

Study 40: The Song of Moses, Part 3 Deuteronomy 28-32

Last week, we discovered that the fulfillment of the Song of Moses (Deut 32) is associated directly with the 1st Century AD. Remember why? (See Deut 32:20, 29). We continue now, beginning in verse 23:

**Deut 32 23 “I will heap calamities on them
and spend my arrows against them.**

This is a fulfillment of one of the curses of the covenant:

Deut 28:49-52 The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an **eagle** swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, 50 a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young. 51 They will devour the young of your livestock and the crops of your land until you are destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine or olive oil, nor any calves of your herds or lambs of your flocks until you are ruined. 52 **They will lay siege** to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will **besiege** all the cities throughout the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Note that in Deut 32:23, God says they are **His** arrows. This is similar to the parable that Jesus told of the wedding banquet:

Matt 22 2 “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3 He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

4 “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

5 “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. 6 The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. 7 The king was enraged. He sent **his army** and destroyed those murderers and **burned their city**.

Most of the time, God uses *means* to accomplish His purposes in the world (e.g. people, natural events, etc. vs. direct intervention, e.g. miracles, fire from the sky, etc.). In AD 66, the Roman general, Cestius Gallus, surrounded Jerusalem with his army because a rebellion had started in Israel. According to the Jewish historian, Josephus:

...[W]hen he had put his army in array, he brought it into the city. Now for the people, they were kept under by the seditious; but the seditious themselves were greatly affrighted at the good order of the Romans, and retired from the suburbs, and retreated into the inner part of the city, and into the temple. But when Cestius was come into the city, he set the part called Bezetha...on fire; as he did also to the timber market; after which he came into the upper city, and pitched his camp over against the royal palace; and **had he but at this very time attempted to get within the walls by force, he had won the city presently, and the war had been put an end to at once**; but Tyrannius Priseus, the muster-master of the army, and a great number of the officers of the horse, had been corrupted by Florus,¹ and diverted him from that his attempt; and that was the occasion that this war lasted so very long, and thereby the Jews were involved in such incurable **calamities** [*The Wars of the Jews* 2:19:4].²

It should be remembered that Jesus, in **Luke 21:20-21** said, “When you see **Jerusalem being surrounded by armies**, you will know that its **desolation**³ is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.”

Some people object, saying that it would be impossible to escape the city *after* it’s been surrounded. But Jesus knew what He was talking about. Josephus continues:

6. And now it was that a horrible fear seized upon the seditious, insomuch that many of them ran out of the city, as though it were to be taken immediately; but the people upon this took courage, and where the wicked part of the city gave ground, thither did they come, in order to set open the gates, and to admit Cestius as their benefactor, who, had he but continued the

¹ Gessius Florus, Procurator of Judea from AD 64-66.

² *The Wars of the Jews* is called *The Jewish War* in some editions of Josephus.

³ Matthew (24:15) and Mark (13:14) call this the “abomination of desolation,” or the “abomination that causes desolation,” referring back to Dan 9:27.

siege a little longer, had certainly taken the city; but it was, I suppose, owing to the aversion God had already at the city and the sanctuary, that he was hindered from putting an end to the war that very day.

7. It then happened that Cestius was not conscious either how the besieged despaired of success, nor how courageous the people were for him; and so he recalled his soldiers from the place, and by despairing of any expectation of taking it, without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, without any reason in the world [*The Wars of the Jews* 2:19:6-7].

Translator, William Whiston, said in a footnote here:

There may another very important, and very providential, reason be here assigned for this strange and foolish retreat of Cestius; which, if Josephus had been now a Christian, he might probably have taken notice of also; and that is, the affording the Jewish Christians in the city an opportunity of calling to mind the prediction and caution given them by Christ about thirty-three years and a half before, that “when they should see the abomination of desolation” [the idolatrous Roman armies, with the images of their idols in their ensigns, ready to lay Jerusalem desolate] “stand where it ought not;” or “in the holy place;” or “when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies,” they should then “flee to the mountains.”

The Church historian, Eusebius, wrote:

The whole body, however, of the church of Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella. Here those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and His apostles finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of these evildoers from the earth [*Ecclesiastical History* 3:5:3].

Josephus says, “After this calamity had befallen Cestius, many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink...” [*The Wars of the Jews* 2:20:1].

Whiston’s footnote continues:

By complying with which those Jewish Christians fled to the mountains of Perea, and escaped this destruction. Nor was there, perhaps, any one instance of a...more providential conduct than this retreat of Cestius...during this whole siege of Jerusalem; which yet was providentially, such a “great tribulation, as had not been from the beginning of the world to that time; no, nor ever should be.”

This last statement is referring, of course, to what Jesus had predicted:

Matt 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be [NKJV].

Josephus had this to say about that time period:

...[I]t had so come to pass, that our city Jerusalem had arrived at an higher degree of felicity than any other city under the Roman government, and yet at last fell into the sorest of calamities again. Accordingly it appears to me, that the misfortunes of all men, **from the beginning of the world**, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were... [*The Wars of the Jews* Preface: 4].

In a footnote here, Whiston, said:

That these calamities of the Jews, who were our Saviour’s murderers, were to be the greatest that had ever been since the beginning of the world, our Saviour had directly foretold, Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19; Luke 21:23,24; and that they proved to be such accordingly, Josephus is here a most authentic witness.