewish communities in Askelon, Ptolemais, Tyre and other cities which had large Jewish communities [*Wars* 2.12.5 (2.447-480)]. There was a riot between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria [*Wars* 2.18.7 (2.487ff)]. The Jewish population of Damascus (numbering 10,000) were rounded up and killed. Josephus says it was common in those days to see cities filled with dead bodies lying unburied, and whole provinces full of such calamities [*Wars* 2.458-465 (2.18.1-2)]. Some Syrian cities, such as Antioch, Sidon, and Apamia, spared their Jewish inhabitants. In the retaliatory raids by the Syrians against the Jews, Josephus mentions some of the largest Jewish casualties: (*Wars* 2.18.5-11)

Scythopolis (13,000 Jews) [*Wars* 2.18.3 (2.466ff)]

Askelon (2500 Jews) (*Wars* 3.1.2-3, 15-28)

Ptolemais (2000 Jews plus many captured) (*Wars* 2.12.5 447-480)

Tyre (a great number killed and imprisoned) (*Wars* 2.12.5 447-480)

Hippos (a great number killed and imprisoned)

Gadara (a great number killed and imprisoned)

Alexandria (50,000 killed, “overflowed with blood”) cf. Rev 14:20 (*Wars* 2.18.7 487ff)

Damascus (10,000 killed “in one hour’s time”) – *Wars* 2.561 (2.20.2)

Joppa (8400 killed)

Asamon (2000 killed)

Early Efforts to Crush the Rebellion Failed – Cestius Was Defeated (AD 66)

Sep - 66 – Agrippa II was in Antioch by this time discussing the situation with Cestius Gallus, who was already assembling his troops, preparing to march them to Ptolemais. [*Wars* 2.18.6 (2.481)]

Oct 15-16, 66 – Cestius Gallus arrived in Ptolemais. He took the Twelfth Legion from Antioch, along with Agrippa's troops and other auxiliaries and marched to Ptolemais [*Wars* 2.18.9]. His troops supposedly numbered more than 35 thousand. **(Elul 26-27, Oct 15-16, 66)**

Oct 17, 66 – After reaching Ptolemais, Cestius sent a detachment to burn and plunder the nearby city of **Chabulon** (Zebulon) and its surrounding villages in Galilee. Lost 2000 soldiers to a Jewish counter-attack. [*Wars* 2.499-506 (2.18.9)] **(Elul 28, Oct 17, AD 66)**

Oct 20-26, 66 – Cestius went to Caesarea, while his army took **Joppa** (8400 Jewish casualties), as well as the nearby toparchy of **Narbatene**, where his soldiers killed, plundered and burned their fortifications. [*Wars* 2.507-509 (2.18.10)] Then he sent forces back into **Galilee** [*Wars* 2.18.11]. **(Tishri 2-8, Oct 20-26, AD 66)**

Nov 2-9, 66 – Zealots assembled in Jerusalem during Sukkot (Fall Festival of Booths) to organize their government and prepare for Cestius' imminent attack.

Nov 2-9, 66 – Did Eleazar function as High Priest at this Yom Kippur? Martin Hengel mentions the possibility that **Eleazar** may have performed the High Priestly function during Yom Kippur in the Fall of AD 66, since he was in control of the Temple complex at that time, and was the son of one of the High Priests (Ananias b. Nedebaeus), and was the Sagan (Captain) of the Temple Guard at the time of the revolt (*The Zealots*, p. 360, note 240). If true, this would be just one more example of a legion of occasions when Eleazar grievously violated the Law and set himself up in the temple as being above Moses and God (a very "lawless" thing to do -- cf. 2 Thess. 2 and the "man of lawlessness").

Eleazar probably did not recognize Agrippa's high priest appointments as having any validity after he took control of the Temple, so it is possible that Eleazar may have performed the High Priestly function at the Yom Kippur in AD 66. However, based on what Josephus says about the current high priest at this time (Matthias), it does not seem likely that Eleazar would distract himself with the high priestly duties, since he was fully engaged in maintaining control of the Temple. Josephus also seems to indicate that the High Priest and most other priests either remained neutral or supportive of the Zealot cause and of Eleazar's control of the temple. So Eleazar would not have interfered with the priests as long as they were not a threat to him.

Josephus tells us that the "official" high priest at this time, who had been appointed by Agrippa II in AD 64, was **Matthias b. Theophilus**. He was evidently appointed just before the Neronian persecution broke out, and remained in office throughout the persecution and the outbreak of the war:

[Agrippa II] also deprived Jesus, the son of Gamaliel, of the high priesthood, and gave it to **Matthias the son of Theophilus**, under whom the Jews' war with the Romans took its beginning. [*Antiq* 20.223 (20.9.7)]

If Eleazar had lawlessly taken over the High Priestly functions at Yom Kippur, it would make us wonder how Matthias could have remained High Priest after the rebellion began in AD 66. Josephus seems to indicate in the following references that Matthias was still serving as High Priest at the time Simon b. Giora was brought into the city to save them from John of Gischala in the Spring of AD 69, and even a year later when the three factions were fighting inside Jerusalem (Winter 70).

War 4:573 (4.9.11) Now it was God who turned their opinions to the worst advice, and thence they devised such a remedy to get themselves free, as was worse than the disease itself. Accordingly, in order to overthrow John [of Gischala], they determined to admit Simon [b. Giora], and earnestly to desire the introduction of a second tyrant into the city:

War 4:574 (4.9.11) which resolution they brought to perfection, and sent **Matthias the high priest**, to beseech this Simon [b. Giora] to come into them, of whom they had so often been afraid. Those also that had fled from the zealots in Jerusalem joined in this request to him, out of the desire they had of preserving their houses and their effects.

War 4:577 ¶ (4.9.12) And thus did Simon [b. Giora] get possession of Jerusalem, **in the third year of the war, in the month Xanthicus [Nisan, April-May]**; whereupon John [of Gischala], with his multitude of zealots, as being both prohibited from coming out of the temple, and having

lost their power in the city (for Simon and his party had plundered them of what they had) were in despair of deliverance.

War 5:527 ¶ (5.13.1) Accordingly Simon would not allow **Matthias**, by whose means he got possession of the city, to go off without torment. This **Matthias was the son of Boethus**, and was **one of the high priests**, one that had been very faithful to the people, and in great esteem with them:

War 5:528 (5.13.1) he, when the multitude were distressed by the zealots among whom John was numbered, persuaded the people to admit this Simon to come in to assist them, while he had made no terms with him, nor expected anything that was evil from him.

War 5:529 (5.13.1) But when Simon was come in, and had gotten the city under his power, he esteemed him that had advised them to admit him as his enemy equally with the rest, as looking upon that advice as a piece of his simplicity only:

War 5:530 (5.13.1) so he had him then brought before him, and condemned to die for being on the side of the Romans, without giving him leave to make his defense. He condemned also **his three sons** to die with him: for as to **the fourth**, he prevented him, by running away to Titus before. And when he begged for this, that he might be slain before his sons, and that as a favor, on account that he had procured the gates of the city to be opened to him, he gave order that he should be slain the last of them all:

War 6:111 ¶ (6.2.2) As Josephus spoke these words with groans, and tears in his eyes, his voice was intercepted by sobs.

War 6:112 (6.2.2) However, the Romans could not but pity the affliction he was under, and wonder at his conduct. But for John, and those that were with him, they were but the more exasperated against the Romans on this account, and were desirous to get Josephus also into their power;

War 6:113 (6.2.2) yet did that discourse influence a great many of the better sort; and truly some of them were so afraid of the guards sent by the seditious, that they tarried where they were, but still were satisfied that both they and the city were doomed to destruction. Some also there were who, watching for a proper opportunity when they might quietly get away, fled to the Romans,

War 6:114 (6.2.2) of whom were the high priests Joseph and Jesus, and of the sons of high priests three, whose father was Ishmael, who was beheaded in Cyrena, and four sons of Matthias, as also one son of the other **Matthias**, who ran away [to the Romans] after his father's death, and whose father was slain by Simon, the son of Gioras, with three of his sons, as I have already related; many also of the other nobility went over to the Romans, together with the high priests.

Josephus thus indicates that Matthias was killed by Simon b. Giora in AD 70. Soon after that the Zealots appointed **Phannias [or Phanas] b. Samuel** as the next High Priest:

Antiq. 20:227 (20.10.1) Accordingly, the number of all the high priests from Aaron, of whom we have spoken already as of the first of them, until **Phanas [Phannias]**, who was made high priest **during the war** by the seditious, was eighty-three;

War 4:155 (4.3.8) Hereupon they sent for one of the pontifical tribes, which is called Eniachim, and cast lots which of it should be the high priest. By fortune, the lot so fell as to demonstrate their iniquity after the plainest manner, for it fell upon one whose name was **Phannias, the son of Samuel**, of the village Aphtha. He was a man not only unworthy of the high priesthood, but that did not well know what the high priesthood was; such a mere rustic was he!

It seems clear that there were no other intervening high priests between the death of Matthias and the selection of Phannias, since Josephus mentions twenty-eight high priests as having served from Herod's reign until the end of the Temple [cf. *Antiq* 20.223-251 (20.9.7 – 20.10.1)], leaving no room for any others between Matthias and Phannias [*Antiq* 20.250 (20.10.5)]. This means that Phannias was

selected not long after the death of Matthias sometime early in AD 70. Furthermore, Josephus points out that this selection of Phannias as High Priest by casting lots, was a lawless thing to do [*Wars* 4.154 (4.3.7)], and ended up profaning the noble office of High Priest by selecting someone untrained and unqualified for the office [*Wars* 4.155-157 (4.3.8)]. For more on this, see VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas*, pp. 487-490.

Nov 3 – Cestius sent the twelfth legion into Galilee against the strongest fortress there (**Sepphoris**), which surprisingly accepted them peacefully. However, the Zealots fled from the city to the hills and were soon found by the Romans, who killed two thousand of them in the nearby **Asamon** mountains [*Wars* 2.510-512 (2.18.11)].
(Tishri 9-16, Oct 27–Nov 3, AD 66)

Nov 4-5 – The twelfth legion returned to Caesarea and regrouped with the rest of the army to march against **Antipatris**, where they dispersed the Zealot forces holding the tower of **Aphek**. When the rebels fled from there, he burned and plundered it, then moved on to **Lydda**. Arriving at Lydda, the city was virtually unguarded. Most of the men of the place had gone up to Jerusalem for the feast of Sukkot (*Wars* 2.19.1).
(Tishri 15-22, Nov 2-9, AD 66)

Nov 7, 66 – Then Cestius moved toward **Judea**, through the pass at Beth-Horon, and camped temporarily at Gabaon (Gibeon), which was not far from Jerusalem. A large force of Zealots who were at Jerusalem for the festival of Sukkot (Nov 2-9), left Jerusalem and attacked Cestius at **Gabaon**, killing 515 of his troops while suffering only 22 casualties. (Tishri 20, Nov 7, AD 66) [*Wars* 2.19.2]

Nov 8-10 – Cestius decided to retreat to **Beth-Horon** temporarily to regroup, but their rear guard was attacked all along the way by **Simon b. Giora's forces**. Simon captured a lot of their weapons and supplies. The rebels then placed their troops on the hills surrounding Beth-Horon to prevent Cestius from getting through the pass. [*Wars* 2.513-522 (2.19.1-2)].

Nov 11-13, 66 – While Cestius and Agrippa were camped at Gabaon for three days, Agrippa offered amnesty to the Zealots if they would break off the attack and return their allegiance to Rome, but Agrippa's messengers were attacked, one killed and another wounded (*Wars* 2.19.3). **(Tishri 24-26, Nov 11-13, AD 66)** Yosippon adds a few more details here:

Then Cestius and Agripas sent messengers to Jerusalem to **Elazar ben Ananias** to make peace, but Elazar did not accept: in fact he killed one of the envoys; and Elazar mustered the priests and the army to go forth again to battle against Cestius. [*Sepher Yosippon*, ch. 63]

Nov 14-16 – Cestius then engaged the rebels and chased them back to Jerusalem, where he set up camp on Mount Scopus for three days to collect food from local villages [*Wars* 2.527-528 (2.19.4)]. **(Tishri 27-29, Nov 14-16, AD 66)**

Nov 17, 66 – Cestius began his attack on Jerusalem on the thirtieth day of Hyperberetus (Tisri - Oct-Nov). He chased the rebels out of all the surrounding areas and bottled them up in Jerusalem. He camped at Mt. Scopus for three days (north of the city beyond the third wall). He seized all the corn from the surrounding villages. He entered through the third wall into the northern part of the city called **Bezetha** and burned it. Then he went up into the Upper City with his forces, where the rebel forces were camped. He stationed his troops at the wall of the upper city and camped near the royal palace. [*Wars* 2.528-530 (2.19.4)]

Nov 18-21 – The moderates and pro-Roman Jewish leaders offered to let Cestius come into the upper city, but he hesitated, giving the rebels time to organize their defense, and remove those moderate leaders who had offered to let Cestius into the city. Some of the moderate leaders were killed. Then the Zealots took control of the upper city walls, from which they launched arrows and stones at Cestius' forces, who were nevertheless heavily shielded while trying to undermine the walls.

Nov 22, 66 – Cestius withdrew unexpectedly: After five days of fighting, just as his soldiers were about to topple the wall and set fire to the gate of the Temple, Cestius disengaged and withdrew for some unknown reason. He was on the threshold of taking the City, and could have done it if he had only pressed the attack at that very time, because the rebels were not prepared to defend it. Josephus said that Cestius could have put an end to the war that very day, but for some unknown reason, he withdrew, and headed back toward Syria. The weather had turned colder, and winter was about to arrive. Cestius may have wanted to winter the troops in Caesarea or Antioch, and then return in the Spring. [*Wars* 2.528-540 (2.19.4-7)] (**Heshvan 5, Nov 22, AD 66**)

Nov 23-24, 66 – Cestius retreated to Scopus first, then onward to **Gabaon**, being constantly attacked on his flanks and at the rear by the rebel forces. The Zealot forces were able to capture most of his baggage and supplies. Cestius camped at Gabaon for two days to plan his next move. (**Heshvan 6-7, Nov 23-24, AD 66**)

Nov 25, 66 – Cestius headed toward the Beth-Horon pass, but was hemmed in by the Zealot forces on the hills surrounding it. [*Wars* 2.540-555 (2.19.7-9)] The only thing that saved him from a total annihilation was nightfall. They left 400 men behind to appear as if they were still camped there, while the rest of the force fled in the night. This occurred on the **eighth day of Dius**. (**Heshvan 8, Nov 25, AD 66**)

Nov 26-27, 66 – When the Zealots discovered the trick the next morning, they quickly overpowered and killed the remaining 400 Roman soldiers, and pursued the Roman force which was now camped at Antipatris. In their haste to flee, the Romans left behind most of their heavy weaponry, war engines, and supplies. The Zealots plundered it all, and went “running and singing” back to Jerusalem believing this victory was a sign that God was going to deliver them from the Roman yoke. The Romans suffered heavy casualties on this retreat: 5300 soldiers, including 480 cavalry. [*Wars* 2.554-555 (2.19.9) and *Wars* 3.9 (3.2.1)] [*Wars* 2.555 (2.19.9)] (**Heshvan 9-10, Nov 26-27, AD 66**)

Josephus commented on this **humiliating defeat** of Cestius:

*"After this **catastrophe** had befallen Cestius, many of the distinguished Jews abandoned the city like swimmers from a sinking ship." [Wars 2.556 (2.20.1)]*

*"This **reverse** of Cestius proved disastrous to our whole nation; for those who were bent on war were thereby still more elated and, having once **defeated** the Romans, hoped to continue victorious to the end." (Life 5-6, 22-24)*

Two Roman historians also recorded the defeat of Cestius: (1) Tacitus, *The Histories* V, and (2) Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, Vespasian 4.

Nov 66 – The peace-loving folks swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink. [Wars 2.556 (2.20.1)] The moderates knew that it was now only a matter of time before the Roman war engine would return in full force. They fled to the hills [Wars 2.556 (2.20.1), see also Life 5-6, and Life 22-24]. Anyone who stayed in Jerusalem and Judea after this was begging for trouble. It was now evident to all that there was no way to avert a full-scale military response from Rome.

Conclusion

The Zealot rebellion had now moved beyond the point of minimal consequence. The next time they see the Roman legions enter their territory, it will be a desperate struggle for survival. The Zealots asked for it, and the Romans gave it to them. Nero sent one of his most experienced generals to crush the rebellion and restore Roman control of the eastern Mediterranean. We will look at Vespasian's campaign next time.

That will wrap it up for this session. Thanks so much for listening.

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