

Josephus and the Fall of Jerusalem: An Evaluation of the Preterist View on Jerusalem in Prophecy

I. Introduction

The Olivet Discourse that Jesus delivered shortly before His death, resurrection and departure from the earth has figured prominent in discussions regarding eschatology. One system of eschatology, known as preterism, has attached their very existence to a particular meaning of this discourse. Preterists believe that all (full-preterists) or most (partial-preterists) of Jesus' words in Matthew 24:1-44; Mark 13:1-37; and Luke 21:5-36 were fulfilled when Jerusalem, and the Temple, was destroyed. Thus the term preterism (Latin *praeter*, meaning "past") speaks of the prophecies from the Messiah about the future destruction of Jerusalem, the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel (Dan 9:23-27), the events leading to the end of the age, and the future coming of the Son of Man were largely, if not entirely, fulfilled in A.D. 70.

The intent of this paper is not to present a biblical case against preterism.¹ Many scholars, some within this conference, have ably done this. Instead I will deal only with how preterists

*This paper is a draft copy of an uncompleted paper, which will be presented at the Pre-Trib Study Group meeting, December 8-10, and will be found in full on the Pre-Trib.org website. The original intention was to include also the perspective of the ante-Nicene fathers of the church regarding whether the fall of Jerusalem was a fulfillment of Matthew 24 but the amount of information on this (clearly futurist) became too much to include. This study will be presented at a future time.

¹ Interestingly on one preterist website they are brazen enough to claim most of the major figures of the first several centuries of the church, the Reformation, a considerable number of biblical scholars of the recent past, as well as many contemporary notable persons. Among the small number of futurists they list includes several scholars of less than conservative perspective. Preterist (Study) Archive, <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/s/smith-daniel.html> (last visited November 29, 2008). Nelson presents a number of reasons why the events connected to the fall of Jerusalem do not follow from the predictions of Jesus: 1. A.D. 70 was not "great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" (Matthew 24:21); 2. Matthew declares that the abomination came first, followed by the great tribulation and flight. The abomination causes the desolation. In the siege of Titus, however, the tribulation preceded the abomination; 3. The abomination of desolation takes place "in the holy place," which is probably the Jewish temple (cf. Acts 6:13; 21:28). In Daniel the abomination is always linked to the temple. When the Roman standards stood in the temple it was too late for flight into the mountains; 4. If the elect are Christians who escaped to Pella, what need was there for shortening those days?; 5. There is little historical evidence for false Christs appearing around the time of the Jewish war or for false Christs performing great miracles; 6. A.D. 70 did not drive masses of professing Christians to apostatize; 7. Every human being would not have been destroyed by the Jewish war (24:22). Would all Roman soldiers have been killed?; 8. Matthew 24:29 states that the parousia (24:29-31) comes "immediately after those days (24:15-28); 9. Matthew 24:14 speaks of the absolute end. Matthew 24:15 is connected by *oujn* to the preceding verses. It is natural for 24:15-28 to describe the same general period. Neil D. Nelson, Jr., "This Generation' in Matt 24:34: A Literary Critical Perspective," *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 38 (September 1996 [sic, 1995]), 379-80, n. 33, quoted in Donald E. Green, A Critique of Preterism (unpublished paper, 2001), 20-21.

have used the writings of Josephus to bolster their claims. First, preterists have asserted the destruction of Jerusalem as recorded by Josephus reveals significant affinity with the words of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. Second they affirm that that events leading up to the siege of Jerusalem and the final fall of the city are reflected in the descriptions of Josephus in his *Bellum Judaicum* (*The Jewish War*).²

To examine each of the purported comments by Josephus said to be fulfillments of Matthew 24 is more than may be fairly dealt with in a paper of this length. Preterist David Chilton offered a large number of passages from Josephus that he claimed reveal connection to the predictions of Jesus. Unfortunately he offered little or no explanation as to why these passages actually fulfill the predictions of the Olivet Discourse, assuming, apparently, quoting the words of Josephus made a prima facie case for his thesis.³ I have narrowed the scope of the study to a more modest endeavor by interacting with David Padfield's listing, which is an attempt to parallel the components of Jesus' words with portions of Josephus, and a few other historians. To accomplish this task I will look at the various predictive elements of Jesus words in Matthew 24, primarily, and mentioning any significant differences in Mark 13 and Luke 21, to determine if words and descriptions given by Josephus in *The Jewish War* truly are historical fulfillment of Jesus' discourse on the Mount of Olives. After dealing with the broader strokes of the Olivet Discourse, I will confine myself to the matter of the coming of "false christs" and the "abomination of desolation." The matter of the actual sign of the coming of the Son of Man is also significant but since not all preterists would view this being fulfilled at the fall of Jerusalem, this will be passed over in this paper.

Before examination the arguments from certain preterists, let us briefly look at why these two sources for preterists are so important to them.

II. The Writings of Josephus on the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70

Preterist writings abound with references to Josephus. Under this understanding of the Jewish historians account of Jerusalem's fall, he is said to describe, even in great detail, the words of our

² The fathers speak often of Josephus and of the fall of Jerusalem in their works. A subsequent presentation will address these statements and examples. *See the following*: Irenaeus (Fragments from the lost writings of Irenaeus: XXXII.53); Theophilus (Theophilus to Autolyucus:Book III:Chapter XXIII.-Prophets More Ancient Than Greek Writers); Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, Book I, chapter XXI); Tertullian (Apologeticum:Chapter XIX); Minucius Felix (Chapter XXXIII.-Argument: that Even If God Be Said to Have Nothing Availed the Jews, Certainly the Writers of the Jewish Annals are the Most Sufficient Witnesses that They Forsook God Before They Were Forsaken by Him); Julius Africanus (Book III.-The Extant Fragments of the Five Books of the Chronography of Julius Africanus: Chapter XVII.38); Origen (Against Celsus, Book I, chapter 16; Book IV, chapter 11; Commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, Book X:Chapter 17. The Brethren of Jesus); Hippolytus (The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus: Part I.-Exegetical. Fragments from Commentaries on Various Books of Scripture. On Jeremiah and Ezekiel.145); Anatolius of Alexandria (The Paschal Canon of Anatolius of Alexandria:Chapter 3); Methodius (quoting Photius, Bibliotheca, cod. 234) (Methodius, On the Resurrection, Book II, Chapter 18). See Michael E. Hardwick, *Josephus as a historical source in Patristic literature through Eusebius*, Brown Judaic Studies 128, Scholars Press, Georgia (1989). List of fathers and works are taken from *Josephus in the Ante-Nicene Fathers: all the citations*, and are not verified for accuracy nor completeness, <http://www.preteristarchive.com/JewishWars/credibility-and-importance.html> (last visited November 29, 2008).

³ David Chilton "Introductory Essays to the Works of Josephus" FROM PARADISE RESTORED: A Biblical Theology of Dominion Dominion Press Tyler, Texas © 1st 1985 & 6th 1999, http://www.preteristarchive.com/JewishWars/articles/1985_chilton_josephus.html (last visited November 28, 2008).

Lord:

"The fulfilment of our Lord's prophecy respecting Jerusalem. . [sic] is portrayed in the pages of Josephus with terrible exactness. We may, perhaps, without presumption ascribe the existence of his works to Divine Providence; for there are few persons who have read his narrative that have not felt themselves more deeply impressed than ever with the solemn truths of Scripture, and the tremendous certainty of the Divine judgments."⁴

Another author says that Josephus' account parallels exactly the prophecies of the Lord:

"Having been an eye witness of the scenes which he describes, he has given a most authentic account of the miseries as well as of the unparalleled crimes of his nation. Though a Jew, and by no means intending to favor Christianity, and though he suppresses most of what related to its Author, yet his history of facts shows the fulfilment of the predictions of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as those of Moses, to the very letter."⁵

If one believes that the prophetic statements are either partially or entirely fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem, one cannot go to any other source than the account of Josephus for this information. His is the only eyewitness record we have of Jerusalem's destruction. He explains in great detail the events leading up to the war, important persons within the Jewish community and the Roman army, the struggles within the cities among rival Zealots and the activities of the Romans both in diplomacy with the people of Jerusalem and the combat between the Jews and the Romans. In anticipation of this paper for the pre-trib conference I went back through every paragraph of the seven books of Josephus' *The Jewish War* to discover if, indeed, what Josephus recorded accurately fulfilled the details of Jesus' words in His discourse to His disciples on the Mount of Olives. I did not find this to be so, in spite of a quite pretentious claim by preterists. What follows is an assessment of this claim by the preterists quoted above.

We shall set forth the predictions of Jesus throughout the Olivet Discourse essentially in the order of the Matthean text, as found in preterist David Padfield.⁶ Since our specific focus will be on the matter of false christs and the abomination of desolation, though Padfield mentions these in the order of the New Testament text, we will reserve these until the end of the paper.

As mentioned earlier, I am relying on two preterists for this list of signs, David Chilton⁷ and David Padfield,⁸ the former being of limited value since Chilton primarily quotes large sections

⁴ Unknown author, *Comments on the Credibility and Importance of Flavius Josephus*, <http://www.preteristarchive.com/JewishWars/credibility-and-importance.html>

⁵ Daniel Smith, *The Destruction of Jerusalem: The Whole Being Intended to Illustrate the Fulfillment of the Predictions of Moses and the Messiah* (preface), http://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1840_smith_destruction-of-jerusalem.html (last visited November 29, 2008).

⁶ David Padfield, *Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 1) The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website, <http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24a.html> (last visited November 27, 2008); David Padfield, *The Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 2), The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website, <http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24b.html> (last visited November 27, 2008).

⁷ David Chilton "Introductory Essays to the Works of Josephus" FROM PARADISE RESTORED: A Biblical Theology of Dominion Dominion Press Tyler, Texas © 1st 1985 & 6th 1999, http://www.preteristarchive.com/JewishWars/articles/1985_chilton_josephus.html (last visited November 28, 2008).

⁸ David Padfield, *Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 1) The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website,

of Josephus' account of the siege and destruction but provides little helpful commentary on how these tragic circumstances are parallels with the words of Jesus. While Chilton provides considerable Josephan text but little else, I shall rely on Padfield as the representative preterist for the study.

A. Not One Stone Shall Be Left On Another

After leaving the temple mount, on their way to the Mount of Olives, the disciples of Jesus were admiring the magnificence of the temple buildings (Mt 24:1), which would have stood out in array upon traveling through the Kidron valley and climbing the Mount. Jesus uses this question as an opportunity to teach regarding the destruction of Jerusalem: "And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."" (Matt 24:2 NAS95S) When one travels to the city of Jerusalem today, he will discover that not a single one of the temple buildings remains that were admired by the disciples of Jesus. The only obvious evidence of the destruction of the temple are the stones that lie at the western wall that were pushed off the temple mount retaining wall by the angry Romans and fell to their present location. This prophecy of Jesus was literally fulfilled. Padfield quotes the alleged words of Titus that he did not desire the destruction of the temple (*War* 6:127-128).^{9,10} Few would disagree that these words of Jesus, stated in reference to the disciples' comment and before His discussion of the sign of His coming and end of the age, refer to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.



B. Wars and Rumors of Wars

Beginning in verse 6 we observe a list of statements by Jesus that precede either the destruction of Jerusalem specifically, or the end of the age, four of these that correspond to the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" in Revelation 6: war, famine, pestilence, and death. The remainder of Revelation 6 reflects other aspects of Matthew 24 (martyrdom, earthquakes, darkening of the sun, red color of the moon, stars falling from the sky, terror of the earth from

<http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24a.html> (last visited November 27, 2008); David Padfield, *The Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 2), The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website, <http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24b.html> (last visited November 27, 2008).

⁹ David Padfield, *The Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 2), The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website, <http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24b.html> (last visited November 27, 2008).

¹⁰ "(6.2.4.127) I appeal to the gods of my own country, and to every god that ever had any regard to this place (for I do not suppose it to be now regarded by any of them); I also appeal to my own army, and to those Jews that are now with me, and even to you yourselves, that I do not force you to defile this your sanctuary; 128 (6.2.4.128) and if you will but change the place whereon you will fight, no Roman shall either come near your sanctuary, or offer any affront to it; nay, I will endeavor to preserve you your holy house, whether you will or not."" (War 6:127-128 JOSEPH) ["μαρτύρομαι θεούς ἐγὼ πατρίους καὶ εἴ τις ἐφεώρα ποτὲ τόνδε τὸν χώρον νῦν μὲν γὰρ οὐκ οἶομαι μαρτύρομαι δὲ καὶ στρατιάν τὴν ἐμὴν καὶ τοὺς παρ' ἐμοὶ Ἰουδαίους καὶ ὑμᾶς αὐτοὺς ὡς οὐκ ἐγὼ ταῦθ' ὑμᾶς ἀναγκάζω μαινεῖν κἂν ἀλλάξητε τῆς παρατάξεως τὸν τόπον οὔτε προσελεύσεται τις Ῥωμαίων τοῖς ἁγίοις οὔτε ἐνυβρίσει τηρήσω δὲ τὸν ναὸν ὑμῖν καὶ μὴ θέλουσι." (War 6:127-128 JOSEPH-T)]

the coming Son of Man in judgment.¹¹ Interestingly, though, each of these first four preceded the time of Jesus and has followed, even in more massive proportion since the fall of Jerusalem. How, then, may they have predictive value? The first of these relatively normal events begins with wars and rumors of wars: ““You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. . . .” (Matt 24:6-7 NAS95S) Padfield, himself, acknowledges that wars and rumors of war was commonplace in the ancient world,¹² as is also true today, but this he draws a false conclusion: “It is hard to picture a time more trying than just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.”¹³

Padfield quotes a comment from Tacitus and Josephus to demonstrate a comparison with the words of Christ:¹⁴

Tacitus, a Roman historian, said of this period: "The history on which I am entering is that of a period rich in disasters, terrible with battles, torn by civil struggles, horrible even in peace. Four emperors fell by the sword; there were three civil wars, more foreign wars, and often both at the same time." (The Histories, 1:2).

Josephus tells of a day in which "the people of Caesarea had slain the Jews that were among them on the very same day and hour [when the soldiers were slain], which one would think must have come to pass by the direction of Providence; insomuch that in one hour's time above twenty thousand Jews were killed, and all Caesarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants." (Wars, 2:18:1).¹⁵

In contrast to Padfield’s description of the wars in the Roman Empire and in Judea, the conflicts within the Roman Empire were not really wars between kingdoms and nations in the first century A.D., as described in the Olivet Discourse. However, rather than the local war in Judea, the account in Matthew depicts something on a much broader scale. In the words of Craig Evans, “the expectation of global warfare and chaos. . . However, there were no major wars prior to the Jewish revolt.”¹⁶ Moreover, as Meyer comments, “As for the Parthian wars and the risings that took place some ten years after in Gaul and Spain, they had no connection whatever with Jerusalem or Judea.”¹⁷

What Padfield does not say is that prior to the war in Judea, the *pax Romana* controlled the ancient Mediterranean world in most instances. Sadler says,

If this verse is the sequence of the previous one, then it can hardly refer to the time before the

¹¹ See Rev 6:2-17.

¹² David Padfield, *Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 1) The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website, <http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24a.html> (last visited November 27, 2008).

¹³ David Padfield, *Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 1) The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website, <http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24a.html> (last visited November 27, 2008).

¹⁴ David Padfield, *Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 1) The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website, <http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24a.html> (last visited November 27, 2008).

¹⁵ Alternate Loeb citation is *War* 2:457.

¹⁶ Craig A. Evans, “Mark 8:27-16:20,” *Word Biblical Commentary* Vol. 34B (Dallas: Word Books, 2001), 307.

¹⁷ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to The Gospel of Matthew*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1879), vol. 2, 130.

destruction of Jerusalem; for then the Roman power kept the peace of the world. It is consequently explained by many commentators as fulfilled in various local tumults between the Jews who were scattered everywhere, and the various Gentile nations amongst whom they dwelt. But this by no means answers to such expressions as, 'nation against nation,' and 'kingdom against kingdom.' They seem rather to refer to such a time as the present, when the civilized world is divided into many separate nationalities."¹⁸

Another problem with connecting the predictions of wars with those referring to the Roman war against the Jews is that Jesus speaks of the age (Mt 24:2, 6) and "beginning of birth pangs," not the finale. Even the death toll in the Bar-Kochba revolt was nearly 600,000, though the Talmud put the unlikely figure of millions.¹⁹

Sadler comments that he viewed what he observed in Matthew appeared more like the modern world with national boundaries, with independent sovereign states, than was true of the Roman Empire.²⁰ Moreover, I suspect that as bad as the destruction of Jerusalem may have been, there have been numerous events in human history, say the trenches of World War I or the Jewish holocaust, which possibly were more devastating.

C. Famines and Pestilences

Next in the scenario painted by Jesus before the end of the age (Mt 24:3) are famines, though Padfield gives pestilences, which in Matthew is found in the KJV and some majority readings but not in the better Greek manuscripts: ". . . and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes." (Matt 24:6-7 NAS95S)²¹ He goes on to say "The destruction of Jerusalem was to be preceded He points out that even the book of Acts records such a prophecy from Agabus to that effect:

"Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. 29 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea." (Acts 11:27-29 NAS95S)

Neither Luke nor the apostle Paul, apparently, connected this famine with prophetic fulfillment from the Olivet Discourse.

Josephus, and again also the Roman historian Tacitus, is quoted to confirm the kind of famine mentioned by Jesus:

Josephus tells of queen Helena's relief effort for Jerusalem. "Now her coming was of very great

¹⁸ M. F. Sadler, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: with Notes Critical and Practical* (London: George Bell and Sons, [1884] 1898), 298.

¹⁹ "According to Cassius Dio, 580,000 Jews were killed, 50 fortified towns and 985 villages razed. The Talmud, however, claims a death toll in the millions. The latter figure is unlikely, because there were simply not that many Jews in the region at that time." Bar Kokhba revolt, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bar_Kokhba_revolt (last visited November 29, 2008).

²⁰ M. F. Sadler, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: with Notes Critical and Practical* (London: George Bell and Sons, [1886] 1911), 527-528.

²¹ The gospel of Luke does include "plagues" (λαμὸς), the same word translated "pestilences" in the KJV.

advantage to the people of Jerusalem; for whereas a famine did oppress them at that time, and many people died for want of what was necessary to produce food withal, queen Helena sent some of her servants to Alexandria with money to buy a great quantity of corn, and others to Cyprus, to bring a cargo of dried figs" (Antiquities, 20:2:5).



Tacitus wrote: "Many prodigies occurred during the year. Ominous birds took their seat on the Capitol; houses were overturned by repeated shocks of earthquake, and, as the panic spread, the weak were trampled underfoot in the trepidation of the crowd. A shortage of corn, again, and the famine which resulted, were construed as a supernatural warning." (The Annals of Imperial Rome, 12:43). Pestilences usually accompany periods of famine.²²

It is not unusual to have famines in the ancient,²³ or even modern, world,²⁴ and certainly these mentioned by Josephus and Tacitus are not more famines than have been experienced in various parts of the world. The biblical text mentions famine over one-hundred times.²⁵

D. Earthquakes

Earthquakes are a common occurrence throughout the world, one of the most massive in the Mediterranean world happening in the 8th century which toppled temples, other buildings, and entire cities. J. Marcellus Kik said regarding the time immediately before the fall of Jerusalem there were earthquakes in "Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Colosse, Campania, Rome, and Judea. It is interesting to note that the city of Pompeii was much damaged by an earthquake occurring on February 5, 63 A.D." ²⁶

It is important for preterists that the various events mentioned by Christ occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem, so that it becomes the major judgment of God on the Jewish people. DeMar sees these happenings as being addressed to the first century community in Judea and not to the entire world and that they must be fulfilled within the generation that heard these words.²⁷

²² David Padfield, *Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 1) The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website, <http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24a.html> (last visited November 27, 2008). The Loeb citation for the quote from Josephus is *Antiq.* 20:51. ["γίνεται δὲ αὐτῆς ἡ ἀφίξις πάνυ συμφέρουσα τοῖς Ἱεροσολυμίταις λιμοῦ γὰρ αὐτῶν τὴν πόλιν κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἐκεῖνον πιεζούντος καὶ πολλῶν ὑπ' ἐνδείας ἀναλωμάτων φθειρομένων ἡ βασιλις Ἑλένη πέμπει τινὰς τῶν ἑαυτῆς τοὺς μὲν εἰς τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν πολλῶν σίτον ὠνησομένους χρημάτων τοὺς δ' εἰς Κύπρον ἰσχάδων φόρτον οἴσοντας" (Antiq 20:51 JOSEPH-T)]

²³ Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); also see Bruce W. Winter, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, Vol 2, David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, eds. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 60-78.

²⁴ There were numerous famines known from the 5th century B.C. throughout the 20th centuries, *List of Famines*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_famines (last visited November 29, 2008).

²⁵ The word famine is found 106 times in the Bible, according to the NASB, translation of the Hebrew בָּעָר 97 times and 2 times בָּכַךְ and the Greek λιμός 7 times.

²⁶ David Padfield, *Destruction of Jerusalem* (Part 1) The Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois website, <http://www.padfield.com/1998/matt24a.html> (last visited November 27, 2008), quoting J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology Of Victory*, p. 93.

²⁷ Gary DeMar, *Earthquakes and the End Revisited*, <http://www.americanvision.org/articlearchive/12-31-04.asp> (last visited November 29, 2008); see also *Earthquakes and the Bible*, <http://ldolphin.org/quakes.html> (last visited

This is crucial. I cannot take space to discuss the accuracy of DeMar's understanding of "this generation" or his identification of the "you" repeated in the text as referring to a first-century audience. My only concern is to demonstrate that the earthquakes and other phenomena were not unusual, occurring before and after this period of time,²⁸ and do not serve as an introduction to the end of the world within four decades of their happening. Moreover, I desire to show that Josephus' words do not spell a disaster of the proportion spoken of in the Olivet Discourse, and certainly not as seen in the Revelation of John at the last decade of the first century.

E. Fearful Events from Heaven

More significant than the former signs of common occurrences are the extraordinary sights in the skies, mentioned only in Luke's account, "and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." (Luke 21:11 NAS95S). By the reference one would believe these to be something more than human misfortune or natural calamity. Observe what Padfield considers to be fulfillment of Christ's words that is found in Josephus:

One night when "there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings,

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²⁸ Following is a list of major events :

64 BC Strong earthquake in Jerusalem; damage to temple and city walls

31 BC Severe earthquake in Galilee and Judea. - .

115 AD Destructive earthquake in Syria;

306 AD Destructive earthquake in Palestine; destruction at Jerusalem.

363 AD Severe earthquake affecting most of Palestine and Jordan;

419 AD Moderate to severe earthquake in Palestine;

447 AD Thermal baths at Gadara destroyed; many people killed.

526 AD The Antioch (Syria) earthquake in. was devastating.

It struck in the middle of the night and was followed by a terrible fire. It killed 300,000 people.

631 or 632 AD Earthquake in Palestine with aftershocks continuing for 30 days; widespread destruction..

749 AD Severe earthquake in Palestine; tens of thousands of deaths.

1033 AD Swarm of severe earthquakes centered in the Jordan Valley which continued for some 40 days.

Felt from Syria to Egypt and in the Negev.. Jericho and Palmyra destroyed.

1182 AD Galilee and Judea; moderate to severe.

1202 AD Severe earthquake felt from Syria to Egypt.

1546 AD Severe earthquake in Palestine; hundreds killed;

1752 AD Severe earthquake affecting most of Palestine and Syria; 20000 people killed

1759 AD Syria 30,000 people killed;

1837 AD Severe earthquake with epicenter near Safed.

Many thousands of deaths with entire towns destroyed.

1927 AD Destructive earthquake with 250-500 casualties;

flow of Jordan river stopped for 21 1/2 hours by landslides;

1943 AD Strong earthquake throughout Palestine.

Map of Seismicity Middle East, <http://membres.lycos.fr/syrie/earthqua.htm> (last visited November 29, 2008).

-MORE TO COME-