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# The Story of Christianity

## Volume 1

Chapter 5

AND

Josephus

# Wars of the Jews

Book 6, Chapter 4

## First Conflicts with the State

I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word  
and have not denied my name.

REVELATION 3:8B

From its very beginnings, Christianity was no easy matter. The Lord whom Christians served had died on the cross, condemned as a criminal. Soon thereafter Stephen was stoned to death following his witness before the Council of the Jews. Then James was killed at Herod Agrippa's order. Ever since then, and up to our own days, there have been those who have had to seal their witness with their blood.

Yet, the reasons for persecution, and the manner in which it has been carried out, have varied. Already in the early decades of the life of the church there was a certain development in these matters.

### A NEW JEWISH SECT

The early Christians did not believe that they were following a new religion. They were Jews, and their main difference with the rest of Judaism was that they were convinced that the Messiah had come, whereas other Jews continued awaiting his advent. Therefore, the Christian message to Jews was not that they should abandon their Jewishness. On the contrary, now that the messianic age had begun, they were to be better Jews. Likewise, their early proclamation to the Gentiles was not an invitation to accept a newly born religion, but rather to become participants in the promises made to Abraham and his descendents. Gentiles were invited to become children of Abraham by faith, since they could not be so by flesh. This invitation was made possible because, since the time of the prophets, Judaism had held that through the advent of the Messiah all nations would be brought to Zion. For those early Christians, Judaism was not a rival religion to Christianity, but the same faith, even though those who followed it did not see or believe that the prophecies had been fulfilled.

From the point of view of those Jews who rejected Christianity, the situation was understood in a similar manner. Christianity was not a new religion, but a heretical sect within Judaism. As we have seen, first-century Judaism was not a monolithic entity, but included various divergent sects and opinions. Therefore, when Christianity entered the scene, Jews saw it as simply another sect.

The attitude of those Jews toward Christianity is best understood by placing ourselves in their situation, and seeing Christianity from their perspective, as a new heresy going from town to town tempting good Jews to become heretics. Furthermore, many Jews believed, with some biblical foundation, that the reason why they had lost their independence and been made subjects of the Roman Empire was that the people had not been sufficiently faithful to the traditions of their ancestors. Nationalistic and patriotic sentiment was aroused by the fear that these new heretics could once more bring the wrath of God upon Israel.

For these reasons, in most of the New Testament it is the Jews who persecute Christians, who in turn seek refuge under the wing of Roman authorities. This happens, for instance, when some Jews in Corinth accuse Paul before Proconsul Gallio, saying that "this man is persuading men to worship God contrary to the Law," to which Gallio answers, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, I should have reason to hear you, O Jews; but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I refuse to be a judge of these things" (Acts 18:14-15). Later, when there is a riot because some claim that Paul has brought a Gentile to the Temple, and some Jews try to kill the apostle, it is the Romans who save his life.

Thus, Romans, Jews, and Christians agreed that what was taking place was a conflict among Jews. As long as things were relatively orderly, Romans preferred to stay out of such matters. But when there was a riot or any disorderly conduct, they intervened to restore order, and sometimes to punish the disorderly.

A good illustration of this policy was the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Emperor Claudius, around the year 51 CE. Acts 18:2 mentions this expulsion, but does not explain the reason for it. Suetonius, a Roman historian, says that Jews were expelled from the capital city for their disorderly conduct "because of Chrestus." Most historians agree that "Chrestus" is none other than *Christus*, and that what actually took place in Rome was that Christian proclamation caused so many riots among Jews that the emperor decided to expel the lot. At that time, Romans still saw the conflict between Christians and Jews as an internal matter within Judaism.

But the distinction between Christians and Jews became clearer as the church gained more converts from the Gentile population, and the ratio of Jews in its ranks diminished. There are also indications that, as Jewish nationalism

increased and eventually led to rebellion against Rome, Christians—particularly the Gentiles among them—sought to put as much distance as possible between themselves and that movement. The result was that Roman authorities began to become cognizant of Christianity as a religion quite different from Judaism.

This new consciousness of Christianity as a separate religion was at the root of two and a half centuries of persecution by the Roman Empire, from the time of Nero to the conversion of Constantine. Roman authorities had dealt with Judaism long enough to understand that for most Jews their refusal to worship the emperor or the gods was not an act of rebellion against established authorities, and that such rebellion would only take place when those authorities sought to impose their gods on the Jews. As a result, Jews were normally exempt from the expectation that they worship the emperor. Thus, as long as Christianity was considered a variant of Judaism, its adherents would not normally be required to worship the emperor, and their refusal to do so would not be considered an act of rebellion or disobedience, but a matter of religious conviction. But once it became clear that not all Christians were Jews, and that this new religion was spreading throughout the empire, authorities would demand that Christians, like any other subjects of the empire, show their loyalty by worshipping the emperor.

The history of Jewish-Christian relations in the first years of Christianity has had fateful consequences. While Christianity appeared as a heretical sect within Judaism, the latter tried to suppress it, as can be seen in various books of the New Testament—books, it should be added, written by Christian Jews. Since that time, however, Jews have not been in a position where it was possible for them to persecute Christians—in fact, the opposite has often been the case. When Christianity became the official religion of the majority, there were those who, on the basis of what the New Testament says about the opposition of Judaism to Christianity, and without any regard for the different historical circumstances, declared the Jews to be a rejected race, persecuted them, and even massacred them. Such an attitude would have been abhorrent to Paul, who claimed that he was being persecuted “for the hope of Israel.”

### **PERSECUTION UNDER NERO**

Thanks to his mother's intrigues, Nero reached the Roman throne in October of 54. At first he was a reasonable ruler, not entirely unpopular, whose laws in favor of the dispossessed were well received by the Roman populace. But he became increasingly infatuated by his dreams of grandeur and his lust for pleasure, and surrounded himself with a court where all vied to satisfy his every whim. Ten years after his accession to the throne, he was despised by the gen-

*At first a reasonable ruler, Nero became increasingly unpopular. Eventually, rumors circulated that he was mad.*



eral population as well as by the poets and artists, who were offended by the emperor's claim that he was one of them. Soon the rumor began circulating that he was mad.

Such was the state of affairs when, on the night of June 18, 64 CE, a great fire broke out in Rome. It appears that Nero was several miles away, in his palace at Antium, and that as soon as he heard the news he hurried to Rome, where he tried to organize the fight against the fire. He opened to the homeless the gardens of his palace, as well as other public buildings. In spite of this, there were those who suspected the emperor, whom many believed was mad, of having ordered that certain sections of the city be put to the torch. The fire lasted six days and seven nights, and then flared up sporadically for three more days. Ten of the fourteen sections of the city were destroyed. In the midst of their sufferings, the people clamored for justice. Soon the rumor arose—and persists to this day in many history books—that Nero had ordered the city destroyed so he could rebuild it according to his fancy. The Roman historian Tacitus, who may well have been present at the time, records several of the rumors that circulated, but seems inclined to believe that the fire began accidentally in an oil warehouse.

More and more, the people began to suspect the emperor. A rumor circulated that he had spent most of the time during the fire atop a tower on the Palatine, dressed as an actor, playing his lyre and singing about the destruction of Troy. Then the story was that, in his presumptuousness as a poet, he had ordered the city destroyed so that the fire would inspire in him a great epic poem. Nero tried to allay such suspicions, but it soon became clear that he would not succeed in this as long as there was no one else to blame. Two of the areas that

had not burned had many Jewish and Christian residents. Therefore, the emperor decided to blame the Christians.

Tacitus tells the story:

In spite of every human effort, of the emperor's largesse, and of the sacrifices made to the gods, nothing sufficed to allay suspicion nor to destroy the opinion that the fire had been ordered. Therefore, in order to destroy this rumor, Nero blamed the Christians, who are hated for their abominations, and punished them with refined cruelty. Christ, from whom they take their name, was executed by Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius. Stopped for a moment, this evil superstition reappeared, not only in Judea, where was the root of the evil, but also in Rome, where all things sordid and abominable from every corner of the world come together. Thus, first those who confessed [that they were Christians] were arrested, and on the basis of their testimony a great number were condemned, although not so much for the fire itself as for their hatred of humankind.<sup>2</sup>

These words from Tacitus are of great value, for they are one of the most ancient extant indications of how pagans viewed Christians. Reading these lines, it is clear that Tacitus did not believe that the fire in Rome was set by Christians. Furthermore, he did not approve of Nero's "refined cruelty." But, all the same, this good and cultured Roman believed a great deal of what was being said about the "abominations" of Christians and their "hatred of humankind." Tacitus, and other authors writing contemporaneously, do not detail these supposed "abominations." Second-century authors would be more explicit. But, in any case, Tacitus believed the rumors, and thought that Christians hated humankind. This last charge makes sense if one remembers that all social activities—the theater, the army, classic literature, sports—were so entwined with pagan worship that Christians often felt the need to abstain from them. Therefore, to the eyes of a Roman such as Tacitus, who loved his culture and society, Christians appeared as haters of humankind.

But Tacitus goes on:

Before killing the Christians, Nero used them to amuse the people. Some were dressed in furs, to be killed by dogs. Others were crucified. Still others were set on fire early in the night, so that they might illumine it. Nero opened his own gardens for these shows, and in the circus he himself became a spectacle, for he mingled with the people dressed as a



charioteer, or he rode around in his chariot. All of this aroused the mercy of the people, even against these culprits who deserved an exemplary punishment, for it was clear that they were not being destroyed for the common good, but rather to satisfy the cruelty of one person.<sup>1</sup>

Once again the pagan historian, while showing no love for Christians, indicates that the reason for this persecution was not justice, but the whim of the emperor. These lines are also one of the few surviving pagan testimonies of the cruel tortures to which those early martyrs were subjected.

It is difficult to know the extent of the Neronian persecution. Christian writers from the latter part of the first century, and early in the second, recall the horrors of those days. It is also very likely that both Peter and Paul were among the Neronian martyrs. On the other hand, there is no mention of any persecution outside the city of Rome, and therefore it is quite likely that this persecution, although exceedingly cruel, was limited to the capital of the empire.

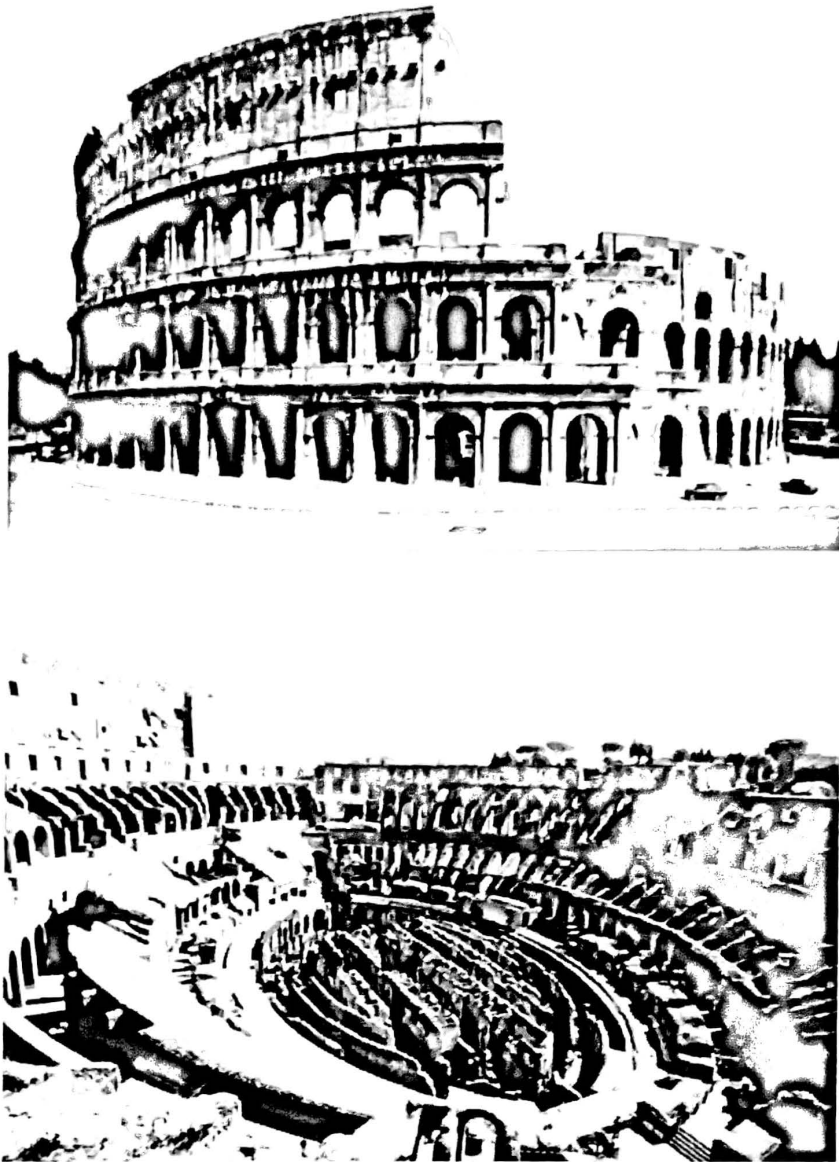
Although at first Christians were charged with arson, soon they were persecuted for merely being Christian—and for all the supposed abominations connected with that name. Ancient writers tell us that Nero issued an edict against Christians. But such an edict, if it ever existed, is no longer extant.

In 68 CE, Nero was deposed by a rebellion that gained the support of the Roman senate, and killed himself. The persecution ceased, although nothing was done to rescind whatever laws Nero had passed against Christians. A period of such political turmoil followed that the year 69 is known as the year of four emperors. Eventually, Vespasian gained control of the government, and during his reign and that of his son Titus Christians were generally ignored by the authorities.

### PERSECUTION UNDER DOMITIAN

Domitian, who became emperor after Titus, at first paid no particular attention to Christians. Why he eventually turned against them is not clear. It is a fact that he loved and respected Roman traditions, and that he sought to restore them. Christians, in their rejection of Roman gods and of many Roman traditions, stood in the way of Domitian's dreams, and this may have been one of the causes of persecution.

Jews also found themselves in trouble with the emperor. Since the Temple had been destroyed in 70, Domitian decided that all Jews should remit to the imperial coffers the annual offering they would otherwise have sent to Jerusalem. Some Jews refused to obey, while others sent the money but made clear that Rome had not taken the place of Jerusalem. In response, Domitian enacted strict laws against Judaism, and insisted on the offering in even harsher terms.



*Christians were seen as enemies of society, in part because they abstained from activities and spectacles such as those that took place in the Roman Colosseum.*

Since at that time the distinction between Jews and Christians was not clear in the minds of Roman authorities, imperial functionaries began persecuting any who followed “Jewish practices.” Thus began a new persecution, which seems to have been directed against both Jews and Christians.

As in the case of Nero, it does not appear that this persecution was uniformly severe throughout the empire. In fact, it is only from Rome and Asia Minor that there are trustworthy reports of persecution at this time.

In Rome, Flavius Clemens and his wife Flavia Domitilla, who may have been related to the emperor, were executed. They were accused of “atheism” and of “Jewish practices.” Since Christians worshiped an invisible God, pagans often declared them to be atheists. Therefore, it is likely that Flavius Clemens



and Domitilla died because they were Christians. If so, these are the only two Roman martyrs of this persecution whose names are known. But several ancient writers affirm that there were many martyrs, and a letter that the church in Rome addressed to the Corinthians—*First Clement*—speaks of “the continuous and unexpected evils which have come upon us.”

In Asia Minor, this persecution resulted in the writing of the book of Revelation, whose author was exiled on the island of Patmos. There are indications that many were killed, and for generations the church in Asia Minor remembered the reign of Domitian as a time of trial.

In the midst of persecution, Revelation displays a much more negative attitude toward Rome than the rest of the New Testament. Paul had instructed Christians in Rome to obey the authorities, whom he declared to have been ordained by God. But now the seer of Patmos speaks of Rome as “the great harlot . . . drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Rev. 17:1, 6). Furthermore, the hope of a new, heavenly city found in Revelation is the counterpart of the present earthly city; over against the city of Rome, “Babylon the great,” or “the great harlot,” Christians should look to the new Jerusalem, coming from heaven, where God will wipe all tears from their eyes.

Fortunately, when persecution broke out Domitian’s reign was coming to an end. Like Nero, Domitian was increasingly seen as a tyrant. His enemies conspired against him, and he was murdered in his own palace. The Roman senate then decreed that his name should be erased from every inscription, so that there would be no memory of him. In this his enemies succeeded, for history has long seen Domitian as a madman lusting for power and recognition as a divine being. Christian historians have also contributed to this, for they have been convinced that anyone who persecuted Christians must have been a tyrant and a madman. Today, historians are vindicating Domitian’s memory as a relatively good ruler. As for Christians, after Domitian’s fall no one seems to have taken notice of them, and therefore they were granted a few years of relative peace.

**CHAPTER 4. WHEN THE BANKS WERE COMPLETED AND THE  
BATTERING RAMS BROUGHT, AND COULD DO NOTHING,  
TITUS GAVE ORDERS TO SET FIRE TO THE GATES OF THE  
TEMPLE; IN NO LONG TIME AFTER WHICH THE HOLY HOUSE  
ITSELF WAS BURNT DOWN, EVEN AGAINST HIS CONSENT.**

1. AND now two of the legions had completed their banks on the eighth day of the month Lous [Ab]. Whereupon Titus gave orders that the battering rams should be brought, and set over against the western edifice of the inner temple; for before these were brought, the firmest of all the other engines had battered the wall for six days together without ceasing, without making any impression upon it; but the vast largeness and strong connexion of the stones were superior to that engine, and to the other battering rams also. Other Romans did indeed undermine the foundations of the northern gate, and after a world of pains removed the outermost stones, yet was the gate still upheld by the inner stones, and stood still unhurt; till the workmen, despairing of all such attempts by engines and crows, brought their ladders to the cloisters. Now the Jews did not interrupt them in so doing; but when they were gotten up, they fell upon them, and fought with them; some of them they thrust down, and threw them backwards headlong; others of them they met and slew; they also beat many of those that went down the ladders again, and slew them with their swords before they could bring their shields to protect them; nay, some of the ladders they threw down from above when they were full of armed men; a great slaughter was made of the Jews also at the same time, while those that bare the ensigns fought hard for them, as deeming it a terrible thing, and what would tend to their great shame, if they permitted them to be stolen away. Yet did the Jews at length get possession of these engines, and destroyed those that had gone up the ladders, while the rest were so intimidated by what those suffered who were slain, that they retired; although none of the Romans died without having done good service before his death. Of the seditious, those that had fought bravely in the former battles did the like now, as besides them did Eleazar, the brother's son of Simon the tyrant. But when Titus perceived that his endeavors to spare a foreign temple turned to the damage of his soldiers, and then be killed, he gave order to set the gates on fire.

2. In the mean time, there deserted to him Ananus, who came from Emmaus, the most bloody of all Simon's guards, and Archelaus, the son of Magadatus, they hoping to be still forgiven, because they left the Jews at a time when they were the conquerors. Titus objected this to these men, as a cunning trick of theirs; and as he had been informed of their other barbarities towards the Jews, he was going in all haste to have them both slain. He told them that they were only driven to this desertion because of the utmost distress they were in, and did not come away of their own good disposition; and that those did not deserve to be preserved, by whom their own city was already set on fire, out of which fire they now hurried

themselves away. However, the security he had promised deserters overcame his resentments, and he dismissed them accordingly, though he did not give them the same privileges that he had afforded to others. And now the soldiers had already put fire to the gates, and the silver that was over them quickly carried the flames to the wood that was within it, whence it spread itself all on the sudden, and caught hold on the cloisters. Upon the Jews seeing this fire all about them, their spirits sunk together with their bodies, and they were under such astonishment, that not one of them made any haste, either to defend himself or to quench the fire, but they stood as mute spectators of it only. However, they did not so grieve at the loss of what was now burning, as to grow wiser thereby for the time to come; but as though the holy house itself had been on fire already, they whetted their passions against the Romans. This fire prevailed during that day and the next also; for the soldiers were not able to burn all the cloisters that were round about together at one time, but only by pieces.

3. But then, on the next day, Titus commanded part of his army to quench the fire, and to make a road for the more easy marching up of the legions, while he himself gathered the commanders together. Of those there were assembled the six principal persons: Tiberius Alexander, the commander [under the general] of the whole army; with Sextus Cerealis, the commander of the fifth legion; and Larcus Lepidus, the commander of the tenth legion; and Titus Frigius, the commander of the fifteenth legion: there was also with them Eternius, the leader of the two legions that came from Alexandria; and Marcus Antonius Julianus, procurator of Judea: after these came together all the rest of the procurators and tribunes. Titus proposed to these that they should give him their advice what should be done about the holy house. Now some of these thought it would be the best way to act according to the rules of war, [and demolish it,] because the Jews would never leave off rebelling while that house was standing; at which house it was that they used to get all together. Others of them were of opinion, that in case the Jews would leave it, and none of them would lay their arms up in it, he might save it; but that in case they got upon it, and fought any more, he might burn it; because it must then be looked upon not as a holy house, but as a citadel; and that the impiety of burning it would then belong to those that forced this to be done, and not to them. But Titus said, that "although the Jews should get upon that holy house, and fight us thence, yet ought we not to revenge ourselves on things that are inanimate, instead of the men themselves;" and that he was not in any case for burning down so vast a work as that was, because this would be a mischief to the Romans themselves, as it would be an ornament to their government while it continued. So Fronto, and Alexander, and Cerealis grew bold upon that declaration, and agreed to the opinion of Titus. Then was this assembly dissolved, when Titus had given orders to the commanders that the rest of their forces should lie still; but that they should make use of such as were most courageous in this attack. So he commanded that the chosen men that were taken out of the cohorts should make their way through the ruins, and quench the fire.

4. Now it is true that on this day the Jews were so weary, and under such consternation, that they refrained from any attacks. But on the next day they gathered their whole force together, and ran upon those that guarded the outward court of the temple very boldly, through the east gate, and this about the second hour of the day. These guards received that their attack with great bravery, and by covering themselves with their shields before, as if it were with a wall, they drew their squadron close together; yet was it evident that they could not abide there very long, but would be overborne by the multitude of those that sallied out upon them, and by the heat of their passion. However, Caesar seeing, from the tower of Antonia, that this squadron was likely to give way, he sent some chosen horsemen to support them. Hereupon the Jews found themselves not able to sustain their onset, and upon the slaughter of those in the forefront, many of the rest were put to flight. But as the Romans were going off, the Jews turned upon them, and fought them; and as those Romans came back upon them, they retreated again, until about the fifth hour of the day they were overborne, and shut themselves up in the inner [court of the] temple.

5. So Titus retired into the tower of Antonia, and resolved to storm the temple the next day, early in the morning, with his whole army, and to encamp round about the holy house. But as for that house, God had, for certain, long ago doomed it to the fire; and now that fatal day was come, according to the revolution of ages; it was the tenth day of the month Lous, [Ab,] upon which it was formerly burnt by the king of Babylon; although these flames took their rise from the Jews themselves, and were occasioned by them; for upon Titus's retiring, the seditious lay still for a little while, and then attacked the Romans again, when those that guarded the holy house fought with those that quenched the fire that was burning the inner [court of the] temple; but these Romans put the Jews to flight, and proceeded as far as the holy house itself. At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread upon him at so great an undertaking, and being hurried on by a certain divine fury, snatched somewhat out of the materials that were on fire, and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side of it. As the flames went upward, the Jews made a great clamor, such as so mighty an affliction required, and ran together to prevent it; and now they spared not their lives any longer, nor suffered any thing to restrain their force, since that holy house was perishing, for whose sake it was that they kept such a guard about it.

6. And now a certain person came running to Titus, and told him of this fire, as he was resting himself in his tent after the last battle; whereupon he rose up in great haste, and, as he was, ran to the holy house, in order to have a stop put to the fire; after him followed all his commanders, and after them followed the several legions, in great astonishment; so there was a great clamor and tumult raised, as was natural upon the disorderly motion of so great an army. Then did Caesar, both by calling to the soldiers that were fighting, with a loud

voice, and by giving a signal to them with his right hand, order them to quench the fire. But they did not hear what he said, though he spake so loud, having their ears already dimmed by a greater noise another way; nor did they attend to the signal he made with his hand neither, as still some of them were distracted with fighting, and others with passion. But as for the legions that came running thither, neither any persuasions nor any threatenings could restrain their violence, but each one's own passion was his commander at this time; and as they were crowding into the temple together, many of them were trampled on by one another, while a great number fell among the ruins of the cloisters, which were still hot and smoking, and were destroyed in the same miserable way with those whom they had conquered; and when they were come near the holy house, they made as if they did not so much as hear Caesar's orders to the contrary; but they encouraged those that were before them to set it on fire. As for the seditious, they were in too great distress already to afford their assistance [towards quenching the fire]; they were every where slain, and every where beaten; and as for a great part of the people, they were weak and without arms, and had their throats cut wherever they were caught. Now round about the altar lay dead bodies heaped one upon another, as at the steps<sup>779</sup> going up to it ran a great quantity of their blood, whither also the dead bodies that were slain above [on the altar] fell down.

7. And now, since Caesar was no way able to restrain the enthusiastic fury of the soldiers, and the fire proceeded on more and more, he went into the holy place of the temple, with his commanders, and saw it, with what was in it, which he found to be far superior to what the relations of foreigners contained, and not inferior to what we ourselves boasted of and believed about it. But as the flame had not as yet reached to its inward parts, but was still consuming the rooms that were about the holy house, and Titus supposing what the fact was, that the house itself might yet he saved, he came in haste and endeavored to persuade the soldiers to quench the fire, and gave order to Liberalius the centurion, and one of those spearmen that were about him, to beat the soldiers that were refractory with their staves, and to restrain them; yet were their passions too hard for the regards they had for Caesar, and the dread they had of him who forbade them, as was their hatred of the Jews, and a certain vehement inclination to fight them, too hard for them also. Moreover, the hope of plunder induced many to go on, as having this opinion, that all the places within were full of money, and as seeing that all round about it was made of gold. And besides, one of those that went into the place prevented Caesar, when he ran so hastily out to restrain the soldiers,

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779 These steps to the altar of burnt-offering seem here either an improper and inaccurate expression of Josephus, since it was unlawful to make ladder steps; (see description of the temples, ch. 13., and note on Antiq. B. IV. ch. 8. sect. 5;) or else those steps or stairs we now use were invented before the days of Herod the Great, and had been here built by him; though the later Jews always deny it, and say that even Herod's altar was ascended to by an acclivity only.

and threw the fire upon the hinges of the gate, in the dark; whereby the flame burst out from within the holy house itself immediately, when the commanders retired, and Caesar with them, and when nobody any longer forbade those that were without to set fire to it. And thus was the holy house burnt down, without Caesar's approbation.

8. Now although any one would justly lament the destruction of such a work as this was, since it was the most admirable of all the works that we have seen or heard of, both for its curious structure and its magnitude, and also for the vast wealth bestowed upon it, as well as for the glorious reputation it had for its holiness; yet might such a one comfort himself with this thought, that it was fate that decreed it so to be, which is inevitable, both as to living creatures, and as to works and places also. However, one cannot but wonder at the accuracy of this period thereto relating; for the same month and day were now observed, as I said before, wherein the holy house was burnt formerly by the Babylonians. Now the number of years that passed from its first foundation, which was laid by king Solomon, till this its destruction, which happened in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, are collected to be one thousand one hundred and thirty, besides seven months and fifteen days; and from the second building of it, which was done by Haggai, in the second year of Cyrus the king, till its destruction under Vespasian, there were six hundred and thirty-nine years and forty-five days.

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