

Chapter 1

As Hannah and Ashley rounded the corner leading to their classroom, they were joined by Carrie and Cory. “What do you know about our new Bible teacher?” asked Cory.

“I heard Mr. Dell wasn't planning to teach this year. He moved here to Henderson expecting to retire,” said Ashley, “but, when Miss Graham had to have emergency surgery just three days before school started Mr. Dell agreed to fill in for the semester.”

Taking the last few steps to their classroom, Hannah nervously took an extra deep breath before facing their new teacher. Changes always made her uncomfortable and she felt her heart thumping harder than usual under her sweater as she entered the classroom.

The tall, athletic man sitting at the teacher's desk looked up with a smile as the girls entered. “Good morning, ladies,” he greeted them as the girls chose desks near to each other. “We'll be getting started in just a minute.”

The final bell rang and Mr. Dell stood and walked around to the front of his desk. Perched on the edge of the desk, he glanced at the upturned faces and introduced himself. “Good morning, class. For those of you who don't know me, I am Mr. Dell. I am looking forward to getting to know each of you better as we learn together this semester. Most of my life I taught in the Midwest of this great country, but earlier this summer I moved here to live closer to my sister and her husband. I am an avid explorer and have enjoyed playing tourist this past summer. You have incredible cedars and giant redwoods right in your backyard and I've enjoyed photographing the magnificent scenery around here. I have taken several hikes along your famous coastal ridges but even with all that exercise I've gained several pounds sampling the delicious food your restaurants and country markets offer!

“Although I hadn't planned to teach this fall, I hope that as we study together we will be able to gain a new appreciation for history – especially church history. Since we are beginning a new semester I would like to try a different approach to our subject. Rather than teach Bible as a single class I propose that we incorporate a blended program that will include some geography and history along with our religion class. I have found that the best way to look at history is to understand how those events impacted God's church. We will be using a textbook that I have used for years in my various classrooms,” explained Mr. Dell as he held up a simple clothbound book entitled *Heroes of the Cross*.

“This book traces the history of God's true church for over 1500 years beginning just after the time of the apostles until the sixteenth century. As we study the geography comprising the then-known world we will see the great political powers that shaped each countries, and we will become acquainted with God's heroes who upheld truth for centuries after Jesus returned to heaven. I'm sure you will find this a fascinating way to look at both secular and sacred history.”

After taking roll call and inviting the class to kneel for prayer, Mr. Dell gave each student a photocopied map of Israel. He pointed out a few of the most recognizable places from Bible times. Mr. Dell asked the students to identify Jerusalem, Dan, Beersheba and Bethel on their maps by highlighting them in green.

“As you know, the Bible was written from the perspective of Israel – God's chosen people and their Promised Land. Nations that are named in the Bible are there because of their connection with God's people. The Bible events that are chronicled show lessons of how God deals with His children. As we learn the history that took place after the time period of John the Revelator we will see that much of what we call “history” is in fact “HIS-story” - meaning that a lot of “secular history”, if rightly understood, tells us about the history of God's true church here on earth. This church doesn't now have its headquarters in Israel as in Bible times, rather, it is a world-wide church. And so we will visit many countries in our search for signs of truth's march spanning from the time of the apostles to post-reformation times.”



<http://www.bible-history.com/geography/maps/Map-of-Ancient-Territory-Palestine.jpg>

Asking Aaron to dim the lights, Mr. Dell began to show pictures of the Holy Land. “This first picture is a massive model that has been constructed to give perspective to the size of the temple buildings. Using the information found in the books of Moses, an artist has made this detailed depiction of what the temple might have looked like. Of course the real beauty of either Solomon's Temple or Herod's Temple could not be replicated. With their costly marble, gold and intricate detailing it would be prohibitive to try to reproduce it that closely. You will just have to use your imagination to fill in the magnificence of the Jew's pride and joy.



http://www.aarweb.org/syllabus/syllabi/w/watts/20060316/REL302_files/2TempleModel1.jpg

“This picture was taken at the famous 'Wailing Wall' in Jerusalem. I'm sure you will remember that the massive stones you see here belonged to the foundation of Herod's Temple. Only Jewish men may come to this section of wall to mourn the destruction of their temple in AD 70. Even today, the 'Wailing Wall' is one of the most sacred places in all of Old Jerusalem for the Jews.



<http://www.images-photography-pictures.net/Jerusalem-Israel-Western-Wailing-Wall-cromacom.jpg>

“Now, a quick question. Who ruled the world at the time of Christ?”

“That's right, Rome,” Mr. Dell agreed as several voices answered his question. “I imagine you guys are fascinated by pictures of stern Roman soldiers in their brilliant red tunics and protective mail, carrying their famous curved, square shield and sword. But if you had lived during Christ time seeing soldiers would have produced more fear and hatred in you rather than admiration.



<http://cd7.e2bn.net/e2bn/leas/c99/schools/cd7/website/images/roman-soldiers.gif>

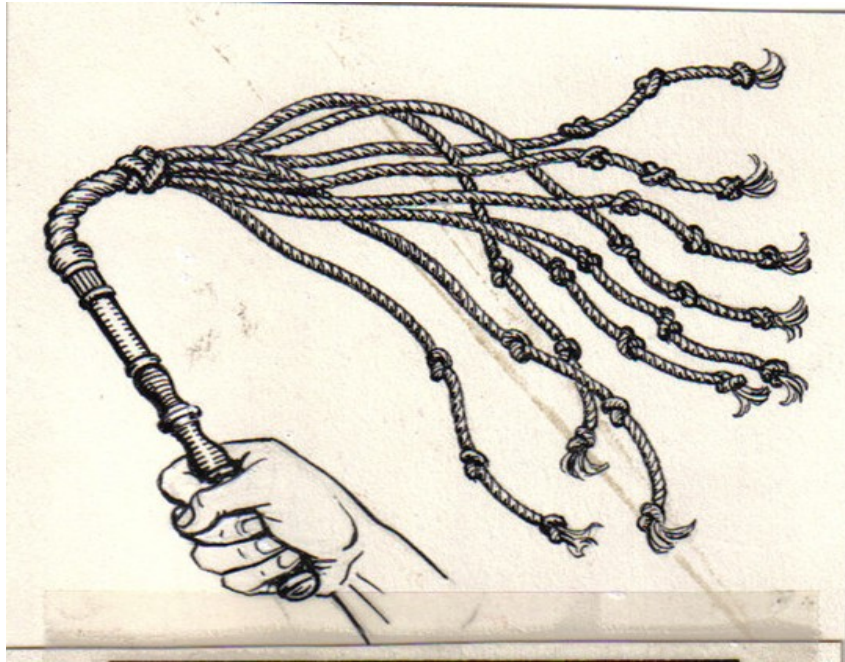
“If you had lived under Roman rule you would know that you didn't argue with a soldier! If they asked you to carry their load for a mile, then you knew you were going to walk that mile whether you wanted to or not. This preemptive attitude did not create love in the hearts of the people. That is why Christ said that His followers must show a different attitude. If they were asked to walk one mile they were to *volunteer* to walk two miles with the soldier. Imagine this type of exchange between a Christian and a Roman soldier:

Soldier: What, are you crazy! I have to use my spear or my foot to get most people to cooperate and you are volunteering to go *two* miles with me?

Christian: For *you* I wouldn't want to go even one mile, but for my *Jesus* I'm willing to walk two miles with you.

“Imagine the type of conversation those two might have had for the next two miles! That is part of the reason the gospel spread so quickly. There was such a contrast between Christians and their defiant, hot-tempered countrymen that others were curious to know what made them so different.

“I'm sure you've heard of the cat-o-nine-tails whip that the Roman's used to 'keep the peace'. The nine tails referred to nine leather strips embedded with metal tips or claws which dug mercilessly into the soft flesh of a bare back. This is an example of the type of whip probably used on Jesus during His mock trial and which also scarred the back of the great Apostle Paul.”



<http://arnoldit.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/image6.png>

The girls in the class giggled as they looked at the next pictures. “How would you like your hair done up like these beauties?” Mr. Dell asked as he showed the various hairstyles worn by upper-class women around the time of Christ. “Some of their styles were extremely fancy – often with strings of pearls entwined through the hair and then piled high on the head. See the tightly curled ringlets framing the faces of aristocratic ladies? You might be interested to learn that the Romans had a type of curling iron called a *calmistro* to make those fashionable ringlets.”

“And here we thought we lived in the modern age!” exclaimed Carrie as her friends nodded in agreement.



<http://www.corbisimages.com/images/67/6298EA26-5D99-471F-B0B1-92BDF7EDF736/DE002304.jpg>

http://www.vroma.org/images/mcmanus_images/flavianhair4c.jpg
www.bible-archaeology.info/jewelry.htm

“And to conclude our little slide show, here are a few statues that will give you an idea of the types of clothing the wealthy and powerful Romans wore.... Here we see the illustrious Augustus.”



<http://pages.interlog.com/~gilgames/imagrom/augustus.jpg>

Mr. Dell projected another picture. “Ladies, please check out these elegantly draped dresses...”



http://www.artsjournal.com/culturegrrl/Eirene_side%20view%20%282%29.jpg



http://www.istockphoto.com/file_thumbview_approve/6395116/2/istockphoto_6395116-neo-classical-sculpture-of-a-women.jpg

“Sometimes we see Hollywood actresses wear dresses that appear to be influenced by these haute couture fashions of 2000 years ago. I guess it's true that fashions go in cycles,” Mr. Dell smiled as he showed his picture.



[poojazaveri.blogspot.com/ 2009/02](http://poojazaveri.blogspot.com/2009/02)

Before beginning to read the Bible book, Mr. Dell paused, “I want each of you to feel free to ask questions, make comments or insert information you may have that goes along with the material we are going to cover in this book. I welcome informative discussions that will give us a better understanding of the Bible we hold in our hands and the beliefs we hold dear as a church.

“Our story begins with a chapter entitled:

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (AD 31 – 70)

Today we will embark on a journey to unearth secrets that have been hidden for hundreds of years. We will visit exotic countries and learn fascinating stories of ancient heroes. We will learn how the gospel was taken to the whole known world within just a few years of Jesus' return to heaven. Come with me on a history adventure as we follow the travels of Matthew, Thomas, James and others as they took the gospel to the British Isles, Syria, Persia, India and other fascinating places.

We will begin our story in ancient Jerusalem with its narrow stone streets, colorful markets and impressive religious processions and ceremonies. Jerusalem was known as the Holy City – the capital of the Hebrew nation. There the white marble Temple stood as an imposing sentinel reminding the Jewish people of the great God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was within the towering walls of Jerusalem that many of the most important scenes in Jesus' life took place. He was dedicated at the Temple when He was eight days old; twelve years later He reasoned with the rabbis during the Passover feast. Jesus taught and healed in Jerusalem and loved to retire to the Mount of Olives overlooking the favored city. It was in Jerusalem that the Supreme Court of the day, the Sanhedrin, condemned their Messiah to die; and after His resurrection Jesus met with His disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem.

Before returning to heaven, Jesus instructed the disciples to begin their ministry by teaching and preaching to the “lost sheep of Israel,” so naturally Jerusalem was chosen as the headquarters for the fledgling Christian church. There were mighty scenes of God power as Peter preached a powerful sermon to thousands of intently listening worshipers at Pentecost, as Peter and John healed the beggar by the Temple gate and when an angel was sent to rescue Peter from certain death in prison. Yet we know that those days were not all happy for the little church. How it must have crushed the dreams of the early Christians to witness the hatred and cruelty that caused Stephen to become the first Christian martyr. How difficult it must have been to understand why God allowed the loved and respected Apostle James to die at Herod's cruel command.

Bible students are not surprised to learn that the years immediately following the death and resurrection of Jesus were turbulent, bloody years for Jerusalem. At Jesus' trial the Jewish leaders had shouted, “His blood be on us and on our children,” and God permitted the fulfillment of their reckless demand. While history has well documented the cruelty of Rome, what is not as well known is that much of Jerusalem's bloodshed took place between Jewish factions within Israel. Shortly after Jesus' return to heaven three rival groups fought for dominance in Jerusalem. The poor citizens lived in constant fear of the every-present Roman soldiers and in terror of the marauding Jewish gangs roaming throughout their city.

Life in Jerusalem became increasingly dangerous and disruptive - filled with intense hatred, fierce competition and bloody retaliation. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the Roman ruler Florus tried to provoke a war by going into the temple bank and taking seventeen talents (around \$100,000.00). The Jews were furious at such disrespect for their religion and began a riot in the streets. Florus showed his utter contempt for Jewish lives by having his soldiers kill 3,600 of the agitators.

While that slaughter was inexcusable, don't think for a moment that the Romans were the only ones at fault during those violent years. The Jews did many things to vex their Roman rulers. For example, the Romans considered themselves compassionate conquerors. They allowed the people to keep their religion and customs, dress and diet. They had only two major requirements: Conquered countries must pay taxes to Rome and their citizens were to pray to the emperor. In violation of these laws the Jewish Sanhedrin passed a law that forbade anyone to offer sacrifices for the emperor. As you can imagine, that announcement brought the swift anger of Rome.

When the Jews realized the serious trouble they were in, they begged King Agrippa II for help. He immediately sent 3000 cavalry to help defend Jerusalem, but the three rival gangs couldn't quit fighting long enough to cooperate with Agrippa's men. Instead, they killed all of his soldiers except for one – and that man only saved his life by promising to become a Jewish convert.

When news of the slaughter reached Florus at his headquarters in Caesarea, he retaliated by killing 20,000 Jews in districts surrounding Caesarea. In response the Jews went on a rampage and murdered every Roman citizen they could find. The bloodbath was so awful that even Caesar in Rome heard about this terrible massacre. He ordered his general, Cestius Gaius, to gather an army and march on Jerusalem to put down the rebellion.

In AD 66 Cestius' troops arrived and surrounded Jerusalem. As a sign of their superiority the Romans planted their flag-standard near the gates of the Royal City. Viewing the mighty army of Rome from the comparative safety of Jerusalem's walls, many of Christ's followers remembered the warning of Jesus that when they would see "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet" they were to get ready to flee. One day Cestius unexpectedly ordered his army to retreat. While the Jewish army pursued the retreating Romans, God's people prepared to flee Jerusalem as Christ has commanded. Because of their prompt action, we are told that not even one Christian died in the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place four years later.

Even with Cestius and his soldiers gone, Jerusalem did not experience peace. Within four years the battle between the rebellious Jews and the angry Romans resumed. In AD 70 the Roman army, commanded by a new general, Titus, again surrounded the city. It was in the spring of the year and Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims from distant lands who had arrived to celebrate the Passover. Josephus estimates there may have been over a million people in Jerusalem attending the festival.

Although there should have been enough grain in Jerusalem to care for a crowd that size for many months, the warring Jewish gangs had foolishly hunted out each other's food supplies and destroyed them. Because of such madness, when Titus arrived there was already the beginning of a food shortage in the city. All of that added up to terrible suffering for the people. Things got so horrible that the strong would steal food from the weak, children took food from their feeble and sickly parents and there were gruesome reports of parents eating the boiled flesh of their dead children. People were so famished they gnawed on their leather belts and sandals hoping to ease their hunger pangs.

Braver (or perhaps more desperate) individuals would sneak through the gates of the city or use ropes to let themselves down over Jerusalem's walls to scavenge for wild plants in the countryside. Often they were caught and taken prisoner. Sometimes hundreds in one day would be scourged with the Roman's fearsome "cat-of-nine-tails" whips then crucified on Calvary - the same hill where Jesus died. Even the war-hardened Titus was sickened as he looked at the piles of dead bodies heaped in the valley surrounding Jerusalem.

Those trapped in Jerusalem longed for an end to the siege. Everyone lived in fear. Finally, fear of the roaming gangs and fear of starvation overcame the people's fear of Rome. Many began

to speak openly about surrendering to the Romans. This infuriated the rebels. They threatened to silence the people by slitting the throat of anyone overheard wanting to make peace with Titus.

Although a war-hardened general, Titus did not want to see the Jew's imposing temple destroyed. He was so impressed by the magnificent white marble temple he gave orders to his men that they were not to harm it in any way. Before forcing his way into the city, Titus attempted to negotiate with the Jewish leaders on how to keep the temple safe during the inevitable battle. Titus promised he would not shed blood in their sacred house of worship if Jewish soldiers stopped using the Temple Mount as a hideout. He told them to choose any other place in the city to fight and he would make sure that his soldiers stayed out of the temple area.

Unfortunately, Titus didn't know that Jesus had declared that the temple would be completely destroyed. The Jewish leaders were so used to opposing the hated Romans they refused this generous offer by Titus and the general at last gave the command to take the city by force. He reminded his soldiers of his desire to save the temple from harm, but in the intensity of battle a soldier threw a torch through an opening in the porch and immediately the cedar-lined temple began to burn.

Titus commanded his men to put out the fire, but most soldiers were so busy robbing the temple of its gold, silver and brass treasures there was no time to obey their leader. Other soldiers set surrounding temple buildings on fire and then slaughtered the Jewish soldiers as they tried to escape from their hiding places. Some records say that 16,000 people were murdered on the Temple Mount and Josephus gives the graphic word picture of Jewish blood running down the steps of the temple like water. When the Jews rejected Christ as their Messiah, what a sad fate they chose for their nation. Their gorgeous temple was now nothing but a smoldering pile of ruins. In crucifying Jesus they had rejected God and now they were without His protection.

Even with that sad picture in our mind, it is encouraging to remember that during this terrible slaughter not one Christian lost their life. They believed the words of Jesus and obeyed without question His command to flee Jerusalem when they saw the "abomination of desolation." Today, as back then, God's people will find that their only safety is in listening and obeying the warnings of God.

Silence blanketed the classroom as each student sat deep in thought. Quietly Jeremy whistled, "Wow, I'm glad I didn't live there!"

"It doesn't seem like a lot has changed over the years," Emily commented. "There is still a lot of bloodshed and hatred in Israel today."

"I agree with you," said Mr. Dell, "The real lesson I see in this story is that we must obey the warnings that God gives. It is interesting to note that not one Christian lost their life because they obeyed. When Titus arrive they were gone from the doomed city - safe from the destruction that took place in Jerusalem. As we close our class I challenge each of us to pray for the ability to hear the Holy Spirit's voice and His grace to obey without question."

B.G. Wilkinson, *Truth Triumphant: The Church in the Wilderness* (Teach Services, Brushton, New York, 1994) Chapters 3, 4, 5

Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, ID, 1971) Chapter 1

Vance Ferrell, *The Fabulous First Centuries of Christianity* (Harvestime Books, Altamont, TN, 2006)
Part 3
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“The Jewish Wars,” *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, Translated by William Whiston (Kregel
Publications, Grand Rapids, MI) Books 5,6