

Put a Stop to Sacrifices (AD 66)

War Chronology – Part 2

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- April 6, 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 began constructing a chronology of the Zealot rebellion and their war with Rome by looking at the role of Eleazar b. Ananias in blowing the shofar and rallying the troops to block Florus' attempt to rob the Temple of its remaining imageless gold coinage. Then he took control of the temple and used it as his fortress throughout the war until just before Titus raised the siege against Jerusalem. We looked at several of the most important events that occurred at the beginning of the war.
- C. This time, we will pick up right after Pentecost when the priests heard the voices of a great multitude in the unseen realm saying "Let us leave this place!" We will look at the actions of Cestius Gallus and Agrippa II in response to the Zealot resistance against Gessius Florus' attempt to get the Temple gold. There were a lot of things happening at this time which set the stage for the war.
- D. Before we get into all that, let's pray:

All-wise and All-mighty Lord, we praise your overruling providence and sovereign control of all the nations. We know that we can trust You to protect us even in troublous times when the world outside is turmoil and confusion. As we study the history of the Zealot rebellion, help us to understand what can happen to Your people when they reject your sovereign rule over them. When men try to gain the whole world, but end up losing their soul, they have gained nothing and lost everything. Your Word reminds us that godliness with contentment is one of the greatest gains we could ever have. May we store up our treasures in heaven, where nothing can ever take it away from us. And help us remember that our most essential citizenship is in heaven, where we will be safe forever. We pray this in the Name of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

In our current studies, we are building a **chronology of the whole war** from start to finish, as well as noticing some of the connections between those events and endtime prophecy (e.g., Matt 24; 2 Thess 2), as well as the **Book of Revelation**.

We noted last time that **Eleazar b. Ananias** was "*the originator*" of the war, and that he may also have been the leading figure on Masada at the end of the war as well. In this session we will see a lot more of his lawless activity, which he was easily able to accomplish because of his control of the Temple fortress.

Here is a brief summary of the significant events that happened 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 these podcasts on the beginning of the revolt:

Events at the Beginning of the Rebellion

- Apr 66** – *Eleazar b. Ananias* blew the horn and took control of the temple
- May 66** – Angelic Armies were seen in the clouds, signaling the Parousia had begun
- June 66** – Voices heard in the Temple indicating the dead were raised out of Hades
- July 66** – New imageless coins were minted with "Year One" stamped on them
- July 66** – Cestius Gallus in Antioch heard about the rebellion, and sent investigator
- July-Aug 66** – Nero left Rome to visit Greece for the games and festivals
- Aug 66** – Josephus returned from Rome just after the rebellion began
- Aug 66** – Agrippa II returned from Alexandria to find the Florus incident and rebellion
- Aug 66** – Agrippa left Jerusalem (went to Antioch) after failing to stop the rebellion
- 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)

The Rebellion Was Now Underway

Causes of the War: Many Christians, Jews, and secular historians have wondered not only why the Jews went to war in the first place, but more especially why they pursued it with such vigor, and to such a bitter end, including the loss of their temple, city of Jerusalem, and the right to continue dwelling in the land. Josephus provides several reasons for their daring attempt to throw off the Roman yoke:

- (1) The Zealot principle [**Fourth Philosophy**] of freedom from taxation and from paying tribute to any foreign government, and that God was therefore totally on their side no matter what they did. The founder of this Fourth Philosophy was Judas of Galilee in AD 6.
- (2) **False prophets** stirred up the belief that this was the time that God would establish His universal reign over all nations (according to the prophets).
- (3) The **signs and wonders** and omens that they saw only strengthened their belief that this was the time when God would enable them to break free from Rome and set up His eternal kingdom.
- (4) Their unequivocal belief that **God was on their side**: John of Gischala said that he "could never fear capture, since the city was God's." [*Wars* 6.98-99 (6.2.1)].
- (5) Class conflict between the rich and poor, as well as political and economic competition between the various rival factions of the priesthood, rabbinate, and aristocracy.
- (6) Ethnic hatred between the Jews and the other Greco-Syrian inhabitants of Palestine.
- (7) The corruption and evil mismanagement of affairs by the Roman procurators, especially the last two, Albinus and Florus.
- (8) But the biggest reason of all was their belief that "*at about that time, one from their country would become ruler of the habitable world*" [*Wars* 6.312-315 (6.5.4)]. So it wasn't just independence from Rome that they wanted. He says there was a certain prophecy about a world ruler who was expected to appear at that time, and take over rulership of the whole world. The Zealots believed that this world ruler would be one of themselves, whichever one of them was finally able to overthrow the Romans. This is why the three Zealot leaders fought so desperately for the top leadership position over the war effort.

Gary Goldberg (from a Jewish perspective) commented on this on his Josephus.org website:

"This manifestly was understood as a prophecy of a Messiah, one appointed by the Lord to do His work on earth. But was it a prophecy of *the* Messiah, the one that would herald the passing of this world and the beginning of the World to Come?

"All we can safely say from Josephus' evidence is that **the revolutionaries expected divine assistance, and probably signs and miracles**, in freeing their country and even taking command of the Roman Empire. The oracle said to them nothing less than the **imminent arrival of a Jewish Empire** to replace it. This is somewhat different from supposing the revolutionaries had eschatological expectations akin to the early Christians.

"Part of the interpretation on this point hinges on the term used for "habitable world," *oikoumene*. This word usually means the Graeco-Roman world, but it could also indeed signify the whole earth; the latter would be a magical happening requiring some new cosmic order. Of significance to Josephus may have been that the term is used by Cyrus in **1 Esdras 2:3** (Septuagint translation) to refer to his own kingdom, and Cyrus is the only foreign ruler to be called a *messiah* (*christ* in the Septuagint). It was a commonplace to reread passages about Cyrus as referring to the contemporary Emperor of Rome, so this may have been the basis for Josephus' interpretation.

"We do not know what oracle Josephus is citing here, although it seems to be one of the **Sibylline Oracles** held at Rome, [since] it is also mentioned by the Roman historians Tacitus (*The Histories*) and Suetonius (*The Twelve Caesars*, the Vespasian section)."

Found at: <http://josephus.org/causesOfWar.htm#messiah>

Comments: Did you notice the Zealot belief that this was the time when God would set up a **political ruler** in Jerusalem who would rule over the whole world? This was the very ideology that had caused the Jews to reject Jesus forty years earlier. They wanted a **fleshly descendant of David** ruling on a **physical throne** from **earthly Jerusalem**. They did not want God or Jesus to be their spiritual king. It was this same lust for an earthly king that originally made Israel reject God's rulership over them and set up King Saul. It was this same earthly kingdom concept which motivated the **Judaizers, Zealots, Ebionites**, and even **Premillennial Dispensationalists** today. *The destruction of Jerusalem was a very effective indication from God on what He thought about that idea.*

Apostle Paul taught that Christ Jesus was the true spiritual ruler of the world, and that he was already putting His enemies down who did not want Him to rule over them. Jesus was about to come and put down the rest of God's enemies, and then give the Kingdom back to God to whom it belongs (1 Cor 15:25-28). Indeed, this very prophecy that the Zealots used to undergird their rebellion, referred instead to the true Messiah Jesus who did establish His eternal kingdom over the whole world at that very time.

It is extremely revealing that one of the four doctrinal errors of the **Ebionites** in **Pella** was this very issue. They believed that a fleshly descendant of David (Jesus or one of his relatives) would set up a physical throne in Jerusalem and rule the world from Jerusalem. They were making the same mistake that the Jews did. Furthermore, it seems that **Papias** was in agreement with this physical kingdom idea, which suggests that he may have been influenced by one of the Ebionite or Nazarean sects in Palestine or Syria.

After the rebellion was launched, the Zealots intensified their efforts of gathering men, weapons, and finances for the revolt. They urged all their sympathizers, not only in Israel, but also in all of the Diaspora to send soldiers, supplies, support, and to join the Zealot cause. The Zealots hired false prophets to deceive their fellow Jews into supporting and joining the rebellion.

Apr-July 66 – Zealots minted new coins at this time? The payments of temple gold to Gessius Florus seriously depleted their supply of imageless coinage. They desperately needed to mint new coins, but that had been prohibited by the Roman government since AD 62. The only way to mint new coinage would be to revolt. Once the Zealots made the decision to revolt, their minting of new coins most likely would have begun soon afterwards. There are coins with the date “Year Five” on them, which would not have been possible if they only started minting coins in December of AD 66 after the defeat of Cestius. Since they could not have minted coins after the Temple was burned in August of 70, this means the fifth year coinage had to be minted before August of 70. Here are the calculations for that:

Apr-Aug 66 (Passover) – Year 1 coinage minted
Apr-Aug 67 (Passover) – Year 2 coinage minted
Apr-Aug 68 (Passover) – Year 3 coinage minted
Apr-Aug 69 (Passover) – Year 4 coinage minted
Apr-Aug 70 (Passover) – Year 5 coinage minted
Aug 70 (Temple Burned)

It is highly unlikely that the minting of new coins began before the revolt broke out in April or May (Passover) of AD 66, which was when Gessius Florus tried to seize the rest of the temple coinage. And in order to have a fifth year of coinage, the minting (or at least the reckoning of when the revolt began) must have begun before August of 66. This means the minting (or at least the reckoning of the beginning of the revolt) must have begun sometime between April and August of AD 66. This seems to be confirmed by the statements of Josephus:

And thus did Simon [b. Giora] get possession of Jerusalem, in the **third year of the war, in the month Xanthicus [Nisan – April-May]...** [*Wars* 4:577 (4.9.12)]

Counting backward two years from this incident in May of 68 implies that they reckoned the war to have begun in the late Spring or early Summer (April or May) of AD 66. They probably took the Roman coins and melted them and re-stamped them. There were thick silver shekel and half-shekel coins labeled “Year One” and so forth. Coins of the fourth and fifth years are extremely rare, since they were minted at a time when the Zealots were divided into three factions, and bottled up in Jerusalem. A lot of refugees had fled the city with gold and silver coins in their stomachs, further depleting the scarce supply of gold and silver near the end of the war. And since Jerusalem was the only place left at the end of the war where they could use their coinage to “buy and sell”, there really was no need to mint a lot of coins which would not have any use outside of Jerusalem (other than perhaps Masada, Machaerus, and Herodium).

The coins of the Zealot rebellion bear the legend, “**Jerusalem the Holy,**” and were the only coins used to pay the Temple tax and purchase sacrifices. This had tremendous propaganda benefits for the revolt, in the same way it had during the Maccabean revolt. They probably could not “**buy or sell**” anything in Israel without using these coins. They certainly could not buy or sell sacrifices at the temple without

them. Furthermore, as Josephus points out, Jerusalem was anything but "The Holy City" at this time, as their coinage claims. The whole city and even the Temple itself was polluted by armies camped inside the city and the shedding of blood. Josephus documents the abomination and laments it.

According to Graetz, the Zealots minted new coins just before the Feast of Booths in September of AD 66 [see Graetz, *Popular History of the Jews*, New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, Fifth Edition, 1937. Vol. 2, p. 190]. However, as we noted above, such a late beginning to the minting (after August) would conflict with the fact that we have fifth year coinage.

The rebels minted their own coins to replace the Roman coinage which had images of Caesar on them. Florus had taken 17 talents. Then he attempted to get the rest of the gold out of the temple, but failed. Agrippa made them pay another 40 talents soon after that to complete their tax deficit. Supplies of imageless coins with which to buy sacrifices must have been running low. The rebel priests under command of Eleazar would have wanted to replenish their supply as soon as possible. It is possible that they began minting right after Gessius Florus left Jerusalem (early May of 66), or as late as very early August after Agrippa II left Jerusalem after failing to stop the revolt. Josephus considered this timeframe (May-August of 66) as being the time when the rebellion began. The Zealots would not have hesitated minting their own coins, not only for temple use, but also for general commercial use ("buying and selling") in Judea and Israel. We will say more about that "buying and selling" idea when we get to the date of December 66 ("Judean citizens forbidden to buy anything from Gentiles").

July - 66 – Cestius Gallus received complaints from both Florus and the Jewish leaders about the disturbances in Caesarea and the brutality of Florus in Jerusalem. So, Cestius sent an emissary, Neapolitanus, to investigate the situation and report back to him. The Jewish people received Neapolitanus warmly with open-arms, and treated him royally. They made it clear that their only complaint was against Florus, and not against Rome itself. However, there was plenty of evidence that a rebellion was forming in Judea, which involved much more than mere complaints against Florus. The Zealots were indeed against all Roman interference in Jewish affairs, especially in taxation and tribute matters. Both Florus and Gallus were aware of this, and therefore were acting in the best interests of Rome. [*Wars* 2.333-335 (2.16.1)]

July or Aug 66 – Nero left Rome and went to Achaia (Greece) to compete in the games. *Wars* 2.558 (2.20.1); 3.1-8 (3.1.1-3) Vespasian and his troops accompanied him as bodyguards. 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. Additional valuable material comes from inscriptions, coinage, papyri, and archaeology. Nero participated in each of the six great festivals in Greece and won hundreds of contests (none of the judges were willing to vote against him). He did not return to Rome until the late Fall of AD 67 (over a year later). This extended presence or visitation of Nero in Greece is a good illustration of the meaning of the Greek word **Parousia**. It does not mean just a one-day event. It means an **extended visit** of weeks, months, or even a year or more, as in this case of Nero. The Greeks referred to Nero's visit as

his parousia. After Nero left Rome and while he was in Greece, there arose another conspiracy against him. That is why he had to hurry back to Rome in late 67.

Aug - 66 – Josephus returned from Rome about this time (sometime between August and September) to find that the “innovations [for war] were already begun.” (Life 17) He had been gone since November of AD 62 (almost four years). He definitely returned before Cestius Gallus attacked Jerusalem (Nov 66). (Life 17-23) He mentions that he was back before Menahem was killed by Eleazar’s forces (Sept 66). He participated in the group of moderates who appealed to Eleazar to restart the Gentile sacrifices again and stop the rebellion (Life 19). Several interpreters note that Josephus was back in Jerusalem by the time the Antonia fortress was captured (on Sept 5, 66, acc. to F. F. Bruce). However, that is not a necessary implication of the statements of Josephus. He explained that he had frequently challenged the rebel priests under the command of Eleazar (son of Ananias) to desist from the war effort, to the point that they were beginning to distrust him and look upon him as an enemy. (Life 18-19) He began to be afraid of them at that point, because they had become strong enough to push Agrippa’s forces back up into Herod’s Palace and capture the Tower of Antonia. (Life 20) He evidently had been living in the upper city with the other aristocratic priests who tried to remain neutral at the time when the rebels were being held in check in the temple by the moderates, Royal Troops, and Loyalists. But when the Sicarii sneaked into the temple and reinforced the rebels, they were able to drive the moderates and Agrippa’s forces up into Herod’s Palace in the upper city and take control of the Tower of Antonia. The rebels were burning and destroying many of the priestly and aristocratic homes and buildings in the upper city, so the neutral priests like Josephus would have rapidly moved out of the upper city and into the temple away from all the fighting and violence going on in the upper city. Then the flash point was well away from the temple area, and it was now safer for the priests to come back to the temple which was under the control of their fellow priests (rebel priests under Eleazar). That is most likely when he returned with the other neutral priests and “retired into the inner court of the temple.” (Life 20) This would have been right after the Tower of Antonia had been taken.

But the point of all this is that he was back dwelling in the upper city before the Tower was taken, and only moved into the temple after the Tower had fallen into rebel control. So I think he must have arrived back in Jerusalem about the time Eleazar had taken control of the temple area, while the forces of Agrippa and the moderates were still strong and keeping the rebel forces bottled up in the temple. Evidently the priests did not want to go into the temple area at that time, since Agrippa’s forces outside appeared to have the upper hand. So the priests like Josephus who were not required to be there (because it was not their scheduled time to serve) stayed out of the temple at that time. But when the rebels under Eleazar’s command were reinforced by the Sicarii and overpowered the moderates and Agrippa’s forces, then it would have been safer for the neutral priests to return to the temple and stay inside, well away from the flash point which was now in the upper city at Herod’s Palace.

His return to the temple could also imply that Josephus had some kind of friendly relations or trustful relationship with the Eleazar faction in the temple. It is

hard to believe that Eleazar would have allowed those priests back inside unless they were totally neutral or somewhat supportive of Eleazar's cause. This later scenario seems more likely to be the case in respect to Josephus, since not long after this he was appointed as one of the ten generals over the Zealot troops in Galilee.

It therefore seems to me that when Josephus arrived back in Jerusalem he was staying in the upper city among the priestly aristocracy who were trying to remain neutral and discourage the revolt. At that time the rebel forces were weak and held in check by the moderates and Agrippa's forces, so it was not safe to be in the temple, since the temple was the flash point. But when the Sicarii sneaked into the temple to reinforce the rebels, then the moderates and Agrippa's forces were beaten back away from the temple by the rebel forces. It was then much safer for the priests to go back into the temple and stay there, because the flash point was away from the temple. But he says he left the temple again after Menahem and the principal men of his band of robbers were put to death by Eleazar's soldiers. (Jos. Life 21) He says he then "abode among the high priests and the chief of the Pharisees" (in the upper city) at that point, and that they were greatly afraid when they saw the people of the city in arms, and that they were unable to convince the rebel forces to stop. (Life 22) The neutral priests (like Josephus?) were unsure at that point what the best course of action for themselves should be. So they pretended to be of the same opinion with the rebel priests under the leadership of Eleazar, since his rebels were now in control of the temple area, lower city, and some parts of the upper city.

Another thing that makes me think that Josephus got back from Rome before the rebels had killed the Romans in the Tower of Antonia, is that since the Romans controlled the ships and seaports, it would be difficult to understand how Josephus (a Jewish priest) could have been safe on his trip back to Jerusalem if the Romans he was traveling with had heard about the rebel priests killing the Roman garrison in the Tower of Antonia. So it seems more likely that he must have arrived back in Judea before Eleazar's men killed the Roman soldiers at the Tower of Antonia.

Aug - 66 – Agrippa II returned from Alexandria (Egypt) where he had gone to "congratulate Alexander upon his having obtained the government of Egypt from Nero" [*Wars* 2.309 (2.15.1)]. On his way back he met Neapolitanus at Jamnia (Yavneh). [*Wars* 2.335 (2.16.1)] A delegation from Jerusalem also went to Jamnia to welcome Agrippa back and inform him of what had happened in Jerusalem while he was in Alexandria. Bernice his sister also made him aware of these things. Then Neapolitanus and Agrippa went back to Jerusalem together. Neapolitanus was welcomed by the citizens of Jerusalem who assured him that they were loyal to Rome and only upset at Florus. Then Neapolitanus left and went back to Cestius in Antioch. Agrippa stayed in Jerusalem to have more discussions with the leaders of Jerusalem who wished to send a delegation to Nero bringing accusations against Florus so that Nero would replace him with another milder procurator. Agrippa negated that idea and charged them to submit to Florus and abandon any thoughts of rebellion, and to pay the tribute money that they had failed to pay. The moderates complied with this request for the tribute money, and quickly went out to the cities of Judea and raised forty talents to pay the back taxes. [*Wars* 2.405 (2.17.1)] But they still wanted to send a delegation to Nero to get Florus replaced. Agrippa insisted that

this should not be done, and that the Jewish leaders should instead submit to Florus. This did not satisfy the moderates in Jerusalem. And some of the seditious insulted Agrippa even further by throwing stones at him [*Wars* 2.406 (2.17.1)]. Yosippon adds some other details which are missing in Josephus:

Elazar ben Ananias, accompanied by a strong band of lads from the bandits, suddenly leaped with drawn swords upon the Roman officers who were with King Agripas and killed the officers and their masses who were with Agripas in Jerusalem and Judah. Then the elders and sages divided and seized Mount Zion, for they did not want to be with the lads in one plot. Now the battle waxed between the bandits and the sages; **the bandits seized the Temple of God and their position became superior** to that of the sages. ... So **Elazar ben Ananias** and the bandits came to **rule over Jerusalem**, and they wreaked havoc in Jerusalem. They burned the palace of King Agripas in Jerusalem, looting his treasuries and all his cherished artifacts. They burned as well all the promissory notes and loan contracts that were in the King's palace; they burned the palace of Beronice, the King's sister; so **their rule strengthened in Jerusalem**. [*Sepher Yosippon*, ch. 61]

Notice what Yosippon said about Eleazar and his army of bandits: "they seized the Temple and their **position became superior**, so that they came to **rule over Jerusalem**, and wreaked havoc, and their **rule strengthened** in Jerusalem." Although neither Josephus or Yosippon ever explicitly say this, it was certainly implied that whoever controlled the Temple also ruled over Jerusalem. That is why Eleazar wanted control of the Temple. He wanted to rule Jerusalem, and he could never have done that without first having control of the Temple. Everyone knew that. That is also why John of Gischala labored so hard to break into the Temple and get control of it. He wanted to be king of the world after they defeated the Romans, but he knew he could never get in the top spot without first getting control of the Temple.

Aug - 66 – Agrippa left Jerusalem after failing to stop the rebellion. [*Wars* 2.407 (2.17.1)]. After his failure to dissuade the Zealots from going to war (Aug 66), King Agrippa II then went to Antioch to meet with Cestius Gallus about the worsening situation in Jerusalem (Sept 66). [*Wars* 2.481]

Aug - 66 – Some of the pro-war Zealots, evidently under the leadership of Menahem (descendant of Judas the Galilean) went to Masada and overpowered the Roman garrison, and stationed their own occupational force there. They broke into the armory there and took all the weaponry back to Jerusalem with them. This seems to have occurred about the same time that Agrippa II was in Jerusalem trying to discourage a rebellion, or immediately afterwards. [*Wars* 2.408-410 (2.17.2)] Josephus also tells us that it occurred about the same time that Eleazar b. Ananias stopped the daily sacrifices of all Gentiles, including the peace offerings from Caesar. [*Wars* 2.408-410 (2.17.2)]

Aug - 66 – Put a Stop to Sacrifices. A refusal of all Roman and Gentile sacrifices was ordered by **Eleazar** b. Ananias. Josephus says that this cessation of Gentile sacrifices was considered “**the true beginning of our war with the Romans**” [*Wars* 2:409 (2.17.2)].

Josephus says that those seditious priests who occupied the temple and who had stopped the sacrifices of foreigners, were **profaning the temple** by their presence in it with their weapons of war. [*Wars* 2.424 (2.17.5)] There was a lot more going on here than just the rejection of the Emperor’s peace offerings. It was a wholesale **cessation of all sacrifices and offerings** from and on behalf of all Gentiles, which ultimately threatened the whole sacrificial system.

The rejection of the daily sacrifice on behalf of Caesar was an open declaration of independence and defiance against Rome. And it was making official a revolt that was already underway since May of AD 66. Josephus says that this event signaled the official beginning of the war with the Romans, and that it occurred a week or so before the Festival of Wood Gathering. [*Wars* 2.409-421 (2.17.2)]

Shortly after rejecting the sacrifices of foreigners, Eleazar and his temple guard and a group of rebel priests took control of the whole area around the temple. The war had now officially begun. Some of the citizens of Jerusalem, who were still bitter over the offenses of Florus, **celebrated this declaration** of independence. (Josephus *Life* 17.4). But many others **mourned this action** by the rebel priests. This rejection of the sacrifices of foreigners was understood by many of the Jewish people (including the moderate priests) as being a **nullification of the validity of the whole sacrificial system**. Some of the other sacrifices (for Jews only) continued, but not consistently and not according to the pattern prescribed in the Law. The common people and other non-Zealot priests deplored this sad state of affairs and considered it a **nullification of the whole sacrificial system**. We have already seen above that Josephus considered it gross impiety and a profanation of the temple. In the eyes of the Romans, it was certainly viewed as a nullification of their right to offer any sacrifices, since that right was conditioned on their offering up the peace offerings of Caesar.

Martin Hengel, in his book, *The Zealots* (pp. 355-366), suggests that there probably was a connection between this rejection of Gentile sacrifices and the *Eighteen Benedictions* (Amidah, or Shemoneh Esreh) of the Shammaites which seem to have been composed at about this same time (Hengel, p. 359, note 234). One of the eighteen “benedictions” contained (or implied) a prohibition against accepting gifts from Gentiles. Also, according to some rabbinic sources (*Git* 56a; *Lam Rab* on 4.2.3) cited by Hengel, the sacrificial animal that had been sent to Jerusalem by the Roman emperor (Nero) was rejected by the priest (Zechariah) because of a slight imperfection in the animal which another Jew (Qamza b. Qamza) had deliberately introduced (and conveniently not noticed by anyone until it was taken to the temple to be sacrificed).

The Fourth Philosophy of the Zealots (Judas the Galilean) considered “the idea of offering a sacrifice to God for a man (the Roman Emperor) who described himself as God” as totally offensive. (Hengel, p. 107, note 162) It is no surprise, then, that Eleazar, sympathetic to the Zealot cause, used that principle of the Zealots and the Eighteen Benedictions as justification for rejecting all sacrifices by Gentiles. Hengel

describes this rejection of the Roman emperor's sacrifice as follows: "This rupture in the traditional service of the Temple signaled the Jewish cult's official break with Roman rule. It could therefore be claimed that the **war against Rome began in the Temple....**" (Hengel, p. 361)

We have always assumed that the references in **Daniel 9:27** and 12:11 to the **sacrifices ceasing** were fulfilled in the siege of July 17 AD 70 when the daily (Tamid) sacrifice and all sacrifices ceased because of the lack of sacrificial animals and lack of priests to offer them [*Wars* 6.94 (6.2.1)]. But that late date does not seem to fit the statements in Daniel, nor in Matthew 24:15 regarding the Abomination, nor the statements about the Man of Lawlessness in 2 Thess 2:3-12. We also know that by the time the Zealots chose a High Priest to perform the Yom Kippur duties in Winter of AD 70, the whole Temple system was in disarray and a mere sham. The priest they chose (Phannias b. Samuel) was an uneducated and untrained countryman who had to be coached on everything he did.

This forces us to look earlier in the rebellion for another cessation of sacrifices. And the cessation of all Gentile sacrifices by Eleazar in August of AD 66, seems to be a prime candidate for its fulfillment. This cessation by Eleazar is far more significant than most interpreters have assumed. Josephus puts a lot of emphasis on it as being the very event which marked the beginning of the revolt, as a kind of declaration of independence from Rome. It very well could be the fulfillment of Daniel 9:27 and 12:11. It is a possibility that needs to be more carefully analyzed and seriously considered. [See Josephus' comments on the possible prophetic connection with these rebel priests, in *Wars* 4:386-388 (4.6.3). It is not clear whether Josephus has reference to Daniel 9-12, or whether it was to some other non-canonical prophet like *Enoch* or the *Sibylline Oracles*].

In Daniel, the incident with Antiochus Epiphanes (167 BC) was viewed as an abomination of desolation. At that time it was a pagan ruler demanding unclean sacrifices to be offered to Zeus on the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. The righteous Hasmonean priests rose up in revolt to purify the Temple from those abominable sacrifices and restore the true worship of Yahweh. But here in AD 66 we see something quite different spiritually-speaking. This time the Roman emperor was offering clean sacrifices on the true altar in the undefiled Temple in Jerusalem. And it was the unrighteous rebel priests who rejected those legitimate Gentile sacrifices with which God was well-pleased, and instead of purifying the temple by this action, they profaned it. Quite a contrast between these two priestly actions. The priests in Antiochus' day cleansed the temple from Gentile profanation. The priests in AD 66 profaned the temple by rejecting the clean sacrifices of the Gentiles. It is no wonder that Josephus, a descendant of the righteous Hasmonean priests, described Eleazar's actions as a profanation of the temple.

At the very time when God, through Christ Jesus our Lord, was saving the Gentiles and bringing their spiritual sacrifices and offerings into His Holy Temple (the Church, and the Spiritual Temple in the Heavenly Jerusalem), the Jews were rejecting the sacrifices and offerings of the Gentiles and refusing to bring them into their physical temple in Jerusalem. Is it any wonder then that God poured out His wrath upon the nation of Israel? The temple was to be a **house of prayer** for all the nations, and a source of blessing for all the nations. The OT prophets, especially

Isaiah, talk much about the gathering in of the Gentiles into God's house in the Last Days, and how the Gentiles would bring their sacrifices and offerings to the temple, and come to Jerusalem for the festivals. Apostle Paul fulfilled that literally when he brought the contributions from the Gentile Christians to Jerusalem, and brought some of those Gentile Christians along with him to that Pentecost festival in AD 58, just eight years before this outbreak of the rebellion.

Is. 56:7 Even those [foreigners, Gentiles] **I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful** in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be **acceptable on My altar**; for My house will be called a **house of prayer for all the peoples** [all nations, the Gentiles].”

Those rebel priests who had taken possession of the Temple were thieves. Josephus tells us that John of Gischala later melted down the gold and silver objects that had been donated to the Temple by Gentiles, for which conduct Josephus labeled them as "villains" [*Wars* 5:562-566 (5.13.6)].

Mark 11:17 And He [Jesus] began to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a **robbers’ den**.”

All of that was fulfilled spiritually in the Church as the Gentiles were grafted into the olive tree of Spiritual Israel (Rom. 11) and attained to the unity of the faith (Eph. 4). But what a contrast here between the physical temple and the spiritual temple in the Last Days! The Jews were rejecting the sacrifices of the Gentiles and going to war with them at the very time when the Christians were accepting the sacrifices of the Gentiles and making peace with them! Now I do not know if Daniel had reference to this idea when he mentioned the cessation of the sacrifices, but in view of the two contrasts we have just noticed here, it would certainly seem possible.

Conclusion

Well, that is about all we need to cover in this session. We will pick back up next time with these events in August of 66 when Eleazar had just stopped the sacrifices on behalf of all Gentiles. The men of power in the city of Jerusalem will protest this action of Eleazar, but without success. We will talk about that next time.

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

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