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Signs of the Times in the First Century

by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., 1982

Transcribed and Edited by David Sielaff, 2004, May 2025

Read the older "[July 2004 Newsletter](#)" and the updated "[May 2025 Newsletter](#)"

Signs of the Times in the First Century

The Bible speaks about signs and miracles occurring not long before the 2nd advent of Christ into this world. They will be spectacular and very convincing to the people of the world. The trouble is that these signs can be misinterpreted by people, even by the wise of the world, even signs that God Himself might give to us. In fact, at the end of the age the signs to occur that will introduce the real Christ into the world could be misinterpreted and help introduce the antichrist into the world. It will be that clever; it will be that close.

Christ said we will have signs in the heavens, signs on earth, and great miracles occurring near the end of the age to introduce Christ to this world. Even when God gives true signs, people are prone to misinterpret them. This allows people an excuse to do what they want whether in accord with, or contrary to, God's word.

How many people today wish to experience miracles and signs? All of us do. Do you want to have signs in your life? Would you want God to show a personal concern about you so much that He will give you miracles? Yes, of course. But those miracles you might experience may also be very dangerous to you and to me if we are not careful. This is because if you have had personal contact with God in a way that you cannot explain (accepting that it is from God), a great miracle sometimes can lead to a great deal of arrogance. We can read in the Bible where it says to do one thing, and we THINK that all we must do is pray and ask God. We might mistakenly go into an entirely different direction because we FEEL we are so close to God.

I believe in miracles. I believe in signs. The Bible is filled with them, especially those associated with the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles. See public and The signs given to us can be dangerous if they are not governed by the biblical revelation.¹

We must have a standard, a guide, by which we can be certain the things occurring to us, and in us, conform to the divine word of Almighty God. That guide is the Word of God. In my view, too many people who experience signs, wonders, and miracles, do not have their lives or desires in conformity to the Word of God. The Bible tells us that we who live to the end of the age will be given many signs and wonders to show that the age is ending, and Christ's return is at hand. Note the well-known statement by the prophet Amos:

¹ Read what a wrong belief in signs meant for the people of Jerusalem and Judea during the Jewish rebellion in the years 66 to 70 AD. The Jewish historian Josephus tells the body count. See Dr. Martin's article: "[The Folly of Setting Prophetic Dates](#)."

“Would a trumpet be blown in a city and the people not tremble?

Would there come to be evil in a city and Yahweh not have done it?

For my Lord Yahweh is not doing a thing without revealing His deliberation to His servants, the prophets.”

• **Amos 3:6–7 CLV**

That is what Amos said. He was a prophet (though he did not consider himself a prophet). But his prophecies show that he was, and he has information for us. I am not a prophet, nor do I want to be one, but I do want to understand what the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, and what Christ Himself said about what will occur at the end of the age. We should try to do all we can to learn about such matters.

We want signs. We want evidence that God is near us, that He operates today, that He is carrying out His prophecies and putting them into operation. We want those things. We need them. But if we emphasize those things too much at the expense of other important things, then we might find ourselves getting into difficulty.

Signs During Christ’s Ministry

The Jews at the time of Christ were people who relished in signs. They were greatly enamored with them. They required of Christ many signs. Christ gave them a number of signs to prove who He was. Even the apostles were able to show many signs. Many of the Jews took up with the apostles and with Christ because of the signs. However, Christ Himself said that there is only one main sign He would give that He was the Christ. It was not the healing of the Syro-Phoenician daughter, or the raising of Lazarus from the dead (both of which were important). **The ONE MAJOR SIGN** Christ said He would give was — that He would be in the grave three days and three nights, and He would come up out of that grave by a resurrection from the dead.

The key issue is not the interval of time He was in the grave; it is the fact that He came out of the grave by a resurrection. It was the fact that He was dead and then He became alive. People saw Him afterward alive. Paul said over 500 people saw Him alive and they were all witnesses to the fact of Christ’s resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5). That means then that God the Father must have been behind Him some way, some how to honor Him while He was dead for three days, to be able to bring Him out of that grave. God must have been, and in fact He did, witness to the reliability of the message of Jesus Christ.

That **one sign** — and that one sign only — is all you and I need to prove that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. If some might say, well, we were not back there some 1900 years ago, that is true enough. But we have the records of people who were there. And they were all different types of people, men who claimed to be honest and told everyone else to be honest, to be fair, and to be truthful. To the very days of their deaths none of them ever gave up his or her belief in the fact that Jesus Christ was indeed resurrected from the dead. That is the “single sign.”

There were other signs given by Christ, and the Jews at that time were looking for many signs. If you could show a number of signs coming from heaven, from God, then they would be willing to believe that you were indeed a spokesman from God. The apostle Paul refers to this desire of the Jews (and I might say, of us as well today) in 1 Corinthians 1:22 CLV: **“in fact, Jews signs are requesting, and Greeks wisdom are seeking.”** The Greek says **“signs,”** plural. The Jews wanted many miracles. If they can see miracles, they will believe. If they cannot see miracles, they will **not** believe.

Many people today want signs and wonders and miracles. When they see them they will believe. Those things are important and there can be no doubt about it, especially if the miracles conform to the Word of God. However, there are also false signs and false miracles. We read in Revelation chapter 13 that there will come a false prophet who will perform many miracles. He causes the world to go over to worship the antichrist and his system at the end of the age.

Christ Himself relegated miracles to a lower level than other things when He said many people would come at the end of the age saying (for example): **“Lord, Lord, have we not done this in your name, and done that and done all types of signs?”** He says to them **“I never knew you.”**

We need to be very careful when it comes to signs. Signs can be misinterpreted. Even true signs from God

can be misinterpreted. I will show some signs that come from Almighty God Himself, if you will believe the New Testament, that are associated with the 2nd coming of Christ, and signs associated with a time in the past which were reflective of what **WILL** occur in our age, but they happened some 1900 years ago.

I will also show that those signs which had a fulfillment in a partial sense were in most cases misinterpreted by the very people to whom they were sent. [And God let that happen. DWS] Signs were important to the Jews. In fact, they required signs as evidence and proof. They wanted signs, and God sent them signs.

Signs of Jerusalem's Destruction

He also sent them signs prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, plenty of signs, which could only be interpreted as coming from the Almighty God Himself, through Jesus Christ. Yet at the same time most people misinterpreted those signs because they did not want them to say or to reveal, what the signs were actually showing. They wanted something else. They saw the signs, but in most cases they made misinterpretations of them. These same types of signs will occur at the end of the age. In fact, they will even be greater.

I want to rehearse what Christ said. The signs would be near the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and HOW they reflect a further disruption that is coming in our age today, and HOW those signs will come back with even greater intensity. As they were misinterpreted in the past, they will be misinterpreted in our age. I have no doubt of that.

Signs Preceding Jerusalem's Destruction

Let us look at some of the signs predicting the destruction of Jerusalem mentioned by Christ Himself to be associated with his Second Coming. The destruction of Jerusalem that took place in 70 AD is very typical of what will occur at the end of the age. Go to the section of the Olivet Prophecy in Luke chapter 21:

“And at some saying concerning the sanctuary [Temple], that it is adorned with ideal stones and votive offerings, He [Jesus] said,

‘These which you are beholding — there will be coming days in which not a stone will be left here on a stone, which will not be demolished.’

• **Luke 21:5–6 CLV**

Jesus is with His disciples on the Mount of Olives just east of Jerusalem looking westward at the city. Pre-dominant in their view is the beautiful Temple that the Jewish historian and priest Josephus describes as one of the wonders of the world at that time.

Christ told His apostles there would not be one stone left upon another in that Temple:

“Now they inquire of Him, saying, ‘Teacher, WHEN, then, will these things be, and WHAT IS THE SIGN whenever these things may be about to be occurring?’

Now He said, ‘Beware that you may not be deceived’

• **Luke 21:7–8 CLV**

On the heels of them asking about a sign, He tells them that signs WILL be given. But He warns His apostles to **“... not be deceived”** because most people will be deceived, even when true signs are given.

“Now He said, ‘Beware that you may not be deceived, for many shall be coming in My name, saying that “I am!” and “The season is near!” YOU MAY NOT, then, BE GOING AFTER THEM.’

• **Luke 21:8 CLV**

Now in 1982 [Dr. Martin's original tape DWS]. Has anyone you ever heard say the times draw near? Have you ever heard anyone say that? I bet you heard scores of people say that. Christ says not to go after them.

“Now whenever you should be hearing battles and turbulences you MAY NOT BE DISMAYED, for these things MUST occur first, but not immediately is the consummation.’

Then He said to them, ‘Roused shall be nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. Besides, there shall be GREAT quakes and, in places, famines and pestilences. There shall be FEARFUL SIGHTS besides [in addition to] GREAT SIGNS also FROM heaven.’”

• **Luke 21:9–11 CLV**

I want to emphasize what we have read. There will be “**fearful sights**” and there will be “**great signs**” from heaven. Clearly these will be God ordained [or God permitted, *DWS*]. But in the heavens you will see “**signs**” and “**fearful sights.**” This is not Ernest Martin saying this, but Jesus speaking to his intimate disciples.

“Yet BEFORE ALL these things [1] they shall be laying their hands on YOU and [2] they shall be persecuting YOU, [3] giving YOU up into the synagogues and jails, [4] being led off to kings and governors on account of My name.”

• **Luke 21:12 CLV**

He goes on to say that parents will betray children, and children betray their parents. Then you will be hated for Jesus’ name’s sake. Verse 20:

“Now whenever you may be perceiving Jerusalem surrounded by encampments, THEN KNOW that her desolation is near.”

• **Luke 21:20 CLV**

In verse 23 it says God will have great wrath upon this land and upon this people (meaning the Jews back at that time), but it has relevance for today, no doubt:

“And they shall be falling by the edge of the sword and shall be LED INTO CAPTIVITY INTO ALL NATIONS. And Jerusalem shall be trodden by the nations [Gentiles], until the eras of the nations may be fulfilled.

And there shall be SIGNS in

- [1] **the sun and**
- [2] **the moon and**
- [3] **the constellations [in outer space], and**
- [4] **on the earth pressure of nations in perplexity [distress], at**
- [5] **the resounding of the sea and the shaking,**
- [6] **at the chilling of men from fear and apprehensiveness of that which is coming on the inhabited earth, for**
- [7] **the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And THEN they shall be seeing**
- [8] **the Son of Mankind coming in a cloud with power and much glory.**

Now at the beginning of these occurrences, unbend and lift up your heads, because your deliverance is drawing near.”

• **Luke 21:24–28 CLV**

I could read the rest of that Olivet Prophecy recorded in Luke chapter 21, but read the rest yourself. Jesus speaks here about a total destruction of Jerusalem. When you analyze Luke 21 you cannot help but get the feeling that some of this information reflects on the occasions that took place around 70 AD, when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by the Roman legions. The war that the Jews had with the Romans started in 66 AD and it went on with lulls and flare ups until the middle of 70 AD.

Christ’s prophesy that there would be not one stone left on another actually happened. Remember the verse in Amos 3:6–7? God will do nothing unless He first reveals beforehand to His prophets that He will do something. This is especially true regarding an event of the magnitude of the Temple’s destruction, regarding His own people. Do you think that there were some witnesses, some evidence of what God was going to do to Jerusalem, other than what Christ said Himself here?

In fact, what Christ said to His disciples (which was noised about all over Jerusalem, surely by the time

of the beginning of the war with Rome), was enough to show that we should pay close attention to the city of Jerusalem and the Temple that it will be destroyed. Jesus tells us that these signs will take place just before the holocaust comes before He returns.²

The war broke out in the springtime of 66 AD. It was put into full force when Roman general Cestius Gallus brought down the 12th Legion from Syria in the north just after the Feast of Tabernacles. Jerusalem was surrounded with his army and for some inexplicable reason he withdrew his army when he was close to capturing that city. If he had done so in the late autumn of 66 AD, he would have extinguished the flames of rebellion, and no doubt would have won the war for the Romans.

As Josephus wrote, General Cestius withdrew his forces and started to retreat back down to the Mediterranean coast of Palestine. The Jews surrounded in Jerusalem were so incensed against the Romans that they went after the withdrawing Roman troops. As those troops started down the defiles of the Judean hills which are very steep, the Jews got on the slopes and swooped down upon the Romans and tore the Roman legion to bits. Cestius himself barely escaped by the skin of his teeth. He was held in disgrace after that disaster.³

The next year a very experienced general was appointed by Nero Caesar to go to Palestine and pursue the war. This man knew what he was doing. He was named Vespasian. He had a son named Titus. They brought in several legions: the 5th, the 10th, the 15th, and the 12th legions, plus they brought auxiliary forces from all over the eastern Roman Empire. This great army was assembled against the Jews. When Vespasian took command, there was no doubt what the outcome would be. The Jews, no matter how vigorous they were in their revolt, did not have a chance against those mighty Roman forces, four powerful legions plus large auxiliary forces against the Jews in Palestine.

Some internal revolts occurred amongst the Romans themselves at the death of Emperor Nero in 67 AD and Vespasian was unable to pursue the war with vigor the way he wanted until 70 AD. After the upheavals in Rome were settled, the Romans pressed their attack, and it was not long after a 5-month siege of Jerusalem from Passover to the 10th of Ab in 70 AD that the war was over. Jerusalem and the Temple were in smoldering ruins. Jesus said before these things happened, there would be great fearful signs. Did those signs occur? Yes.

The Signs Did Happen!

I own the writings of Josephus in the scholarly Loeb edition,⁴ which has the Greek on one side and the English on the other. The account Josephus gives is very interesting. He was an eyewitness of what thousands knew took place, writing no more than 10 years after the event, probably within 5 years. He sent it to King Agrippa II, King over the Jews, who was himself an eyewitness to many of the early events. There was hardly anyone who would dispute most of the information in here, except a few details and a few transcription errors,

² The result was that in the summer of 70 AD, and we know the exact day of the month, the Temple was completely destroyed just as Christ said it would be, not one stone left on another, and the city of Jerusalem so demolished that an eyewitness afterward said you would hardly believe there was once a city there (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 7.1–3). That took place in the 10th of Ab, the 5th Hebrew month of the calendar starting with the springtime month of Nisan. It corresponds to around August of 70 AD. The Temple took about 85 years to be completed. According to Josephus, it was completely finished about 6 years before its destruction in 70 AD. At the time of Christ, it had been under construction for 46 years (John 2:20). They continued building until 64 AD.

The Temple was supposed to be God's house where He lived symbolically. He resided in the inner sanctum of the Temple. Just as Christ said, that Temple was destroyed, it went up in smoke in 70 AD on the 10th of Ab. The Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar some 655 years earlier, also on the same calendar day that Titus set it to flame by accident in 70 AD.

Eleven years before Solomon's first Temple was destroyed, the captivity of the people of Jerusalem and Judah began in the 1st year of King Jehoiachin of Judah. Add 655 and add 11 years and you get **666** years. Most remarkable is it not? I do not know if that is significant, but on that same calendar day in 70 AD the book of Lamentations was being read in synagogues throughout the world wherever Jews were gathered. The Jews later received news of what was happening in Jerusalem at that very time. *ELM* [Also see my article, "[The Book of Lamentations](#)" and my Commentary "[Jeremiah and Lamentations](#)." DWS]

³ Read the entire story in Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.513–555. DWS

⁴ All Josephus' quotations in this article are taken from, *Josephus in Nine Volumes, I–III, The Jewish War*, Books IV–VII, trans by H.St.J. Thackeray, in the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928). DWS

but the main writings of Josephus about the war, no one seriously doubts.

Most people have not even heard of those things that took place when the war started in the spring of 66 AD with a major incident between the Jews and the Romans at the city of Caesarea down on the coast.⁵ The war broke out in this city. Here is what Josephus says happened prior to the beginning of the war, and just after the war started. Of these 7 events, 6 of them occurred in succession, beginning in 66 AD. They are most remarkable events. Talk about a commentary upon Luke 21, here it is! This is an eyewitness account.

Josephus — A Short Biography

Let me tell you about Josephus. He was a priest, born in 37 AD and he was a very young man when he was given command over some Jewish forces at the beginning of the war. After Vespasian came on the scene and defeated the forces in Galilee, Josephus went over to the Romans. He has been called a turncoat by the Jews ever since. They do not like him very much.

Josephus was the general in charge of Jewish forces in northern Palestine, in Galilee, and was defeated. Certain factors took place so that Vespasian began to like and trust Josephus. The Roman general took Josephus along on all of his campaigns wherever Vespasian and his son Titus went so that Josephus was an eyewitness to the final destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. Talk about a man who knew everything that was going on! He was a general of the armed forces of one of the armies. He was also a priest. He accompanied Vespasian and finally Titus down to Jerusalem and saw the final destruction with his own eyes. Here is what he says:

“Thus it was that the wretched people were deluded at that time by charlatans and pretended messengers of the deity; while they neither heeded nor believed in the manifest portents that foretold THE COMING DESOLATION, but, as if thunderstruck and bereft of eyes and mind, disregarded the plain warnings of God.”

• *Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:288*

When it says here **“the coming desolation”** it is the same words that we find in words of Christ recorded by Luke. This paragraph shows us that Josephus says signs, wonders and portents were given before the war, but **“the wretched people”** would not believe them.

The 1st Sign

Here is the first sign that was given in the beginning of the year 66 AD. This may have commenced a bit earlier in 65 AD:

“So it was when a star resembling a sword, stood over the city [Jerusalem] and a comet which continued for a year.”

• *Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:289*

You might say this is superstition because they used to look upon things happening in the heavens with a great deal of mysticism and superstition, granted. But here he says there was a star resembling a sword as well as a comet, so the one was not the other. A comet is pretty well identified and understood. Comets in almost all occasions in the past were looked upon as harbingers of evil, as something ominous. Whether that understanding of the comet is true, or not true, there was a comet; an unknown comet was seen over the city. There also was a star resembling a sword. That was the first sign. After all, Christ said there shall be “signs” in the heavens. That does not seem to be all that important at first, but that is just the first sign.⁶

⁵ Caesarea was the city Paul had been in a few years before, for 2 years. The city is mentioned in Acts 8:40; 9:30; 10:1, 24; 11:11; 12:19; 18:22; 21:8, 16; 23:23, 33; 25:1, 4, 6, 13. It is where the apostle Peter converted the Roman centurion Cornelius. *DWS*

⁶ This comet is unidentified today. There are all types of comets, some are identified, some are not. Halley’s Comet is coming back in 1986. It was identified in 240 BC. About every 86 years it returns. But this was an unknown comet. *ELM* Halley’s Comet

The 2nd Sign

“So again when, before the revolt and the commotion that led to war [i.e., before the war], at the time when the people were assembling for the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth of the month Xanthius [Nisan], at the ninth hour of the night [3 a.m.] ...”

• **Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:290**

He names the exact date. This is the month of Nisan in 66 AD, springtime, on the 8th day of the month, six days before Passover. It is most interesting that in the Gospel of John it mentions about Christ coming into Jerusalem and He picks up 6 days before Passover. Most interesting. These things seem to go in patterns at times. I do not know if this is to be looked upon here as important enough, but this is what a priest, Josephus, was saying. There was no reason for disputing him. Look what happened:

“... so brilliant a light shown round the [holy] altar and the sanctuary [of the temple] that it seemed to be broad daylight; and this continued for half an hour.”

• **Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:290**

Did it happen? Josephus says it occurred when people were gathering for the days of unleavened bread. This did not happen in a corner. It was when all types of people were coming from all over the world. If this did not occur, Josephus could have been laughed to derision. When did it occur? It occurred [at night] at 3 o'clock in the morning. No one was to be in the Temple except guardian priests. But the Temple could be seen from the Mount of Olives. You could look down into it easily. There over the altar and over the Holy Place, the Sanctuary, a great light came down right over that altar. It stood there for ½ hour and then disappeared.

Remember that the Temple itself was finished only two years before this occurred. Now they were saying God's House is complete. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons Josephus cites as to why the Jews went to war against the Romans was because 18,000 people were working on that Temple and suddenly when it was completely finished around 64 AD. King Agrippa comes along and finally puts the 18,000 to making stone slabs for a walkway to go up to the Temple, but that ends too.⁷

Do you know what 18,000 people were doing then about 65 AD? They are twiddling their thumbs, out of work. When people start doing nothing and not working, mischief begins, especially when they have Roman procurators who were some of the most tyrannical rulers that you can imagine.

I do not criticize the Jews for what they did in going against the Romans in one way, because they were under great persecution. Look at these signs that took place. I ask you; did this occur or not? Josephus, a highborn Jewish priest, says this happened at a time when thousands of people were coming into Jerusalem, they saw a great light and it stayed over the altar and the Temple for ½ hour. Here is his interpretation:

“By the inexperienced this was regarded as a good omen, but by the sacred scribes it was at once interpreted in accordance with after [later] events.”

• **Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:291–292**

In other words, here was the great Shekinah glory, as they called it, coming down upon the altar and the inexperienced said, oh, this is God coming into our midst. Now the Temple is finished and all of a sudden here is God coming into the great Holy Place over the altar. Now we will go to war against the Romans. God is with us now. The sacred scribes said wait a minute, something is wrong here. God is trying to point out something. Let us go on.

I will skip the 3rd sign for now, but I will return to it below.

was very disappointing to those who saw it in 1986 with the naked eye. It was considerably less dramatic and spectacular than its prior appearances in 1835 and 1910. However, scientists were enthralled. See more information at the Comet Halley website: <http://www.solarviews.com/eng/halley.htm>. DWS

⁷ See Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:219–222. DWS

The 4th Sign

At the feast of Passover, six days later after the great light came down, Josephus says:

“The eastern gate of the inner court — it was of brass and very massive, and, when closed towards evening, could scarcely be moved by 20 men; fastened with iron-bound bars [on each side], it had bolts which were sunk to a great depth into a threshold consisting of a solid block of stone — this gate was observed at the sixth hour of the night [midnight] to have opened of its own accord. The watchmen of the temple ran and reported the matter to the captain, and he came up and with difficulty succeeded in shutting it.”⁸

• **Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:293–294**

Someone could say, this could not possibly be. There are no men in the Temple at that time. It takes 20 men to even close it when the sun goes down, and now it opens of its own accord. To me this is not a problem at all because in Acts chapter 12 the apostle Peter is in prison in Jerusalem, chains all over him and everyone is asleep. An angel comes and says, Peter, get up and walk. The chains come off and they walk right through the door. It said,

“Now, passing through the first jail and the second, they come to the iron gate that brings them into the city, which spontaneously was opened to them. And, coming out, they came forward one street, and immediately the messenger withdrew from him.”

• **Acts 12:10 CLV**

Peter walked right on out. That happened about 30 years before. I see no reason why it could not happen here 30 years later. The only thing is that the [Temple] gates are far more massive, and in the Temple. These are the gates just before the holy altar. If they opened of their own accord when no man was in there in the middle of the night, only some miraculous sign or being could have done that. Josephus continues:

“This again to the uninitiated seemed the best of omens, as they supposed that God had opened to them the gate of blessings.”

• **Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:295**

Do you see how they interpreted it? They would never say this is God showing something else. Mind you, here are the gates of the Temple opening up. Here is what it meant:

“But the learned understood that the security of the Temple was dissolving of its own accord and that the opening of the gate meant a present to the enemy, interpreting the portent [sign, the same Greek word as in the gospels] in their own minds as indicative of coming desolation.”

• **Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:295–296**

In other words, I [God] am now opening up the Temple to everybody. Do you see the sign? Do you see the way it is? It depends on how you will look at that. That is sign number 4. This is at Passover in 66 AD.

The 5th Sign

“Again, not many days after that festival on the twenty-first of Artemisium [the Jewish month of Iyyar which is in the late springtime], there appeared a miraculous phenomenon, passing belief. Indeed, what I am about to relate would, I imagine, have been deemed a fable, were it not for the narratives of eyewitnesses and for the subsequent calamities which deserved to be so signalized [so “sign-ized,” a great sign]. For before sunset ...”

• **Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:297–299**

⁸ This was called the Gate of Nicanor, the Corinthian Gate. It was the most magnificent gate with 2 doors in the Temple. It separated the court of the women from the court of the men just before the Great Altar in the Temple. These two great bronze gates were over 20 feet high, so thick it took 20 men to close them. *ELM*

This is on the 21st of the month Iyyar. Let me tell you what this day is. It was the last day of the second Passover season. The 2nd Passover was to be undertaken by people who were out of town or unclean or who had some other difficulty during the 1st Passover. It is interesting that this was on the last day of the second Passover, as though this sign may be near to the last one to be given. Here is what happened:

“For before sunset throughout all parts of the country [of Judea] chariots were seen in the air and armed battalions hurtling through the clouds and encompassing the cities.”

• *Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:299*

The word **“encompassing”** here in the Greek is exactly the one in the Gospels (*i.e.*, Luke 21:20). They were encompassing Jerusalem and the cities. This was not seen by a few quacks, the whole country saw it. He says, you would not believe it and you would consider it a fable, but this is what happened.

The 6th Sign

Here is the 6th sign which came about two weeks later:

“Moreover, at the feast which is called Pentecost the priests [all 24 of them] on entering the inner court of the Temple by night as their custom was in the discharge of their ministrations, reported that they were conscious, first of a commotion and a din [a great noise], and after that of a voice as of a host [an army], ‘WE ARE DEPARTING HENCE’ [from here].”

• *Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:299–300*

That was all that was heard, **“We are leaving this place.”** This is most interesting. It did not say, **“I am leaving this place.”** It said, **“WE are leaving this place,”** on the day of Pentecost in 66 AD. Here are these other signs going on before, but this occurs on a very strategic day, Pentecost a day of beginnings. Christ told the apostles to wait in Jerusalem until the day of Pentecost and then the Gospel message began to go out. I could show other things in the book of Acts that demonstrate that the day of Pentecost signifies the completion of one thing and the beginning of another. Is it interesting that on the day of Pentecost exactly 33 years from the time that the Gospel started in Jerusalem — to the very day — this announcement and sign occurred.

Here is the Temple, completely finished 2 years before, everything ready for God to be in there, and it says, **“We are departing from this place.”** Do you know what that means? Elohim was departing. Elohim is in the plural. It is perfectly proper to say, **“WE are departing from here.”** This testimony comes from a priest called Josephus, but even besides that, do you know how many people there were in the Temple at that time? There were 24 of the chief priests. Every one of them must have come out and said, that is what we heard. Clearly we heard it. That is pretty good evidence is it not? I do not have the slightest doubt that it happened.

In my view this is God giving this as a sign to tell people to get out of Jerusalem. What did Christ say? When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, get out of the midst of it. Is it not interesting that they had just two weeks before on the 21st of Iyyar seen these armies throughout the whole nation. Fearful sights and great signs shall there be in heaven, which is what the Scripture says.

I have no doubt at all that Christ was giving these signs to the people to get out. There were some other people there in the midst of Jerusalem — Christians. Josephus says that after this, the wise knew what it meant, and they got out. If God Himself is leaving, it is about time that they leave. Do you know what this means? If God is saying, **“We are leaving this place,”** then when God left on that day of Pentecost in 66 AD, that building was no more sacred than any ordinary house or cow barn. If God is not in it, it is no longer holy.

The Apostle Paul

Do you know what happened some three years before this? A man was living in the city of Rome. His name was the apostle Paul. Before these signs occurred he made a statement when he revealed the Mystery (given to him and to other apostles as well), it says:

“For He is our Peace, Who makes both one, and razes [breaks down] the central wall of the barrier [between us and God] (the enmity in His flesh), nullifying the law of precepts in decrees, [Why?] that He should be creating the two, in Himself, into one new humanity, making peace.”

• *Ephesians 2:14–15 CLV*

That breaking down of the middle wall of partition meant that anybody — both Jew and Gentile — could come into the midst of the Temple. God is no longer in Temples made with hands. By the breaking down of that middle wall of partition about 2½ or 3 years before these signs took place, God has already given to His apostles the knowledge that from now on He would be in Temples in the mind and not in a house made by hands. [Mark 14:58; Acts 7:48, 17:24, 19:26, 2 Corinthians 5:1; Hebrews 9:11, 24. DWS]

Here is Josephus saying with the witness of the 24 priests (who are reflective of the 24 elders in the book of Revelation) hearing, **“We are leaving.”** That left that Temple desolate of God. It was not but 3½ years later that the Temple lay in complete desolation. There was not a stone left on it. But when it was destroyed, it was not God’s house because God (that is, Elohim) left on Pentecost day in 66 AD.

Eusebius, the Christian historian, along with Epiphanius, a Christian historian of later times, say that this was the sign to the Christians to get out of Jerusalem because that city was left desolate. God was not in it anymore. Lots of people did not like what the apostle Paul said about breaking down of the middle wall of partition. But it did not take very much longer when they heard that God Himself was leaving the city. It was a vindication of what the apostle Paul was teaching. Clearly it was.

The 7th Sign

“But a further portent was even more alarming. Four years before the war [during the time of Tabernacles in 62 AD] when the city was enjoying profound peace and prosperity, there came to the feast at which it was the custom of all Jews to erect tabernacles to God, one Joshua, son of Ananias, a rude peasant, who, standing in the Temple, suddenly began to cry out ...”

• *Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:300–301*

Before I tell what Joshua cried out, let me tell you what happened at Passover in 62 AD, just 6 months before when one of the leaders of the New Testament *ekklesia* was killed. His name was James, the half-brother of Jesus, the one who wrote the epistle of James in the Bible. He had a brother named Jude, who wrote the little book by his name. James was the head of the Jerusalem *ekklesia*. Josephus even mentions the killing of James.⁹ He was killed at Passover in 62 AD.

Six months later at Tabernacles this Joshua the son of Ananias commences to say some things. Even Josephus felt it was rather significant, that is why he puts it in here. This man continued to say these things for 7 years and 5 months. His preaching ended when he was on the roof near the wall of the city while the Romans were attacking. A stone came and hit Joshua when he was saying his last prophecy (which I shall mention in a moment) to the city and the people of Jerusalem.

The historian Eusebius and others have said that the reason God gave up on the Jews in Jerusalem was that when James (the head of the *ekklesia* and highly esteemed as a righteous man even by the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees) was killed, that was the end of God’s patience. From that moment on it was to be deterioration and the war of the Romans against the Jews that led to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. All of it was in retribution to the killing of James. It was more than that, but that was the tradition. James was killed at the Passover of 62 AD. Six months later here is what started:

**“Joshua, son of Ananias, a rude peasant, who, standing in the Temple, suddenly began to cry out,
‘A voice from the east,
a voice from the west,**

⁹ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 20.200–201. DWS

*a voice from the four winds;
a voice against Jerusalem and the sanctuary,
a voice against the bridegroom and the bride,
a voice against all the people.'*

Day and night he went about all the alleys with this cry on his lips. Some of the leading citizens, incensed at these ill-omened words, arrested the fellow and severely chastised him. But he without a word on his own behalf or for the private ear of those who smote him only continued his cries as before.

Thereupon, the magistrates, supposing, as was indeed the case that the man was under some supernatural impulse, brought him before the Roman governor; there, although flayed to the bone with scourges, he neither sued for mercy nor shed a tear, but, merely introducing the most mournful of variations into his ejaculation [words from his mouth], responded to each stroke with 'Woe to Jerusalem!'

When Albinus, the [Roman] governor asked him who [he was] and whence he was [where he came from] and why he uttered these cries, he answered him never a word, but unceasingly reiterated his dirge over the city, until Albinus pronounced him a maniac and let him go.

During the whole period up to the outbreak of the war he neither approached nor was seen talking to any of the citizens, but daily, like a prayer that he had conned [dishonestly] repeated his lament, 'Woe to Jerusalem!' He neither cursed any of those who beat him from day to day, nor blessed those who offered him food: to all men that melancholy presage was his one reply. His cries were loudest at the festivals.

So for seven years and five months he continued his wail, his voice never flagging nor his strength exhausted, until the siege, having seen his presage verified, he found his rest. For, while going his round and shouting in piercing tones from the wall, 'Woe once more to the city and to the people and to the Temple,' as he added a last word, 'and woe to me also,' a stone hurled from the ballista struck and killed him on the spot. So with those ominous words still on his lips he passed away."

• *Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:300–309*

You can call him a maniac if you want to, but there are interesting things there. Josephus found it worthy to record this. He proclaimed for 7 years and 5 months starting with the next festival after James was killed. Christ gave His prophecies some 30 years before. What would you do if you were in Jerusalem at Pentecost 66 AD, and the priests come out and said, we heard "**We are departing hence?**" and they say they are leaving.

Back To The 3rd Sign

Now I will return to the 3rd sign. I did not want to give it in order because it does sound ridiculous on the surface. But I do not see why this 3rd sign should be ridiculous. Josephus states that this sign also took place in the Temple. The people in the Temple were careful about what type of animals would come in there for sacrifice. If they found a little blemish or anything out of place the animal was not allowed on the altar. Josephus gives this 3rd sign that took place at Passover 66 AD. I give it for what it is worth. You might put it down to the peculiarities of the age, that it did not happen at all, and this is just a bunch of superstitious people who believed this. Maybe so, maybe not.

"At that same feast [just after the 2nd sign, the great light over the altar] **A COW that had been brought by some one for sacrifice GAVE BIRTH** [just before it was to be killed] **TO A LAMB in the midst in the court of the Temple."**

• *Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:292*

The cow gave birth to a fetus of a lamb. This is crazy in one way. But now, you know why I did not want to put this in there in the proper sequence, all the others make good sense according to what we have here. I scratch my head on this 3rd one also. At first I said that it was probably superstition of some kind, but look,

this was at the Passover time when there would be a host of people there, at the altar, in the inner court of the Temple where the priests would have been, being most particular over what type of animals went in. Could they tell the difference between a goat, a lamb, and a calf? I think so.

Whoever heard of such a thing? But whoever heard of these other things which also were signs and miracles? I do not see any problem with any of this myself, because if a virgin can conceive and bear a son and call Him “Immanuel,” I see no reason this could not happen either. Is it not interesting that it is a lamb being born, coming from a different type of animal, as though a new type of creation is starting soon, a new way of looking at things? What was born was from a cow, a bovine animal, powerful, but now an innocent and weak lamb on the altar. Thirty-three years before this time a lamb was killed in Jerusalem. So was the 3rd of 7 signs.

Josephus’ Conclusion

Is it not interesting that Josephus tells of 7 signs before the war to warn God’s people, and all people, to flee or to get out? Here is what Josephus says in conclusion after mentioning the 7 signs that took place before the war, when people could have fled if they chose. It looks like these signs dovetail closely to what Christ said. If I had been a Christian living in Jerusalem or Judea at the time I think I would have hightailed it out of there, like most of the Christians did.

“Reflecting on these things one will find that God has a care for men, and by all kinds of premonitory signs shows His people the way of salvation, while they owe their destruction to [their own] folly and calamities of their own choosing. Thus the Jews, after the demolition of Antonia, reduced the Temple to a square, although they had it recorded in their oracles that the city and the sanctuary would be taken when the Temple would become four-square.”

• *Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:309–311*

The translator, Thackeray, has a little note on this, **“Authority unknown.”** You can look anywhere in the Old Testament and you cannot find a thing where it says if the Temple becomes four-square, then that is when it will be destroyed. But wait a minute. Josephus says this was found **“recorded in their oracles”** which means the Old Testament. Go to Ezekiel chapter 40:

“In the twenty-fifth year of our exile [the first year of Jehoiakim], at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was smitten, on this very day the hand of Yahweh came on me, and He brought me there.”

• *Ezekiel 40:1 CLV*

Do you know what that tells us? The selfsame day that the Temple was smitten, 14 years later Ezekiel gets this prophecy. It goes through Ezekiel chapters 40, 41, all the way to chapter 48, those 9 chapters, first came to Ezekiel on the 10th day of the month, on the 10th of Ab, the very anniversary of the destruction of the Temple. Do you know what this is all about? A new Temple is to be built. Read it. Read all of it. Go to the 47th and 48th chapters of Ezekiel. Do you know what this new Temple will be? It will be four-square, on all sides exactly even. There is hardly a doubt that this is what Josephus is referring to.

Some way, somehow they made a connection that with the destruction of the former Temple on the 10th of Ab there will be, when the Temple becomes some way **“four-square,”** a new era is about to dawn. This is precisely what Josephus says. He speaks about the Temple, that when it should become **four-square**, it will be taken. It is most interesting that Ezekiel saw that very vision of that Temple being **four-square** on the 10th of Ab, the anniversary in the day of King Nebuchadnezzar.

I will go one step further. In the book of Revelation chapter 21, it speaks about the new Jerusalem coming out of heaven. You know what it is? It is four-square, indicating a new creation.

“Thus the Jews after the demolition of Antonia, reduced the Temple to a square, although they had it recorded in their oracles that the city and the sanctuary would be taken when the Temple should become four-square.”

But what more than all else incited them to the war was an ambiguous oracle [a prophecy], likewise found in their sacred scriptures [the Old Testament], to the effect that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world. This they understood to mean someone of their own race, and many of their wise men went astray in their interpretation of it.”

• **Josephus, Jewish Wars 6:311–313**

Do you know what that “**ambiguous oracle**” was? It was Daniel chapter 9, about the messiah coming at the end of 70 weeks. The Jews had no doubt that the messianic age was going to occur to them at that time. Christ did come in that period just before. But they got the idea that the prophecy will be fulfilled in their time, and they went to war against the Romans, in spite of all these signs. In fact, how did they interpret these signs? They interpreted them all as good.

People Today

What do people do today? They do the same thing. I am not against people who love miracles and signs. I like them too. But many people that get a sign or a miracle that happens to the hour, or it happens to the dollar of getting something — this is beautiful. It is wonderful. If you get a healing and it is precise, it may come from God. But I have talked to lots of people who experienced such miracles and signs, and spoke to them about biblical principles, teachings that are clear in the Scripture. They say that they have God’s Holy Spirit, they know, because He would not do all these things for them unless they were believing and teaching the truth — and they are absolutely wrong, according to the Bible, on every point.

Am I hitting them over the head? No. But I tell you this, miracles and signs can be some of the most dangerous things that people can get into because they misinterpret and in many cases they go contrary to the very principles of the Scriptures. That is why if you ever have miracles, and I hope you have a thousand of them, your teaching had better be in conformity with the divine Word of God, or you will be in trouble.

Here are all types of signs that even Josephus mentions and what did Christ say to the apostles when he talked about these signs (back to Luke chapter 21), when they asked him “what signs?” They wanted signs also. They asked, “**When shall these things be,**” the destruction of Jerusalem, and “**What sign will there be when these things will come to pass.**” The first thing Christ said to them was: “**Take heed that you be not deceived.**” Signs are open to deception if we are not discerning according to biblical teaching.

What Christ said here in many cases in Luke chapter 21 refers to Jerusalem and Judea back at the time of Josephus who gave a commentary on the very matter. I think all these signs that Josephus records did take place. I see no reason they did not happen. There is too much evidence to show otherwise. I agree with Josephus that God beforehand always gives information or something to show His people what will happen before He does it. That fits with Amos 3:6–7. **Read or reread** Dr. Martin’s article, “**How to Interpret Biblical Signs.**”

At the end of the age we are approaching now many of these prophecies will come to pass in their complete fulfillment. God will not leave us without knowledge. Almost all of these signs were in the midst of a period when there were festivals, when there were all types of people present, not in some ordinary day of the year, but when lots of people were around, or when there were official priests, all 24 of them that could not lie. If one lied, the others would say he was a liar. The evidence is too compelling.

God will give us knowledge, but I tell you what will happen. Even when the knowledge is given and some of these things begin to take place in Israel and Jerusalem in the next few years in advance of us (perhaps another great light will come down upon the altar), I know exactly how it will be interpreted. Now God is with us. Now the great Shekinah glory is with us. If something happens, the doors of blessing are open to us. If God gives another sign of armies in the heavens, “Now we will be victorious and bring in the Messianic kingdom.” Everything, “**We are departing hence,**” will be interpreted as “**we are now to go and give the Gospel to the world from Jerusalem.**” Do you see how these things will be interpreted? People will believe these things because they want to, and because they will be deceived.

The signs will occur at the end of the age, and the vast majority of the people, be they Jews or Gentiles, will misinterpret the signs that are coming in the heavens. They will misappropriate them to themselves, and

you know who will come up? A man called the antichrist, the man of sin. He will look so close to Christ that people will be within an ace of accepting him. You would too, and I would too, if we did not know better.

Deception

Remember, the first thing Christ said about signs and wonders when His intimate disciples asked Him, He did not say, “when this occurs, when that occurs,” He says, “**Be you not deceived.**” Josephus here says they were deceived on point after point after point when they should have known better.

In closing, the apostle Paul, before all this happened concerning the Temple, he was in the city of Rome saying that the middle wall of partition is broken down. We do not **need** the Temple any longer. God is not in a physical Temple. He is now making a Temple of individuals made up of blocks and stones of people: patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and you and I, and we do not need all these things. The apostle Paul was strongly opposed by Jews and even by Christians because of what he was saying against the Temple.

It was not but a few years later when the Christians heard of Elohim “departing” from that Temple, and a few years after that — about 4 years later — when the Temple was in smoldering ruins — most of the people said Paul was right after all. Not only did they say he was right, but they also said Christ was right.

Now do you see why Christianity began to grow like wildfire **after** 70 AD? Judaism in a sense went down and even Christianity began to go into corruption, which is true. But there were many, many evidences; Christ’s prophecies were given **33 years** or so in advance. They were fulfilled almost precisely to the dotting of the “i” and the crossing of the “t.”

I can say look to the future. We have not seen the end of things yet. We have some exciting times ahead. Let us make sure we interpret the prophecies and the signs correctly. They will only be interpreted correctly if each of us is in conformity to the divine standard, which we should know we can rely on. That standard is the Word of God.

Ernest L. Martin, 1982

Edited by David Sielaff, July 2004, May 2025

Summarized Chronology of the Signs of Josephus And Other Events – DWS

Sometime in Sabbatical Year 62/63 AD the **Mystery was revealed** to Paul and others.¹⁰

Spring 62 AD	Before the Signs Death of James the Righteous (half-brother of Jesus)	
Fall 62 AD (continues to 70 AD)	Sign 7: JOSHUA BEGINS his prophesying	
C O N T I N U E D	Spring 63 AD	Sign 3: Lamb born from a cow inside the Temple
	Late 65, early 66 AD	Sign 1: Star like a sword and comet appear in night sky
	Spring 66 AD	Sign 2: Brilliant light on altar and sanctuary of the Temple
	Spring 66 AD	Sign 4: Doors of Eastern Gate open on their own
	Spring 66 AD	Sign 5: Chariots and armies seen in the sky throughout Judea
	Spring 66 AD	Sign 6: Voice from Inner Court, “ We are leaving from here. ”
Fall 70 AD	Sign 7: Jerusalem surrounded, JOSHUA DIES — city and Temple destroyed	

¹⁰ See Dr. Martin’s article, “[The History of the Revelation of the Mystery.](#)” DWS