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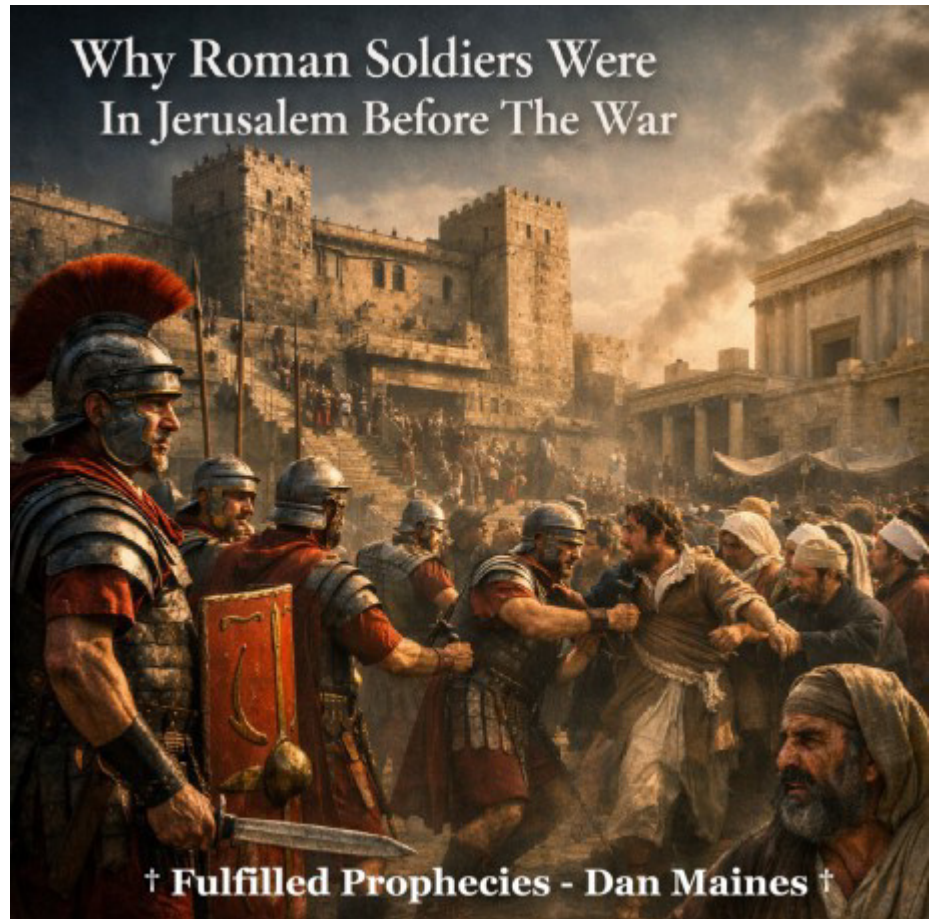
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Why Roman Soldiers Were In Jerusalem Before The War



By Dan Maines

Why Roman Soldiers Were In Jerusalem Before The War

Introduction

† Many people imagine Roman soldiers only appearing in Jerusalem after the Jewish War began in AD 66. That idea isn't supported by either scripture or history.

† Roman authority had already ruled Judea for over one hundred years before that war began. Because of that control, Roman soldiers were stationed in Jerusalem long before the destruction of the city.

† Understanding this historical setting helps us read the New

Testament correctly, because the gospels and Acts repeatedly mention Roman officials and soldiers in Jerusalem decades before AD 66.

Luke 3:1

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene

† This verse places the ministry of John the Baptist within the structure of Roman political authority. Judea was already governed by a Roman prefect named Pontius Pilate.

† Roman governors ruled the region on behalf of the emperor, and they maintained order through Roman military forces stationed in the province.

† Tacitus confirms that Judea was governed by Roman officials during this period and that Roman authority controlled the region.

John 19:16

So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

† Jesus was executed through the Roman method of crucifixion, which was a punishment carried out by Roman soldiers.

† This shows clearly that Roman military authority operated in Jerusalem during the ministry of Jesus decades before the Jewish War.

† Josephus explains that crucifixion was commonly used by Roman authorities to punish rebellion and maintain control in conquered territories.

Matthew 27:27

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him.

† A Roman cohort refers to a unit of Roman soldiers stationed under the authority of the governor.

† Their presence inside the governor's headquarters in

Jerusalem demonstrates that Roman troops were permanently stationed in the city.

† Roman governors required a military presence to enforce Roman law and prevent uprisings among the population.

Acts 21:31-32

While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. At once he took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to them, and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

† This passage describes Roman troops quickly responding to unrest in Jerusalem.

† The soldiers came from the fortress overlooking the Temple, showing that a Roman garrison was stationed there at all times.

† This event occurred around AD 57 to 58, almost a decade before the Jewish War began.

Acts 21:34-35

But some in the crowd were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.

† The barracks mentioned here refer to the Roman garrison connected to the Antonia Fortress beside the Temple.

† Roman soldiers were stationed there so they could immediately intervene if riots broke out in the Temple courts.

† This confirms that a permanent Roman military presence existed directly beside the Temple complex.

Luke 13:1

Now on that same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

† This shows Roman authority intervening during Temple related activity before the Jewish War.

† Pilate had already carried out violent suppression connected to religious gatherings.

† This demonstrates that Roman power was actively present in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus.

Why Roman Soldiers Were Especially Visible During Passover

† Passover brought enormous crowds to Jerusalem. Jewish pilgrims traveled from across the Roman world to celebrate the feast in the Temple.

† Josephus records that the population of Jerusalem swelled dramatically during these festivals as pilgrims arrived from many regions.

† Because Passover celebrated Israel's deliverance from foreign oppression in Egypt, it carried strong national emotion.

† Roman authorities feared that this patriotic atmosphere could easily lead to rebellion against Roman rule.

† For this reason Roman troops increased their visibility during Passover and other major feasts.

† Soldiers watched the Temple area and the crowds closely in order to prevent riots or revolts.

† Roman troops were stationed at the Antonia Fortress, a fortress built beside the Temple complex.

† From this location soldiers could quickly enter the Temple courts if trouble began among the crowds.

† Josephus explains that the fortress overlooked the Temple so Roman soldiers could monitor everything happening in the courts during major gatherings.

Roman Control Before The War

† Rome first took control of Jerusalem in 63 BC when the Roman general Pompey entered the city and brought Judea under Roman authority.

† Josephus records that this event placed Judea under Roman dominance for the following century.

† In AD 6 Judea became a Roman province governed directly by Roman prefects rather than local kings.

† This is why Roman governors such as Pontius Pilate appear in the gospel accounts.

† Roman prefects ruled from Caesarea but maintained troops in Jerusalem because of the city's religious and political importance.

Historical References

† Josephus records that Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BC and placed Judea under Roman authority.

† Josephus also explains that the Antonia Fortress overlooked the Temple so Roman soldiers could monitor the crowds during festivals.

† Tacitus confirms that Roman governors ruled Judea during the first century and that Roman power controlled the province.

† Eusebius explains that the early church grew within the Roman world and that Roman rule formed the political background of the New Testament era.

How it applies to us today

† Understanding the Roman presence in Jerusalem helps us see the New Testament in its real historical setting.

† Jesus and the apostles preached the kingdom of God while living under the authority of the Roman Empire.

† Even though Rome was the most powerful empire of the time, the message of Christ spread throughout its territory.

† This reminds us that God's kingdom advances regardless of

earthly governments or political power.

Q & A Appendix

Q: When did Rome first take control of Jerusalem?

A: Rome captured Jerusalem in 63 BC when the Roman general Pompey entered the city and brought Judea under Roman authority.

Q: Were Roman soldiers present in Jerusalem during the life of Jesus?

A: Yes. Roman soldiers served under the governor Pontius Pilate and carried out the crucifixion of Jesus.

Q: Why were Roman soldiers especially visible during Passover?

A: Because Passover brought massive crowds to Jerusalem and Roman authorities feared that the festival could spark rebellion.

Q: Where were Roman soldiers stationed in Jerusalem?

A: Roman troops were stationed at the Antonia Fortress beside the Temple so they could quickly respond to unrest.

Q: Does the New Testament mention Roman soldiers in Jerusalem before AD 66?

A: Yes. Acts records Roman soldiers intervening during riots and disturbances in the city years before the Jewish War began.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Luke 3

† John 19

† Matthew 27
† Acts 21
† Luke 13
† Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews
† Josephus, Wars of the Jews
† Tacitus, Annals
† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

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