

# Sixth Trumpet, part 1

Revelation 9:13-16

By Phillip G. Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2016-09-18

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## Text

13 So the sixth angel trumpeted, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 So the four angels were released—they had been prepared for the hour and the day and month and year—so that they might kill a third of mankind. 16 And the number of the mounted troops was a hundred million (I heard their number). 17 And in the vision I saw the horses like this: those who rode them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulfur yellow; the heads of the horses were like lions' heads; out of their mouths came fire, smoke and brimstone. 18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone that came out of their mouths. 19 For the capability of the horses is in their mouths—and in their tails, because their tails are like snakes, having heads, and with them they do harm.>

20 Yet the rest of the people, those who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as to stop worshiping the demons, even the idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; 21 and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their fornication or their thefts.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

We have come to the sixth trumpet, and I need to speak again about chronology and timing issues. And I think you will find this first major point to be interesting. Chronology is not most people's favorite thing, but this is a little different.

And I think it has perhaps been a mistake for me to constantly convert Hebrew and Seleucid dates to our modern Gregorian Calendar. I've done that to try to make it easier to understand. But because there are so many differences of opinion on how to convert those dates, my doing so may actually confuse you when you read the literature.

If you stick to the Hebrew calendar that was used by John and by the Hebrew historians there is an absolute mathematical precision. I believe there is a precision with Gregorian dates too, but it involves too many assumptions. So from here on in I will probably simply refer to the Hebrew dates. I am in the process of making a time-line that has all of the dates. So if you want to see the conversions, you can. I think Josh and Tobias will be making that available online. And this week I uploaded a bunch of new dates that relate to this book.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of the Majority Text by Wilbur M. Pickering - [The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken](#). The first word "And" was changed by me to "Then."

## **I. The sequence: Revelation has a very precise chronology**

So point number I says, "The sequence: Revelation has a very precise chronology." We have been seeing that point by point in chapters 5-9, and we can see that again here. And because it is constantly being denied, I need to constantly affirm it.

### **A. *This trumpet is blown after the events of verses 1-12 ("Then"; verse 12 - "One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.")***

Verse 13 says, "Then..." That word indicates a sequence. And while some want to diminish the time sequence here and simply translate that as an "And," if you look at the previous verse, I don't see how that is possible. Verse 12 says, "One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things." Notice the time sequence. Trumpet five is past; it is finished. And the next two woes are yet to come. I don't know how so many people can gloss over this time sequence - including many partial preterists. But it is important to note.

### **B. *John's time sequence follows a calendar that calculates down to the hour ("the hour and the day and month and year" - v. 15)***

And then comes John's statement in verse 15, "So the four angels were released — they had been prepared for the hour and the day and month and year — so that they might kill a third of mankind." But especially notice the phrase, "prepared for the hour and the day and month and year." John's chronology follows the Hebrew calendar, and the more I have studied the chronology of the events, the more I have been astonished at the details involved in figuring out chronology. And what makes it especially complicated is converting their days (which begin at 6 pm) and their months (which are lunar, and don't line up with our months) to our Gregorian calendar. It sometimes makes your head spin. If you do not account for every hour and every day, you can be off in your calculations. That is why I am so thankful to have a calendar program that does this automatically. And I have also spent countless hours over the past few years poring over the writings and the mathematical calculations of calendar experts, and you can understand why there are differences that arise.

So I plan to stick to the Hebrew, Roman, and Seleucid dates of the ancient historians. They match perfectly to the day in my calendar program. But

without boring you to tears (which I don't plan to do), I can't as fully awe you with the amazing wonder of Biblical timing. But let me assure you that there is a marvelous pattern and symmetry in God's plan for the ages. I'll just give you a few hints from my conclusions.

Let's go back to Pentecost (which was at the beginning of chapter 8) - and actually, I will go back to the first Pentecost in AD 30. And I want to show you some hints of why that was such a pivotal date, and why it is a pivotal date in the book of Revelation.

- My calendar program shows that it is exactly 77,777 weeks from Moses' burning bush to Pentecost. What is the significance of that? Both were commissions to leaders to form a new covenant community. But what an amazing number: 77,777<sup>2</sup>
- Here is a second wierd "coincidence" - it was exactly 77,700 weeks from the dedication of the Tabernacle and the Holy Spirit manifesting His presence with God's people in that Tabernacle under Moses to the time of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the Spirit again manifested His presence with His people. Why the even number? Exactly 77,700 weeks. Well, the number seven is the number of completion and perfection.
- Third, that was an exact number of Jubilee cycles. A jubilee cycle was 50 years and had prophetic significance of bringing liberty.
- Fourth, Acts 2 was exactly 7 weeks from Christ's death. That number 7 keeps cropping up. And I will skip over a bunch of other cool correlations of ages past with Pentecost.

Since we are focused on the war against Jerusalem, let me point out some things that are just too exact to be mere coincidences.

- Is it by accident that the AD 70 temple was burned on Ab 9, the very date that it was burned by Nebuchadnezzar in the Old Testament?
- And even more strange, is it an accident that it is exactly 240,000 days from that first temple destruction to this temple destruction? Exactly 240,000 days! That is just too weird to be a coincidence.
- Is it an accident that this also happened to be 77,770 weeks after Moses died?
- Is it by accident that the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem in AD 70 exactly 40 years to the very day that Jesus was crucified (on Ab 14, or Nisan 14 - different Hebrew names for the same month)?
- Is it an accident that this very day was a lunar eclipse? No, it was symbolizing Israel's lights going out - the end of that nation.
- Is it by accident that Cestius blew his trumpets of war on the very day that the first angel blew his heavenly trumpet of war? No. The Feast of Trumpets was God's warning of judgment for Israel. And that brief war was the last opportunity that any people had to flee. And Eusebius says that all Christians heeded that warning. And by the way, The Feast of Trumpets always occurs on Tishri 1, which is always a noon moon (cf. Psalm 81:3-4). There is prophetic significance to all of

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<sup>2</sup> My calendar program is the one developed by E. W. Faulstich. The figures can be cross-checked with calculations he has done in his collected writings.

these things.

- Is it by accident that the second angelic trumpet corresponds with the next festival trumpet blast - Tabernacles?
- Is it by accident that the third angelic trumpet corresponds with the next festival trumpet blast - the Day of Atonement? No. There are no accidents. My paper on the Festivals of Israel show that they were prophetic statements of the ending of the Old Covenant and especially the ending of the temple. There is only one festival that is yet to be fulfilled - it is the Feast of Purim, which points to the salvation of Israel in the future and even greater blessings to the Gentiles - but no temple. All the previous festivals had to be fulfilled while the temple was still standing.
- Is it by accident that from Moses' first reading in Deuteronomy (after the forty years and the last unbeliever from the wilderness generation had died), to the time that Titus sells the survivors into slavery (after the forty years preceding AD 70) is exactly 77,777 weeks? Wow! That is another perfect correlation of exactly the same number. Coincidence? I think not.
- Is it by accident that Jerusalem fell in a Jubilee year? I think not.

These are not coincidences. God is following a pattern that showcases both His sovereignty and His mercy - to those who have eyes to see. And so it is not simply a "throw away phrase" (as some people treat it) when verse 15 speaks of the timing of these events being down to the very day and hour. And we will be digging into some cool stuff on the 1260 days and the 42 months when we get to chapter 11.

***C. Verse 13-21 serve as the introduction to or overview of the entire sixth trumpet (covering 42 months), and 10:1-11:14 deal with two other things that happened during those 42 months.***

But having said that, I do want to point out that there is a structure that needs to be noted in this sixth trumpet if we want to be exact in our interpretation. Most commentators treat chapter 10:1 through chapter 11:14 as two interludes. And it is true - they are. But they still occur during the time of the sixth trumpet. The explanation for the odd structure is pretty simple. In verses 13-21 of our chapter God gives an overview of the entire sixth trumpet - from 67-70 AD. It is kind of an introductory summary of what will happen. Then in chapters 10 and 11 he outlines two other things that occur during the period of that sixth trumpet. So you can treat these verses kind of as an introduction.

And by the way, it is the only way to explain how one third of mankind is killed. To my knowledge, one third of mankind is not killed in AD 67, but by the time we get to 69 (the year of the four emperors) there is civil war and massive numbers of Romans and other nationalities die from civil war,

famine, plague, and other means. So verses 13-21 are going to cover the next three years, right up to the time before the seventh trumpet, and then chapters 10 and 11 will deal with two topical subjects that occurred during that same period of time. Does that make sense? Well, enough on the structure.

## **II. God is sovereign over this war (v. 13a)**

The next point says that God is sovereign over this war that Vespasian brings. And of course, we have been seeing that John keeps harping on that point over and over again in these visions. God is sovereign. We even saw His sovereignty in the amazing calendar numbers that I have already given to you. But you can clearly see it once again in the first phrase of verse 13: "So the sixth angel trumpeted..."

We have been seeing that heaven's armies are more critical to world history than man's armies. I was reading again in Josephus this past week, and was reminded of three times that Titus was almost killed by the Jews, yet miraculously escaped. Two times he fought his way through such a huge throng of Jewish soldiers that Romans and Jews alike were astonished. He should have been dead. Now, Titus attributes that escape to his gods. Josephus attributes it to Jehovah. But it is clear that heaven's armies were guiding this war from start to finish - and you can come to that conclusion just by reading the secular histories. It was one strange war. But it is good to be reminded that we have angels involved in these battles.

## **III. God's heavenly kingdom responds to earth's prayers (v. 13b)**

But it was more than just the angels. The kingdom of heaven, as directed by Jesus Christ, is impacting the earth. And that is symbolized by the second clause in verse 13: "and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar that is before God." What is the golden altar? Well, he has defined that as the altar of incense in chapter 8:3. Take a look at that.

Rev. 8:3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Now, Jews would have already known what it was. But even for us, it has already been identified as the altar of incense that symbolizes the prayers of the saints. So this voice of Jesus Christ that is directing the armies of heaven is a direct result of the prayers of the church on earth. Is prayer important? Absolutely, yes! I don't know how you could describe it as being more

important than this verse does.

But it mentions the four horns of the golden altar, and anyone who was familiar with the temple rituals would realize that those four horns were one of the most powerful images of God's mercy. The sacrifice would be made in the outer court on the bronze altar and some of the blood would then be brought and smeared on the horns of the golden altar. This symbolized the fact that God's mercies flow only because of the merits of Christ's death, and our prayers are effect only because of Christ's atonement and His prayers.

What a wonderful symbol. Though it may have seemed like the whole world was falling apart, God was answering the church's prayers and God was being merciful to the church. Sometimes judgments on God's enemies are a mercy to the church. Don't think God has failed you if He starts taking down statist governments in the next few years and we enter into financially tough times.

But I do want to spend more time on prayer because these chapters become a turning point for the church. The church had undergone incredible persecution. That persecution ended in Israel because Jews were now so preoccupied with defending themselves from Rome that they had no time to persecute the church. So starting in chapter 8:1-6 the prayers of the saints were continually streaming to the golden altar in heaven. It was those prayers that started this whole series of trumpets. And it was those same prayers that are leading to the judgments of this sixth trumpet.

Without prayer we have no victory. Please turn to Psalm 76. I think this Psalm is such a vivid reminder of what must happen to the church worldwide if we are to see the enemies of the church come under judgment and for the church to emerge as a world-conquering force once again. It will require powerful God-centered prayer. Psalm 76 says,

Psa. 76:1 In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. 2 In Salem also is His tabernacle, And His dwelling place in Zion. 3 There He broke the arrows of the bow, The shield and sword of battle. Selah

Selah means, "Let's pause and think about that for a minute." And we should. What was God's tabernacle? Jesus said that it was intended to be God's house of prayer for all nations. It was par excellence a place of prayer.

But notice that it was in that Tabernacle where God's people were gathered for prayer that the definitive difference in Israel's battles was made. The victory was not simply achieved out there on the battlefield. It was in this house of prayer that God broke the arrows of the bow and the shield and sword of battle.

But then Asaph goes on to say that these prayers must be God-centered, not comfort centered. Our prayers must be passionate for the kingdom and consider God to be more glorious and excellent than winning or gaining plunder. So verse 4 continues:

4 You are more glorious and excellent Than the mountains of prey. 5 The stouthearted were plundered; They have sunk into their sleep; And none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands. 6 At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep. 7 You, Yourself, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence When once You are angry? 8 You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth feared and was still, 9 When God arose to judgment, To deliver all the oppressed of the earth. Selah 10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise You;

Can God use the wrath of the ungodly to undo their kingdom and to bring praise to His name? Yes He can. He did that by turning the wrath of the Jews that had been burning hot against the Christians and moving it against the Romans. And He did that by turning the wrath of the Romans that had been persecuting the Christians and using it against the Jews. Those two enemies of God undid each other. But even after the war, God continued to glorify Himself with both Roman and Jewish persecutions. So verse 10 again:

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise You..."

With the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself.

11 Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay them; Let all who are around Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared. 12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes; He is awesome to the kings of the earth.

That is the kind of faith that Revelation was designed to inspire in God's people. It helps us to look at current events through new eyes.

#### **IV. God's heavenly armies are more powerful than Satan's armies (v. 14)**

And verse 14 of Revelation 9 gives yet another encouragement. It shows how God's heavenly armies are more powerful than Satan's armies. If you are a glass-half-empty type of person you will focus on how scary it is that these demon princes have been loosed. "What are we going to do?" But if you are a glass-half-full type of person, you will notice that those demons were bound and couldn't do anything until it served heaven's purposes. And you will notice that God's angelic armies are tougher and more powerful than Satan's armies - "saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.'" If this good angel can unbind four demons and their armies, we ought to be impressed with the valor of our angels, not discouraged over the strength of Satan's armies.



## **V. These demons are in the region where Vespasian's armies come from ("Euphrates")**

The word "Euphrates" is also significant for the first century Jewish readers. It conjures up numerous Old Testament passages where the enemies of Israel came from - from the north; from the Euphrates (Jer. 6:1,22; 10:22; 13:20; 25:9,26; 46:20,24; 47:2; Ezek. 26:7; 38:6,15; etc.). And this has made some commentators say that this passage must then be referring to a hundred million human soldiers (or if you hold to the minority text, two hundred million human soldiers). It is humans, after all, who came from the north in the Old Testament. But as we will see, everything about these mounted enemies demonstrates that they are demons, not simply men.

But it is not exclusive of human armies. The demons are somehow connected to those human armies. But the focus is on demons. So, just as verses 1-12 show the images in Titus' armies that pointed to the demons they worshiped, these were images on Vespasian's legions that pointed to the demons that they worshiped.

## **VI. The images of the demons were the images on the shields and banners of Vespasians' four legions**

So let's examine the images on Vespasian's four legions.<sup>3</sup> And that they are images can be seen from a number of proofs. First, look at verse 17. It says, "And in the vision I saw the horses..." Visions were characteristically symbolic. Second, the comparative particle ὡς (hos), which means "like" or "as" (not literally identical, but "like" or "as") is used ten times in this chapter, the adjective ὁμοίως (homoios), which means "like" is used four times, and the noun ὁμοίωμα, which means similar to or likeness to is used once. All of those words are clearly pointing to the fact that you cannot take these as literal horses and literal riders. Literal horses don't have snakes as tails. So these are clearly symbols of demons.

If you look at the map of the siege, you will see the specific Legions used by Titus and Vespasian. The four new legions that Vespasian brought up were IV (Scythia), V (Macedonia), VI (Ferrata), and X. They join with XII and XV. And there were parts of some other armies that were present as well. And if you analyze the symbols of these armies, they make perfect sense.

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<sup>3</sup> Conybeare and Howson pointed out that Rome had four legions in the neighborhood of the Euphrates. See their *Life and Epistles of Paul*, p. 603, footnote 2. See also Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.5 and Josephus, *Wars*, 3.1.3; 3.4.2; 5.1.6; 6.1.3; 7.1.3. See Zuleika Rodgers, *Making History: Josephus and Historical Method*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 354. The four legions from the Euphrates were Legio IV (Scythia), V (Macedonia), VI (Ferrata), and X.

First of all, verse 17 says that the horses had heads like lions. The two symbols of Legio V were the eagle and the lion. You can see a coin minted in honor of that legion with an eagle and a lion.

Legio XII from the Euphrates also had an image of lion on their standards - in this case a flying lion. And interestingly, the cavalry assigned with these units had their horses wear head-armor shaped like a lion's head. I found a surviving specimen that is also in your outlines. So the horses literally wore that symbol of a lion on their heads. So did the standard bearers: The symbol of Legio IV was a flying horse. So the Roman legions tried to imitate the demons they worshiped as closely as they could.

What about the fire that came out of their mouths and the tails like a serpent? Most commentaries only focus on the fact that these armies torched everything, including Jerusalem and temple. But the imagery of the armies themselves connects them with smoke and fire. For example, the Chimera god, an example of which I have put in your outlines, has a head like a lion and a tail like a snake with the tip of the tail being the snake's head. The Chimera had different shapes. So these are a collage of images. According to ancient legend, the Chimera was reputed to breath fire out of its mouth. Moderns tend to look at gods like this with amusement, but the ancients feared them and they worshiped them.

But fire and smoke issuing forth may also be connected with two of the gods represented by two of Vespasian's legions - the gods Zeus and Neptune. The Tenth Legion's god, Neptune, worked very closely with Apollo, the demonic king mentioned in verse 11. And the main animal associated with him was horses. And both gods had lightning and fire associated with them. In fact, the Twelfth Legion's symbol was a lightning bolt, to connect them with that. The shields of Legio V Macedonia are of fire and smoke. And I have given you an image of that as well - one of their shields.

And note the red, yellow, and blue that was on that shield and on all the other armor of those Legions. Verse 17 says, "those who rode them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulfur yellow." And I have three pictures that show those typical colors for the legions. Those are the three colors that the legions wore.

The location of Legio VI was up until recently unknown, and thus the question marks on the map. But recent archaeological evidence places them in the Megiddo Valley, exactly where Revelation 16:16 places them.<sup>4</sup> So that

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<sup>4</sup> Surveys conducted by Israeli archaeologist Yotam Tepper found Roman coins and roof tiles stamped with the name of the Sixth Legion.

summarizes the four legions from the Euphrates and how they symbolized the demons that they worshiped. And those gods or demons had up until now been bound at the Euphrates. It is a composite description just like the demons in verses 1-12 were. So Vespasian and Titus join forces in the Spring of AD 67, and they begin an aggressive campaign of war.

## **VII. These demons were used to kill a third of mankind (v. 15)**

Let me give you one more point, and that is seen in verse 15: "So the four angels were released — they had been prepared for the hour and the day and month and year" and here comes the phrase we haven't dealt with yet: "—so that they might kill a third of mankind."

Most Partial Preterist commentaries try to get around this last statement since it seems exaggerated to them. Was a third of mankind really killed at this time? If you read the premillennial arguments against our position, this is claimed to be a slam-dunk argument against us. And I am not at all satisfied with any of the Partial Preterist replies that I have read so far. So this is a serious issue that deserves at least a few minutes of consideration.

Let me first of all discard some lame arguments that have been used by our own camp. Mullholland suggests that all of humanity is divided up into three groups of unequal size: a group sealed by God, a group judged by God, and a group who is neither sealed nor judged but is given opportunity to repent. So one third of those groups are killed on his interpretation. But that seems forced. It seems to refer to one third of mankind, not one of three very unequal groups. So I am not satisfied with that explanation.

Others in our camp apply this to men in Israel alone. While that is technically possible, it doesn't fit two facts: First, far more than one third of Jews were annihilated throughout the empire. Second, it doesn't seem to fit the context of idolatry of literal idols in verses 20-21. Jews didn't worship idols of wood, stone, bronze, and gold. It seems better to take this as a reference to mankind within the Roman Empire or Mankind in general. We have almost no idea of death figures in China and other parts of the world from this time, so I could not say one way or the other of whether one third of the world's population died. I suspect not.

But there are four arguments as to why this is most probably related to the world of the Roman Empire. First, in the parallel section in chapter 16:14 the demons from the Euphrates go out of the beast's mouth, so that connects it to Nero; to Rome. We are not talking about China or North America. Second,

he speaks of the kings at the Euphrates, so that is the second connection that would seem to indicate that it is Gentiles, and goes beyond Jews. But the Euphrates is still within the Roman Empire, so it excludes China. Third, he uses the Greek term οἰκουμένης, which is defined in the dictionary as usually applying to the Roman Empire (or the world as an administrative unit under Rome). And last, it speaks of them coming to the land of Israel to wage war at Megiddo. Rome came to Megiddo, but China didn't. And our passage also speaks of the demons coming from the Euphrates - the place where the auxiliary units combined with Vespasian's four legions that were brought to Israel. And the point is that these demons would be unleashed not just upon Israel (which is where many Partial Preterists restrict this demonic activity), but also upon the whole empire during the next three and a half years. This is a covenantal judgment against both Israel and Rome.

But it still brings up the question, "Did one third of mankind in the Roman Empire die between the years AD 67 and 70?" And I believe the answer is "Yes." Now, Futurists will say, "No way. There is no evidence of this massive number of deaths." People like Tim LaHaye have recently been going on a frontal attack against Partial Preterism, and this is one of their arguments. Well, I beg to differ with them - there is evidence.

Part of the problem is that secular scholars are all over the map on what the population of the empire might have been. I have read numerous papers and books studying the demography of that period.<sup>5</sup> If Gibbon's estimates for the population in the first half of the century are correct (and he has by far the highest estimate at 120 million) then the population was reduced by far more than one third. But others have estimated the Roman population before these years as 83 million (Moreau de Jonnes), 70-90 million (Michael Grant), 70 million (Beloch & Stein), 50-60 million (Finley), 50 million (Duncan, Jones, and McMullen), and 39 million (McEvedy). Well, if you are all over the map like that, it is almost impossible to use demography to prove fulfillment or

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5 Some of the articles I have read are, Raymond W. Goldsmith, "An Estimate of the Size and Structure of the National Product of the Early Roman Empire," (Yale University); Walter Scheidel, "Roman Population Size: The Logi of the Debate," (Stanford University, July 2007); Whitney J. Oates, "The Population of Rome," *Classical Philology*, vol. 29, no. 2, (April, 1934), pp. 101-116; L. Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire*, trans. A. B. Gough (London: Routledge, 1913), IV, 17-28; C. Herschel (*The Two Books on the Water Supply of the City of Rome of Sextus Julius Frontinus* [Boston: Estes, 1899]); Nic Fields, *AD 69: Emperors, Armies & Anarchy*, (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2014); Edwin M. Yamauchi & Marvin R. Wilson, "Census," in *Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical & Post-Biblical Antiquity*, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendriksen Publishers, 2014); Turchin, P., Scheidel, W., & Spencer, C. (2009). *Coin Hoards Speak of Population Declines in Ancient Rome*. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 106(41), 17276-17279. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40485178>; Michael Grant, *The World of Rome* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1960), <http://www.questia.com/read/1506664/the-world-of-rome>.

non-fulfillment. Most people say that it was probably in the 55 million range. But if any of the first four estimates are correct on the size of the population, then liberals have no basis for questioning the inerrant Scriptures. God said that a third would die, and that is good enough for me. But because Premils have recently been bringing this verse up as an objection to Partial Preterism, I do want to deal with it for just a few more minutes to show that there was massive death during this time.

And my chief source of information is Tacitus, a Roman historian who lived during this time. When you read through his five volumes that cover 68-70 AD (they were titled, *The Histories*), you see language that describes absolute carnage during these years. And the carnage was not just against the Barbarians who had revolted. That was bad enough, but the civil wars had Roman legions fighting against other legions and decimating their numbers. Tacitus speaks of "vast numbers" of Roman soldiers being slain.<sup>6</sup> Nor were ordinary citizens exempt. Cremona was massacred, as were other regions.

So why don't we read about these things more? Part of the problem is that many establishment scholars tend to doubt the carnage, and my suspicion on why they would doubt what the ancient historians say is because it mars their bright picture of Rome. And they also tend to downplay other significant changes in numbers. For example, on the diminished size of the city of Rome that I just referenced, Whitney Oates says,

On the face of it, this seems impossible. Despite the fact that ... the city had suffered severely from disease and pestilence, we have no warrant to conclude that the city had decreased in size by over more than half. We are forced, therefore, to reject such an interpretation.<sup>7</sup>

And my response is, "Why? Why is the literal interpretation of the facts impossible?" And why do many scholars dismiss the genocides recorded by historians as being real genocides? It is only a hunch, but I think it is because they idolize Rome. For over 1000 years scholars have looked to Rome for the ideal model of a state. So if historians say that Julius Caesar killed one million Gauls in one conflict, and enslaved another one million, it must be hyperbole. Julius Caesar is too much of a hero to engage in genocide. That's a dirty word - at least when it is used to describe Roman atrocities. Were there really one a half million Jews killed in Israel and 3-7 million more killed throughout the empire? They say that Josephus must have been exaggerating. It sounds too much like genocide, and it gets played down. Even Christians have idolized Greece and Rome. But Rome and

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6 *Histories*, Book III, says, "the ground was strewn with a vast number of mangled and lifeless bodies." But similar language can be seen all through books I-V.

7 [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Journals/CP/29/2/Population\\_of\\_Rome\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Journals/CP/29/2/Population_of_Rome*.html)

Greece were demonic to the core and there is no good reason to idolize them. And I like the way Nic Fields pops this illusion in his recent 2014 history book that covers just the year AD 69. He says,

"Historians generally like to encourage us to remember Rome as a glorious font of western civilization. I find it difficult to agree with this proposal. Rather than be dazzled by its so-called glory, Rome is better seen as 'that immense monument of human arrogance'. So from here on abandon any notions about the glory that was Rome or the noble legacy it ostensibly left us."

And I say, "Amen." By the time you finish his book, you will be sickened by Rome and all that it stands for. Rome's brutality during these next few years depopulated a third of the empire.

Who all died? Let's try to add it up the information that we have. Christians continued to die for more than a year - all the way up until June 9 of 68 when Nero died. As I mentioned in a previous sermon, the church was almost exterminated. As much as the church had advanced around the world, to be almost exterminated would hugely impact the world's population. If the Roman Empire was 55 million (as most establishment scholars believe) and if Christians numbered in the multiplied millions (as we have already established), then we are already racking up some significant percentages. Let's just assume a conservative figure of five million Christians. That would be almost 10% of the total population. It would be less if the higher estimates of the first four scholars were followed, but it is still significant. And if you follow the higher estimates, then it is a slam dunk that a third of the population died.

Jews are the next category that adds to this holocaust. They continued to be killed throughout the empire up until early 74. In fact, the lowest figure of Jews killed throughout the empire that could possibly be supported is 4 million (which is what some establishment scholars hold to), but several scholars have demonstrated that it is much closer to the seven million mark. If the Roman population was higher, then this figure would go up as well, because Jews comprised approximately 15% of the entire population<sup>8</sup> - 10% in the West and 20% in the East.<sup>9</sup> The Jewish deaths alone would have comprised over 10% of the population; and you need to add the Christians to that. So we are already nearing 20%. This would have had a devastating impact upon the population and economy of the empire. And we will deal with that subject in the second half of the book in much more detail.

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8 Paul Barnett, *BEhind the Scenes of the New Testament*, (Downer's Grove, Ill.: Inter-varsity, 1990), p. 158.

9 Neil Faulkner, [Apocalypse: The Great Jewish Revolt Against Rome AD 66-73](#), (Gloucestershire, Eng: Tempus, 2002), p. 38; [Seven Cities of the Apocalypse and Roman Culture](#), Roland H. Worth, Jr., (New York: Paulist, 1999), p. 72.

But the German Batavians were slaughtered in their uprising, and other Barbarian uprisings were brutally suppressed. It is impossible to read through the five volumes of Tacitus' *The Histories*, without being aware of a massive loss of life. Which, by the way, Fields points out was typical of Rome's armies. Life did not mean much to them.

Then there were Roman legions fighting against other Roman legions in the civil wars of AD 69. The best of the best were up against each other. And they showed no mercy to the legions and the auxiliary armies that supported the losing emperor. Remember that AD 69 was the year of the four emperors, and there was civil war through that whole period. But the Batavians themselves were a powerful military, and they annihilated two Roman legions. Tacitus doesn't give an exact number of legionaries killed, but he says that it was "vast numbers." Two additional legions sided with the Batavians, which means that they were the losing side once Rome stomped on them. So we now have four legions in trouble. We don't have percentages to add, but when Tacitus speaks of huge areas being heaped high with the dead bodies of Roman soldiers, there is something that needs to be added to the percentages we have already seen. It's now higher than 20%.

But non-combatant Roman civilians also died all through the year 69, the year of the four emperors. Tacitus' accounts turn your stomach at the brutality of Roman soldiers against their fellow Roman citizens. It was one of the things that made our founding fathers vow that there would be no standing army in America - they feared what an army could do to its own citizens. And actually, you don't have to look beyond the War Between the States, do you? Armies unleashed upon our own citizens produced absolute carnage.

I'll just give you a tiny paragraph from Field's history book on the year AD 69 to give you a tiny glimpse. He talks about what happened to one town for siding with the wrong emperor. They had already lost many lives during the conflict, but Fields describes what happened to the citizens after the surrender had happened. He says,

In any war it is the civilian caught up in the conflict that suffers the most, and the inhabitants of this affluent town were to be no exception; despite a show of surrender, they fell victim to indiscriminate looting, rape and butchery, the most frightful forms of soldier licence, the last vices of war. A holocaust of death and destruction cleaned the entire town. ...

The Flavians were now completely out of hand. They roamed unchecked through the town, raping and murdering, looting and destroying, and then they slept drunken on wine

and lust and blood. Such was the rape of Cremona.<sup>10</sup>

And by the way, the statements that Tacitus, Seutonius, Cassius, and others give of the crazy behavior of the Romans fit our interpretation that these demons were unleashed upon Rome. Just as Josephus describes the Jews as being either insane or demon possessed during the years 68-70, Tacitus' descriptions of the mob activities, suicides, mass killings and torture, and the crazed behaviors of barbarians and Romans alike seems to point to a time of demonization amongst the Romans as well.

And we haven't even touched on those killed by plagues and fires during this time. R. Bagnall and B. Frier have pored over 300 census returns filed in Egypt during the first three centuries since the birth of Jesus and tried to come up with Demographic tables and mortality rates for Romans. Their conclusion was that life expectancy from birth for Roman females was between 20-30 years and males was between 22 and 25 years. If that was true, then something devastating must have happened during this time. The huge numbers of widows and orphans alone seems to point to vast numbers of males being killed in the latter part of the first century. So even though we do not have any slam-dunk numbers, neither do those who question this verse being fulfilled. And certainly there is abundant evidence of mass death that seems to credibly approach the 33% mark.

When we get to chapter 11 I will give you evidence of a tidal wave that covered the region of Lycia and a great deal of Egypt. Cassius didn't say how many died, but it must have been an enormous number. So you would have to add that to the numbers.

I'll give you just one more example of statistics that we have. Though the evidence is disputed, there is evidence that the city of Rome declined in its population tremendously between AD 14 and 200, going from 1,250,000 in AD 14<sup>11</sup> to 570,000 around AD 200. That would be a reduction of the size of the city by 55% in less than 200 years. Now, how much of that happened during these next three years, we do not know. But skeptics need to account for those kinds of things. They point strongly in favor of the Partial Preterist interpretation.

And to those who are still skeptical, I would point to the fact that there was a

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<sup>10</sup> Fields, Dr Nic (2014-03-31). AD69: Emperors, Armies and Anarchy (Kindle Locations 2447-2452 and 2461-2463). Pen and Sword. Kindle Edition.

<sup>11</sup> See calculations at

[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Journals/CP/29/2/Population\\_of\\_Rome\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Journals/CP/29/2/Population_of_Rome*.html) Estimates of the population range from a low of half a million to a high of eight million residents of the city of Rome. 1.25 million was an estimate first established by Gibbon, and is argued for in this essay using a variety of methods.



far worse reduction of the population under later emperors that is impossible to contest, so to dismiss this smaller number of one third as being ridiculous when they do not have any concrete evidence, is simply skepticism, not an argument. Tacitus is definitely on our side on this debate. And that is as much as I will deal with this question.

## Conclusion

But let me end with five concluding applications. First, we have seen that you can absolutely trust the numbers and statistics of the Bible. The calendar statistics alone makes you realize that the Bible is inspired and inerrant if you weren't already convinced of that. But we can trust the Bible completely and implicitly.

Second, God is never late. The saints in chapter 6 who were praying for judgment the previous year may have thought that He was late, but He was not. God was prepared down to the hour, day, month, and year. We can trust Him to be there when we need Him.

Third, we cannot trust civil governments to do what they have promised to do - especially if they are led by unbelievers. The book of Revelation makes it unmistakably clear that civil leaders can easily be moved by demons. Even if they want to fulfill their promises, they are limited in what they can do.

Which means fourthly, that we should not entrust too much power to civil governments. The apostle John will more fully address that issue in the second half of the book, where he describes civil governments as beasts and demonic. And in doing that, it is simply following the lead of the book of Daniel, which describes the demonic king Nebuchadnezzar as having "the heart of a beast" (Dan. 4:16). And the beast that Babylon was likened to was its god - a winged lion. It was a demon. So for his government to be described as that beast was to be described as that demon. The demon holds sway over Nebuchadnezzar. And Daniel 7:24 describes the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar in these words:

The first [beast] was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

That shows the Christianization of Babylon making it rational. Once Nebuchadnezzar was converted, his empire was no longer described as a beast or as demonic. The only other government not treated as bestial and demonic was the kingdom that the Messiah was prophesied to establish.

And what is the point? The point is that we should desire Christians in

office. Whatever good intentions an unbelieving politician might have, he is still under the sway of the wicked one - 1 John 5:19. And this was a truism in early America. They would quote David's statement, "He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." Listen to what the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, John Jay, said:

Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christian rulers for their rulers."

When you once take the demonic into consideration, voting for an unbeliever doesn't make sense. If even a compromised Christian like King David could be moved by Satan to do a horrible statist thing - the census, think of what Satan can do in moving other politicians.

My last application is that we should bring our prayers before the throne of grace and seek God's mercy for His church. These kinds of culture battles will ultimately be won by spiritual warfare alone. And when we are praying, it is good to keep in mind that God's ultimate goal is righteousness exalting every nation of the world - the kind of righteousness that the nations at the end of this book have. So pray. Make wise use of the golden altar of incense. Amen.

Romans. The population of Rome in the early second century was 49 million. It grew back to 60-70 million by the 160s.

The Roman Empire at its greatest extent, in the reign of Trajan, 117 CE Demographically, the Roman Empire was an ordinary pre-modern state. It had high infant mortality, a low marriage age, and high fertility within marriage. Perhaps half of Roman subjects died by the age of 5. Of those still alive at age 10, half would die by the age of 50. Roman women could expect to bear on average 6 to 9 children.

At its peak, after the Antonine Plague of the 160s CE, it had a population of about 60-70 million and a population density of about 16 persons per square kilometer. In contrast to the European societies of the classical and medieval periods, Rome had unusually high urbanization rates. During the 2nd century CE, the city of Rome had more than one million inhabitants. No Western city would have as many again until the 19th century.