

The Approach of the Roman Army

At this critical and alarming conjuncture, intelligence arrived that the Roman army was approaching the city. The Jews were petrified with astonishment and fear; there was no time for counsel, no hope of pacification, no means of flight:—all was wild disorder and perplexity:—nothing was to be heard but “*the confused noise of the warrior,*”—nothing to be seen but “*garments rolled in blood,*”—nothing to be expected from the Romans but signal and exemplary vengeance.

A ceaseless cry of combatants was heard day and night, and yet the lamentations of mourners were still more dreadful. The consternation and terror which now prevailed, induced many of the inhabitants to desire that a foreign foe might come, and effect their deliverance.

Such was the horrible condition of the place when Titus and his army presented themselves, and encamped before Jerusalem; but, alas! not to deliver it from its miseries, but to fulfil the prediction, and vindicate the benevolent warning of our Lord: “*When ye see (he had said to his disciples) the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place*, and Jerusalem surrounded by armies (or camps,) then let those*

*who are in the midst of Jerusalem depart, and let not those who are in the country enter into her,” for “then know that the desolation thereof is nigh**.”*

These armies, we do not hesitate to affirm, were those of the Romans, who now invested the city. From the time of the Babylonian captivity, idolatry had been held as an abomination by the Jews. This national aversion was manifested even against the images of their gods and emperors, which the Roman armies carried in their standards; so that, in a time of peace, Pilate, and afterwards Vitellius, at the request of some eminent Jews, on this account avoided marching their forces through Judea.

Of the desolating disposition which now governed the Roman army, the history of the Jewish war, and especially of the final demolition of the holy city, presents an awful and signal example. Jerusalem was not captured merely, but, with its celebrated temple, laid in ruins. Lest, however, the army of Titus should not be sufficiently designated by this expression, our Lord adds, *“Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together***.”*

The Jewish State, indeed, at this time, was fitly compared to a carcass. The sceptre of Judah, i.e. its civil and political authority, the life of its religion, and the glory of its temple, was departed. It was, in short, morally and judicially dead. The eagle, whose ruling instinct is rapine and murder, as fitly represented the fierce and sanguinary temper of the Romans, and, perhaps, might be intended to refer also to the principal figure on their ensigns, which, however obnoxious to the Jews, were at length planted in the midst of the holy city, and finally on the temple itself.

(Excerpt from *The Destruction of Jerusalem, An Absolute and Irresistible Proof of the Divine Origin of Christianity...* sixth ed. by George Peter Holford, Philadelphia: Published by Joseph Sharpless, 1814, 62-65; paragraph and footnote structure modified)

* Not only was the temple and mountain on which it stood accounted *holy*, but also the whole city of Jerusalem, and several furlongs of land round about it. *Vide* Neh. xi. 1; Isaiah liii. 1; Daniel ix. 24; and Mat. xxvii. 53.

** Mat. xxiv. 15, 21; Luke xxi. 20, 21.

*** Mat. xxiv. 28.