



KATOOMBA

— BAPTIST CHURCH —

CHRIST'S CHURCH THROUGH THE AGES

LESSON 5: THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (PART 1)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Judea conquered by Pompey the Great in 63 B.C.
- Hasmonean Kingdom becomes vassal of Rome.
- Herod the Great crowned 'King of the Jews' by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C.; goes on to overthrow the Hasmonean Dynasty in 37 B.C.
- Herod dies c. 4 B.C.; divided into Herodian Tetrarchy.
- Judea unified under the semi-autonomous rule of King Herod Agrippa I (A.D. 41-44)
- Direct Roman rule under Procurators from A.D. 44

RISING TENSIONS & TURMOIL

- Gospel advancing to all corners of the world.
 - Aristobulus: first Bishop of Britannia (c. A.D. 37/54)
 - Apostle Thomas: missionary to India (c. A.D. 52)
- Time of rising political and socio-cultural instability.
- By the outbreak of Jewish-Roman War, Rome has had five rulers prior to the contemporary emperor, Nero:
 - Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius
 - All (except Augustus) died by assassination
- The reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68) was marked by particularly significant turmoil and instability.
- Ancient sources from 1st Century A.D. indicate that many were concerned that the Empire may not survive such tumultuous upheaval.

- Israel was deeply divided between various factions, who fought and struggled for power and influence.
- Massive socio-political polarisation throughout Judea.
- A series of corrupt Roman Prefects and Procurators further increased the socio-political divisions in Judea.
- From the reign of Caligula (A.D. 37-41) onwards, the wars and rumours of wars increases dramatically.
- The socio-cultural tensions in the eastern provinces of the Empire were a complex issue, that was influenced by a variety of interconnected factors:
 - Ethnic tensions between people groups:
 - Greeks vs Jews
 - Hellenistic Jews vs Hebraic Jews
 - Conflict between Roman Law & indigenous customs
 - Civil Rights of Jews in the Roman Empire
- During the reign of Caligula, the Roman Prefect of Egypt was Aulus Avilius Flaccus.
- Caligula sent Herod Agrippa I on an unannounced diplomatic visit to Alexandria to check on Flaccus.
- This visit was not met well by the local Greek populace, who mocked Agrippa upon arrival.
- Flaccus placated the Greeks and the Emperor; had statues of Caligula place in synagogues; Jews riot.
- Herod Agrippa becomes King of the Jews in A.D. 41
- Conspired to oust Herod Antipas, and was successful.
- Antipas is exiled by the emperor, and Herod Agrippa becomes unified, Roman-backed ruler over entire Province of Judea and surrounding territories.
- However, instability and turmoil continue to increase.

(Yet, the persecuted Church of Jerusalem continued to flourish)

- Examples of such turmoil include:
 - A.D. 40: riots in Alexandria between Greeks & Jews
 - Caligula ordered Imperial statue to be erected in the Temple of Jerusalem; Agrippa eventually convinces him to reverse the order.
 - A.D. 46-48: insurrection breaks out in Judea
 - ‘The Jacob and Simon Uprising’
 - Crushed by Roman authorities in A.D. 48; both of the brothers were executed.

THE JEWISH REVOLT OF A.D. 66

- Emperor Nero reigns from A.D. 54-68
- Gessius Florus - Procurator of Judea from A.D. 64-66
- Fighting between Greeks & Jews in Caesarea Maritima, due to a Greek merchant house sacrificing unclean birds to the gods in front of a synagogue in the city.
- Roman troops did not intervene in the devolving crisis.
- Prayers and sacrifices for the Emperor at the Temple are halted in protest.
- Protests about taxation become included in the list of grievances during the crisis.
- Random attacks on unarmed Roman citizens in Jerusalem perpetrated by Jews.
- In response, Florus sent Roman troops to plunder the Temple, and take 17 talents of money (approx. 770kg) under the guise of “unpaid taxes”.
- Jews openly mock Florus; begin rioting; kill soldiers.
- Florus unleashed Roman military forces, who raided Jerusalem upon his orders.
- Arrested the major leaders of the city.
- They tortured and crucified them (despite many of them being Roman citizens).
- This enflames the religious and nationalistic tensions exponentially.
- In response, the various Jewish nationalist factions then launched an armed insurrection.
- Attacked and overran Roman military garrisons in Jerusalem, slaughtering many soldiers (even those who surrendered and were unarmed).
- By September A.D. 66, remaining Roman troops surrendered and were lynched.
- Meanwhile, the Greek inhabitants of Caesarea Maritima attacked the Jews in that city.
- The Jews response with greater force, and expel many Greeks from Judea, Galilee, and the Golan Heights.
- King Herod Agrippa II (puppet-ruler, and last of the Herodian Dynasty) fled Jerusalem to Galilee.
- Campaign launched to cleanse Jerusalem and Judea of all Roman citizens, sympathisers, and symbols.