

The War Began (AD 66)

War Chronology – Part 4

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- April 20, 2014

Opening Remarks:

- A. Thanks for joining me here for another Then and Now podcast where we study the Bible and History from a full preterist perspective.
- B. Last time we looked 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, the Zealot forces were emboldened and much better equipped with men, weapons, supplies, and funds, which enabled them to survive another four years until Jerusalem finally fell in the summer of AD 70.
- C. This time we will continue looking at the chronology of the war after Cestius was defeated. We will look at the efforts of the Zealots in Jerusalem to organize their new government and prepare for the upcoming attack of the Romans. When Nero heard about the defeat of Cestius, he immediately dispatched Vespasian to even the score. Vespasian began his campaign in Galilee.
- D. Before we get into all that, let's ask our Heavenly Father's blessing on our study:

Lord of the Angelic Hosts, Whose glory fills the heavens: Our hearts grieve at this time of year when we remember how our sins nailed Your Son to the Cross. *How can it be that Thou My God should die for me? Amazing love* for such sinful and unworthy creatures. We exalt You and adore You for pouring out Your Mercy, Grace, and Infinite Love upon us. How glorious it must have been when Your Son rose up from the grave to prove that He had conquered Death and Hades for all ages to come. We can do nothing but throw all our hope and affections upon Him. He is worthy to be praised, and exalted above the heavens, and glorified forever with You in Your Eternal Kingdom. Be with us in this study and help us understand Your Word better, so that we can teach it faithfully to others. We pray this in the Name of the Spotless Passover Lamb who died for us, was raised on the third day, then ascended, and now reigns forever at Your side. Amen.

Rome and Judea Prepared for War (Winter 66-67)

Dec - 66 – Cestius immediately dispatched messengers to Nero. After his humiliating defeat by the Zealots at the pass of Beth-Horon, Cestius sent swift messengers to Nero to inform him of the worsening rebellion in Judea and to ask for reinforcements (*Wars* 2.19.5-9 and *Life* 5-6, 22-24). Nero was in Greece at the time with Vespasian as his bodyguard. As soon as Nero heard the bad news, he dispatched Vespasian and Titus to settle the score. But it would take some time over the winter months for Vespasian and Titus to assemble their troops. This delay gave the Zealots more time to get better organized for the coming war, but it also gave the Romans plenty of time to prepare for their attack in the Spring.

Dec 66 – Zealot leaders immediately began organizing their government and selecting leaders for the defense of the country during the winter (Dec 66–Mar 67). It was evidently at this time that they selected the various **governors** (or generals) to oversee the **seven regions** of Palestine [*Wars* 2.20.3-4 (2.562ff) and *Wars* 3.3.5 (3.54)]. According to Goldberg (<http://josephus.org/warChronology3.htm>), the leaders who devastated Cestius Gallus' forces joined with the existing "Sanhedrin" (or "assembly") to form a new government and make preparations for the war [*Life* 12, 61 and 38, 190; and *Wars* 2.562ff (2.20.3)]. It appears that the Sanhedrin, largely composed of moderates, were somehow involved in approving these governors. The president of the Sanhedrin at this time was supposedly **Simon b. Gamaliel**, son of the same Gamaliel who taught Apostle Paul. His two main associates in the leadership of the Sanhedrin were **Ananus II** and **Joseph b. Gorion**. Josephus says nothing about the role (if any) that the current High Priest, **Matthias b. Theophilus**, played in these deliberations, but he does say that **Simon b. Gamaliel** was very much involved in those proceedings [*Life* 38, 190]. Goldberg thinks that some of the Zealot leaders involved in those deliberations with the Sanhedrin may have included: relatives of Monobazus of Adiabene, Niger the Perean, Silas the Babylonian, and Simon b. Gioras. [*Wars* 2.520 (2.19.2)]. Goldberg notes that all of these named individuals were dead by the time Josephus wrote the *Wars* (AD 78), so the others who were involved who were not named by Josephus, were probably still alive. They could have been friends and relatives of Josephus whose identity he wished to conceal, perhaps also because he wished to conceal his own involvement with them.

That Sanhedrin or "assembly" appointed **Joseph b. Gorion** and **Ananus b. Ananus** as commanders of Jerusalem, with the obligation to raise the walls higher. But eventually, when the new government needed funds, the rich and powerful **Eleazar b. Simon** (or Eleazar b. Ananias?) was able to trade the much-needed funds for control of the city. [*Wars* 2.562ff (2.20.3)]. This Joseph b. Gorion is not mentioned again anywhere else in Josephus' writings, but there is a reference in the Talmud to Nakdimon b. Gurion who was one of the three wealthy men who supplied Jerusalem with food and other things during the war. Joseph and Nakdimon could have been brothers. I found Goldberg's observations on the identity the revolutionary leadership intriguing:

What Josephus doesn't tell us is the names of the people who appointed the new generals, nor why those chosen arrived at those positions. ... likely is it that Josephus did not want to name any of his Jerusalem companions, many of whom he grew up with, and so only identified non-Jerusalemites. And other than the Adiabeneans, the men he named were all dead at the time he wrote the *War* (AD 78); perhaps other early leaders were not. [<http://josephus.org/warChronology3.htm>]

The Zealot leaders sent emissaries to all the Jewish communities outside Palestine, seeking reinforcements and supplies for the war effort. Some reinforcements came from Adiabene and Babylon. According to Josephus, they appointed nine or ten governors (generals or commanders) over the seven regions of Palestine: [*Wars* 2.562ff (2.20.3-4) and *Wars* 3.54 (3.3.5)]. However, later he admitted in his autobiography (*Life* 29) that two other priests (Joazer and Judas) were assigned to Galilee along with him, making a total of eleven or twelve commanders over the seven regions. And there may have been more that he does not mention.

1. *Jerusalem* - **Joseph b. Gorion** and **Ananus II** (who killed James 4 years earlier, for which he was deposed from the High Priesthood by Agrippa II, which explains why he opposed Agrippa in the war). Eventually Joseph and Ananus were replaced by Eleazar b. Simon (b. Ananias?)
2. *Idumaea* - **Jesus b. Sapphias** and **Eleazar b. Ananias**, with the current governor, Niger the Perean, instructed to carry out their orders.
3. *Jericho* (E. Judea) - **Joseph b. Simon**
4. *Peraea* - **Manasseh** (both Yosippon and Hegesippus agree with this)
5. *N.W. Judea* (i.e. Thamna, Lydda, Joppa, Emmaus) - **John the Essene** (cf. *Wars* 2:567 2.20.4) and 3.11.19). cf. Hegesippus 3.3
6. *N.E. Judea* (i.e. Gophnitica and Acrabattene) - **John b. Matthias** (or son of Ananias acc. to Pseudo-Hegesippus). Simon b. Giora may have been involved here also. cf. *Wars* 2.652 (2.22.2) and 4.504 (4.9.3), and Martin Goodman, *Ruling Class of Judaea*, pp. 163, 202ff.
7. *Far North* (i.e. two Galilees and Gamla) - **Josephus b. Matthias** (with two priests, **Joazar** and **Judas**, underneath him. *Life* 29)

Curiously, *Yosippon* has a little different account of the leaders who were selected at this time:

When the Jews heard these things, they chose three experienced warriors as generals: **Joseph ben Gurion**, **Anani** the High Priest, and **Elazar** his son, appointing them over the land and dividing among them the land of Judah by lot, and they gave them troops in support. The third of the land that fell by lot to **Joseph ben Gurion**, for he had been anointed as war leader, included all the territory of Naphtali and the ridge of Galil and beyond. The second lot, Jerusalem and all her environs, went to **Anani** the High Priest, [his task] to strengthen the walls and prepare for battle against Vespasianus. The third lot, all the territory of Edom from Elia unto Yam Suf, went to **Elazar ben Anani the priest** and with him **Yehoshua**. The rest of the land from Jericho unto Gilad towards the Euphrates River and across the Euphrates all the land of Aram Naharaim went by lot to **Menasseh**. They set the rest of the **nobles of Judah** and the **priests** over the fortified cities from the boundaries of Jerusalem towards Egypt. [*Sepher Yosippon*, ch. 65]

Note that neither **Niger the Perean** or **John the Essene** are mentioned by *Yosippon*. He says that **Joseph b. Gurion** was "anointed as war leader" and appointed to oversee the northern region of Naphtali and Galilee. I am not quite sure what to make of these differences between *Yosippon* and Josephus. It could mean that the account of Josephus is wrong, or that *Yosippon* is wrong, or that both are speaking of Josephus as the commander of Galilee.

It is also interesting that Josephus refers to **John the Essene** as receiving command of NW Judea. He was supposedly killed soon afterwards in the first Zealot attack on Askalon [*Wars* 3.19 (3.3.2.2)]. If he was made the governor over NW Judea at the war council [*Wars* 2.567], that would mean that the war council occurred before

the attack on Askelon. But that does not seem to fit the statements of Josephus in other places where he implies that the attacks on Askelon occurred immediately after their defeat of Cestius and before the war council in Jerusalem during the winter [Wars 3.9 (3.2.1)]. So, this needs some more study. This is why Yosippon's account [Yosippon, ch. 65] may be important for us to compare with Josephus, along with Hegesippus.

Goldberg (www.josephus.org) thinks the two Askelon attacks came after the war council in Jerusalem. That makes the most sense. This is not the first time Josephus scrambled the order of events. So we will assume that is the correct sequence. This means that the attacks on Askelon came after the war council. That allows **John the Essene** to be appointed governor of NW Judea at the war council [Wars 2.567], and then be killed soon afterwards in the attack on Askelon during the winter of 66-67 [Wars 3.19 (3.3.2.2)], which was probably their first military operation after the war council.

Winter 66-67 – Josephus was sent to Galilee (Dec. 66 or Jan. 67) to begin war preparations there. He was only 29 years old at the time of his appointment to this position of command over the Galilean region.

Winter 66-67 – The Zealot forces marched swiftly to Askelon not long after their defeat of Cestius, and attempted to subjugate it, so that the Roman garrison there would not be a thorn in their side later. But it backfired on them. Yosippon places this attack on Askelon after the winter war council in Jerusalem (Yosippon, ch. 65). After defeating Cestius, the Zealots believed they were invincible, and had God on their side. But they were no match for the well-armed and well-trained Roman footmen and horsemen, and therefore suffered heavy losses (supposedly ten thousand), including two of their three main leaders (**John the Essene** and **Silas of Babylon**) [Wars 3.19 (3.3.2.2)].

Winter 66-67 – Not long afterwards, the Zealots attacked Askelon a second time, with similar devastating results (eight thousand more slain). The main Zealot leader (**Niger the Perean**) was trapped in the tower of Bezedel, to which the Romans set fire. They assumed Niger had died in the fire, but he had jumped down from the tower into a subterranean cave. There he was found alive three days later by the Zealots, and was thought to have been "preserved by God's providence to be their commander **for the time [about] to come**" (Gk. *eis ta mellonta*) [Wars 3.27-28 (3.2.3); cf. Wars 3.9-11 (3.2.1)]. However, that messianic hope never materialized. He was such a brilliant strategist and valiant warrior that Eleazar and his followers in the Temple envied him and feared he would take over their leadership. So, in the internecine strife that broke out in the city a year or so later in AD 68, Eleazar and his followers found an excuse to eliminate Niger from being a rival leader [Wars 4:359 (4.6.1)].

Winter 66-67 – During the winter all the newly appointed generals were busy fortifying the walls of their fortresses, gathering men, supplies and weaponry, and training their recruits how to fight the Romans [Wars 2.647 (2.22.1)]. Josephus was busily engaged in those kinds of activities in Galilee at this time.

Winter 66-67 – Were the Eighteen Benedictions developed at this time? As we noted earlier (Aug 66), Martin Hengel thinks the Eighteen Benedictions were developed earlier, and were the basis for Eleazar's decision to stop the daily sacrifices on behalf of all Gentiles in Aug 66 [Hengel, *The Zealots*, p. 359]. However, the Jewish historian, Graetz, thinks that the **Eighteen Benedictions** were not made obligatory until the winter of 66-67, and forced into law by Eleazar b. Ananias at a synod held in his personal residence [Graetz, vol. 2, p. 194]. Graetz says a couple of times that it was **Eleazar b. Ananias** "who gave the first impetus to the mighty struggle" (Graetz, vol. 2, pp. 195 and 189). The fundamental purpose behind the *Eighteen Benedictions*, according to Graetz, was "nothing short of a **total separation**, or the erection of an **insurmountable barrier**, between **Judaeans and heathens**. Judaeans were forbidden to learn the language of the heathens, to accept gifts from them for the temple, and even to **buy wine, oil, bread, and other food from them**. These decrees became known under the caption of Eighteen Benedictions" (Graetz, vol. 2, p. 194). Notice that last prohibition (no buying from Gentiles). It was designed to keep their coinage from getting into the hands of Gentiles, and to prevent Judeans from any commercial dealings with the Gentiles. **No buying and selling** with the Gentiles.

Dec - 66 – Judean citizens forbidden to buy anything from Gentiles. It is no surprise that **Eleazar b. Ananias** was directly involved in initiating and enforcing this prohibition. We might also note that in order to enforce such an order, the Zealots would already have needed to mint their own coinage with which to buy and sell in Judea. Notice what Graetz says in his history about this prohibition from buying from Gentiles:

After Cestius' defeat or flight, the animosity of the heathens against the Judaeans became even more violent. They banded together and murdered their Judaeans neighbors, men, women, and children without mercy. The Judaeans patriots retaliated on their heathen neighbors whenever possible. A desperate race-war broke out between the Judaeans and the heathen population of Palestine and the neighboring countries. Since all these nationalities, Romans, Greeks, Syrians, and even Alexandrians made the emperor's cause their own, the ultra-Zealots believed themselves justified in embracing all heathens in their hatred of Rome. The school of Shammai therefore promulgated a law which aimed at nothing short of a total separation, or the erection of an insurmountable barrier, between Judaeans and heathens. **Judaeans were forbidden to learn the language of the heathens, to accept gifts from them for the temple, and even to buy wine, oil, bread, and other food from them.** These decrees became known under the caption of "Eighteen Things." Religious rigorism and political zealotism went hand in hand in that stirring period. The politically and religiously moderate Hillelites, however, were not in accord with these measures of separation. When the Synod was called together, the Zealots lorded it with a high hand. Armed guards were stationed at the doors, with instructions to make short shrift of the Hillelites. The Shammaites succeeded in carrying their point by force. The meeting of the Synod took place in

the residence of **Eleazar ben Ananias (ben Hezekiah), the leader of the Zealots**. [H. Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, Fifth Edition, 1937. Vol. 2, p. 194]

Graetz also stated that this same **Eleazar b. Ananias** was the very one who initiated the war effort. He says that "Eleazar ben Ananias ... gave the first impetus to the mighty struggle..." This confirms what we have seen from Yosippon, Hegesippus, and Josephus as well. All fingers point to Eleazar b. Ananias as the prime instigator of the rebellion. [H. Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, Fifth Edition, 1937. Vol. 2, p. 195]

Winter 66-67 – There were more **Signs and Omens** which foretold doom and destruction. The moderates were in **mourning** over what they saw coming. Josephus says, "...the moderate sort were **exceedingly sad**; and a great many there were who, out of the prospects they had of the calamities that were coming upon them, **made great lamentations**. There were also **such omens observed as were understood to be forerunners of evils**, by such as loved peace, but were by those that kindled the war interpreted so as to suit their own inclinations; and the very state of the city, even before the Romans [under Vespasian] came against it, was that of **a place doomed to destruction**." [*Wars* 2.649-650 (2.22.1)] Josephus does not tell us what those omens were. We can only speculate. But Jesus had predicted these very kinds of things in His Olivet Discourse: "terrors and great signs from heaven" (Luke 21:11).

Nero Sent Vespasian -- Zealots Prepared for War (Winter 66-67)

Winter 66-67 – **Nero was in Achaia (Greece)** competing in the games at the time of the revolt. *Wars* 2.558 (2.20.1); 3.1-8 (3.1.1-3) Vespasian and Titus were nearby. The prime sources for Nero's life and reign are Tacitus' *Annals* 12-16, Suetonius' *Life of Nero*, and Dio Cassius' *Roman History* 61-63, written in the early third century. Additional valuable material comes from inscriptions, coinage, papyri, and archaeology.

Vespasian and Titus had traveled along with Nero on his visit to Greece as his protectors and body-guards. When Nero heard about the humiliating defeat of the 12th Legion (under Cestius Gallus) that had occurred just a few weeks before this, he commissioned Vespasian to put down the rebellion, even though Vespasian had been for a short time before that in Nero's disfavor, according to Suetonius, for "either leaving the room during the Emperor's song recitals, or staying and falling asleep." (*The Twelve Caesars*, Vespasian 4). It was in Greece that Vespasian offended the Emperor during one of Nero's recitals. Luckily, Vespasian only incurred banishment from the court. In fear for his life Vespasian fled to a small out-of-the-way township. Meanwhile, the revolt had begun in Judaea, so Nero quickly recalled Vespasian, his most able commander, from banishment, granting him a special command to crush the revolt. Nero suspected the cause of Cestius' defeat was the incompetence of Cestius, so he appointed Vespasian to lead the forces against Judaea (in place of Cestius Gallus). Vespasian was 57 years old at the time, a well-seasoned, experienced, and disciplined veteran.

Winter 66-67 – Vespasian went to Antioch to gather two legions there, while Titus went to Alexandria to fetch the legion there. Over the winter months they assembled their troops and prepared for the war. They would bring the legions together at Ptolemais in the Spring (67). Vespasian sent his oldest son Titus (24 years old) by fast boat to Alexandria in Egypt to fetch the Fifteenth Legion (*XV Apollinaris*) from there [*Wars* 3.8 (3.1.3)] and march them quickly along the coast to Caesarea for the winter, and then on to Ptolemais in early Spring. Meanwhile, Vespasian traveled through Greece to cross the Hellespont near Troas [*Wars* 3.8 (3.1.3)], and then traveled on the major trade routes through Turkey to reach Antioch (the capital of Syria) by February 67, where the fifth and tenth legions, *V Macedonica* and *X Fretensis* (the latter commanded by M. Ulpius Traianus (Trajan), father of the future emperor) would be gathered. Some have suggested (Mills, Jessie E. *Revelation Survey and Research*, pp. 13-15) that as Vespasian traveled with his troops through the cities of Asia that he may have killed any Christians or Jews that he encountered on his way to Antioch. But there is no evidence that any Christians were affected by that. They had already been killed in the Neronian persecution or raptured by that time. However, if there were any Jewish communities still left in those cities through which Vespasian passed, they would most likely have been taken captive or killed. In Antioch, Vespasian spent the winter (Dec 66 to Mar 67) meeting with his military advisors (including Agrippa II), planning his battle strategy, and assembling the two legions along with Agrippa's whole army [*Wars* 3.29 (3.2.4)], as well as the other auxiliaries and mercenaries sent from the surrounding nations which were allied with Rome. [*Wars* 3.64-69 (3.5.2)] In the Spring (AD 67), Vespasian then marched those assembled forces to Ptolemais to meet Titus' forces there. This was a massive fighting force of almost 60,000 soldiers. [*Wars* 3.8 (3.1.3); *Wars* 3.29 (3.2.4); and *Wars* 3.64-69 (3.5.2)]

Romans Attack Galilee First (AD 67)

Mar 67 – Vespasian assembles his army at Armageddon. Titus brought the fifteenth legion from Alexandria. Vespasian brought the fifth and tenth legions from Antioch. They assembled their forces in Ptolemais, which was now 60,000 strong (three legions plus Agrippa's forces, auxiliaries and mercenaries). And it was assembled and organized for attack in Ptolemais, the coastal city on the edge of the Plain of Megiddo (Heb. Har-Mageddon). The Romans began their assault upon the Jewish rebels from their camp near Armageddon! The strategy of Vespasian was to eliminate all of the rebel forces from the Galilean region, and push them all toward Jerusalem.

May 67 – Vespasian began military operations in Galilee. Gadara is attacked and falls right away. The Sea of Galilee was turned into a pool of blood. Josephus and his forces retreat to Jotapata, where he held out for 47 days. Just as the Romans were about to break through, Josephus and the other leaders join in a mutual death pact. However, Josephus was somehow fortunate enough to be the last man standing, so he decided not to kill himself, and was thus taken alive.

NOTE: I will provide more details in coming sessions about the activities of Josephus in his struggle against Vespasian there in Galilee. There is a lot of good information about this already available in Gary Goldberg's excellent *War Chronology* on the Josephus website (www.josephus.org). Since there were some things happening at that time which will help us interpret the book of Revelation, we will hit some of the highlights of that here in our war chronology.

We will also deal with the activities of the Zealots in Jerusalem while Vespasian was attacking Galilee. This was a very significant period which shows several fulfillments of Jesus' predictions in the Olivet Discourse, as well as some of the Old Testament prophecies. The statements about the massive bloodshed there in Galilee when Jotapota fell and Josephus was captured, definitely resemble some of the predictions in the book of Revelation about blood flowing in the rivers and lakes, and dead bodies floating down the Jordan river all the way to the Dead Sea. All of Josephus' descriptions of this resembles statements in both the Olivet Discourse and the Apocalypse. A summary of Vespasian's Galilean campaign can be found at the Josephus website, where there are a lot more details about this part of Vespasian's activities in Galilee: <http://josephus.org/FlJosephus2/warChronology5Pg2.htm>

Terror Tactics

Martin Goodman says in *The Ruling Class of Judaea*: "...the Roman commander surely knew that Jerusalem's walls would be exceptionally difficult to breach. Any technique that could avoid a direct assault with the danger of the loss of thousands of soldiers must be avoided. So he, like Cestius Gallus before him, chose a strategy of terror." (p. 182) Thus Vespasian's first strategic goal became the subjugation of Galilee. Josephus' men refused to face the combined legions in the field; as a result, their activities in Galilee were purely defensive. The cities Josephus had fortified waited their turn for Vespasian's army to come to them; but several of them gave formidable resistance that infuriated the Roman soldiers.

Aug - 67 – Josephus was captured by Vespasian at the battle of Jotapata, and held in chains. He was captured under extraordinary circumstances, after a siege of forty-seven days. When brought before Vespasian and Titus, Josephus predicted that Vespasian would become emperor. Vespasian viewed this as nonsense, but his life was spared to see if this prediction would ever materialize. He spent the next two years in chains in the Roman camp, during which he wrote a lot of notes about the war, which he used after the war to compose his *Wars* (AD 78) and *Antiquities* (AD 93). Josephus was used as a hostage at first, and then later as an interpreter, and a voice to urge the Zealots to surrender and quit the rebellion. In AD 69, after four emperors died in quick succession (Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitellius), and Vespasian became Emperor, Josephus was then freed from his chains and adopted into Vespasian's family, the Flavians, and so became Flavius Josephus.

Sept 67 – Vespasian captured a lot of Jewish prisoners there in Galilee, and held them captive at the stadium in Tiberias until they could be dispersed. 1200 of the elderly were put to death. 6000 of the youngest and strongest were sent to Corinth to dig the canal across the Isthmus. The remaining 30,400 captives were sent to Agrippa II to be sold into slavery [*Wars* 3:540 (3.10.10)]. Vespasian continued

crushing all Zealot resistance in Galilee as he prepared for his advance to Jerusalem. He left no pockets of resistance behind him to cause trouble later. He pushed everything ahead of him toward Jerusalem.

Fall - 67 – Armed groups of Jewish bandits and rebels plunder and pillage the moderates and pro-Romans in the Judean countryside to the south, while Vespasian is up north subjugating Galilee. Simon b. Giora was deposed from his command at Acrabattene by Ananus II, so he went to Masada to take refuge with the Sicarii there.

Nov - 67 – Vespasian subjugated all of Galilee. Vespasian then wintered the troops in Caesarea until the Spring (Nov 67–Mar 68).

Nov - 67 – John of Gischala fled from Gischala as it was being defeated by Vespasian, and went to Jerusalem with his band of followers.

Nov 28, AD 67 – Nero initiated the digging project for the canal across the Isthmus of Corinth with some of his soldiers in charge of the 6000 Jewish slaves that Vespasian had sent to him. The digging supposedly lasted 75 days [acc. to Lucian], although some think it lasted a little longer.

Dec - 67 – Nero received word from Rome about a conspiracy, and a mutiny of some of the troops in the West. His extended visit to Greece (over a year) came to an abrupt end, and he hurried back to Rome.

Winter 67-68 – More join the rebel forces in Jerusalem. Refugees from all over Galilee fled to Jerusalem to join the rebels there. Plus more folks from the Judean countryside and even outside Palestine begin arriving in Jerusalem to help in the war effort. They were welcomed by the populace in Jerusalem.

Winter 67-68 – Famine in Rome was worsened by Nero's use of the grain ships to bring in sand for the arena. Nero seems to have been more interested in entertaining the masses in Rome, than he was for feeding them.

Winter 67-68 – Struggles for supremacy between the various Zealot factions in Jerusalem, which left their preparations and defenses for the upcoming siege a lot weaker than they would have been if they had united together against the Romans. Each of the Zealot leaders wanted to get into the top leadership position before they defeated the Romans, so that he could become the new world ruler after the war was over. They burned each other's supplies and killed each other's soldiers. The thought never seemed to cross their mind that their internecine strife and rivalry weakened all of them to the point that they were no match for the Roman forces. They assumed God would not allow the Holy City of Jerusalem to fall into the hands of the Romans.

Jan - 68 – During all this factional fighting, the Zealots under the control of Eleazar killed some of the moderate leaders whom they suspected of being Roman sympathizers. Ananus II and his moderate forces then counter-attacked and bottled up the **Zealots in the inner temple**, and took control of the rest of the city. Ananus II placed a guard of six thousand men around the outer temple porticos to keep the Zealots inside. The injured Zealots retreated back into the temple, defiling those

sacred courts with their blood. [Wars 4.196-201 (4.3.12)] **Ananus II foolishly trusted John of Gischala** to become his ambassador to the Zealots, to try to negotiate with them from a position of strength. But once John got into the temple he betrayed Ananus II and claimed that Ananus had invited Vespasian to take the city, and that Ananus was planning to destroy the Zealot leaders once they came out of the Temple. This was all the Zealots needed to hear. The Zealots immediately dispatched two fast **messengers to the Idumaeans**, begging them to come and help them overpower the moderates, and free them from their temple imprisonment.

Feb - 68 – The Idumaeans came immediately. But they had to camp outside the city, since Ananus II was in control of the city and would not let them in (because he knew why they had come to Jerusalem on such short notice). Ananus had his friend Jesus b. Gamaliel speak to the Idumaeans and try to clear up their big misunderstanding of this whole situation. The Idumaeans had been misinformed. Ananus II was not in league with the Romans, as he had been accused by the Zealots. So the Idumaeans should instead support the cause of Ananus II and help him get rid of the abominable rebels who were polluting the temple and destroying the country. These words of Jesus b. Gamaliel were simply not believed by the Idumaeans. So they remained outside the gates overnight trying to decide what to do.

Feb - 68 – The Idumaeans got into Jerusalem under the cover of night and a terrible thunderstorm. [Wars 4.286-301 (4.4.5-7)] When night fell, there was a frightful storm (with severe lightning and torrential downpours with high winds) which drowned out the noise of some of the Zealots who escaped from the temple and opened a small gate for the Idumaeans to come in. Once they were inside, they killed the guards of Ananus and liberated the Zealots from the temple. Then they turned their wrath upon the two (former) high priests (**Ananus II** and **Jesus b. Gamaliel**) and the citizenry. **Ananus II and Jesus were killed along with about 8500 other soldiers and citizens.** “The whole outer courts of the temple were deluged with blood.” (Cornfeld translation) [Wars 4.313-325 (4.5.1-2)] The corpses of Ananus and Jesus were mocked and cast outside the city without a decent burial. This was a gross abomination by the Zealots. Ananus II was the son of the High Priest (Ananus b. Seth) who had arrested Jesus our Lord and before whom Jesus was tried. Ananus II was appointed High Priest for 3 months (AD 62) during which time he arrested James and some of his companions and put James to death (see under April 62 above). His death here at the hands of the Zealots was not coincidence. It happened just as Jesus said in His Olivet Discourse, *“these are the days of vengeance [when] there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword and will be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot”* (Luke 21:22-24). **Now the Zealots had control of the city**, thanks to the Idumaeans. The moderate party of Ananus II was crushed. Josephus lamented the death of Ananus II, and said that it sealed the doom of the city. [Wars 4.318 (4.5.2)]

Feb - 68 – Once the Zealots had control of the city, they began rounding up all the citizens of Jerusalem whom they suspected of being in sympathy with Ananus II and the moderates. Anyone who would not join them and support them, they arrested,

gave them a mock trial, and then killed them and seized all their property and possessions. By the time they were through, 12,000 citizens had been killed, including most of the young nobility and the eminent Zacharias son of Baris. [*Wars* 4.326-344 (4.5.3-4)] The Idumaeans began to be uncomfortable with all this ruthless and unnecessary bloodshed, and one of the Zealots admitted to them that Ananus II was really not the traitor that the Zealots had accused him of being. Upon hearing this, the Idumaeans then opened the prison doors and released two thousand moderates who had been imprisoned there by the Zealots. Then the Idumaeans left to return to Idumaea. After the Idumaeans left, the Zealots had absolute control of the city, and they immediately took advantage of the opportunity to murder every person whom they suspected of having any opposition to them, including **Gorion b. Joseph** and **Niger the Peraean**. [*Wars* 4.354-365 (4.6.1)] The Zealots became so tyrannical that they trampled on every law and principle of decency. There was no abomination or lawlessness that they refrained from. Lots of people tried to flee the city at this time, but they were killed by the Zealots before they could get away, and **their bodies were left unburied** to putrefy where they had fallen. [*Wars* 4.381-388 (4.6.3)]

Mar - 68 – John of Gischala had now gained much influence among the Zealots through his treachery and intrigue. He now began gathering followers around himself and maneuvering to take over the leadership of the Zealots who were now in control of the city as a result of the help from the Idumaeans. So the Zealots now split into **two factions**, one led by **John of Gischala**, and the other led by **Eleazar b. Ananias** and Zacharias b. Phalek.

Mar 21, 68 – Vespasian and Titus begin their Spring campaign to clear out all the resistance in **Peraea** (east of Judea) on the east side of the Jordan river, western Judea, **Samaria** (to the north of Judea), and **Idumaea** (to the south of Judea), driving everything out of those areas toward Jerusalem. They bottled up the rebels inside Jerusalem. He also believed that once all the rebels fled to Jerusalem they would weaken themselves by internal fighting and make his task a lot easier. He was right. That is exactly what happened.

May - 68 – By the end of Spring (late May), Vespasian had subdued Peraea, western Judea, and Idumaea. All was now set for the siege of Jerusalem. **Then Nero died** (June 9, 68) and instantly everything was put on hold. Vespasian suspended his attack against Jerusalem until he could hear about matters in Rome.

Conclusion

This was a very quick overview of the first five months of the war, showing how the stage was being set for the siege of Jerusalem. Vespasian was crushing all the pockets of resistance and pushing all their refugees toward Jerusalem, where he could bottle them up and more effectively deal with them under siege. Next time we will look at more of the details of his campaign in Galilee, especially in regard to the assault on Jotapata where Josephus was defeated and captured. Josephus spends a lot of words describing all that, so we will look at some of the highlights next time.

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

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