

## 87 THE FOUR ANGELS OF REVELATION

**INTRODUCTION:** There is a stunning similarity between the second woe, which includes the sixth trumpet, and Josephus' report of the entrance of the Idumeans into Jerusalem during the Roman and Jewish War. Both report of the murder of two prominent leaders and the unleashing of unimaginable slaughter within Jerusalem. We will seek to show that the "four angels" passage of Revelation 9, coupled with the "two witnesses" narrative of Revelation 11, is a representation of the Idumeans joining with the zealots in Jerusalem. This resulted in a definitive, bloody turning point of the Roman and Jewish War, signaling the utter ruin of the nation.

**SUMMARY OF THE FOUR COMMANDERS OF IDUMEA ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS:** In the winter of AD 67-68, the two leaders of Jerusalem, High Priests Ananus and Jesus of Gamala, had control of most of the city except for the temple. The temple was in the possession of the radical anti-Roman zealots who were terrorizing the city. John of Gischala, a cunning rebel who aspired to total control, pretended to be a friend of High Priest Ananus. However, he was secretly colluding with the zealots. One day, John told the zealots that Ananus was going to surrender Jerusalem to the Romans. This was a lie. However, this deception incited the zealots to send for the Idumeans to help defeat those they falsely believed were traitors. When the Idumeans joined with the zealots, the cruel beastly nature of the zealot movement emerged in its full savagery. First they killed the honorable leaders of the city, the two High Priests, and then proceeded to quickly slaughter thousands of Jews. This was the great turning point of the war which we believe was represented by the beast ascending from the bottomless pit in Revelation 11:7.

### 1. OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE FOUR ANGELS PASSAGE Rev 9:12-19.

**A. Scripture:** *"The first woe is past; two other woes have still to come."* Rev 9:12

**A. Comment:** The sixth trumpet is part of the second woe which stretches from Revelation 9:13 to Revelation 11:14 (excluding chapter 10). Besides the four angel passage, the second woe includes the "Two Witnesses" narrative.

**B. Scripture:** *"The sixth angel sounded. I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had one trumpet, 'Free the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates!'"* Rev 9:13-14

**B. Josephus:** "... [Idumean troops] came to Jerusalem, under four commanders..." Wars 4.4.2

**B. Comment:** When the Jews were in Babylon, Babylon was captured by the Persians when they diverted the waters of the Euphrates River, enabling them to enter the city through the riverbed and take control of Babylon by stealth. This event appears to be the symbol for the unusual entrance of the Idumeans into Jerusalem through the locked city gates. It's likely not a coincidence that Jerusalem is called Babylon. Four Idumean commanders led the army to Jerusalem. A horrific storm obscured the sound of sawing through Jerusalem's gate, allowing the Idumeans free passage into the city. ("angel" or "angelos" means "messenger" and can refer to a person or a celestial being depending on the context.). See: P.P. #4 "Babylon, the Harlot of Revelation, was First Century Jerusalem".

**C. Scripture:** *"The four angels were freed who had been prepared for that hour and day and month and year, so that they might kill one third of mankind."* Rev 9:15

**C. Josephus:** Josephus reported that well over 20,000 people of Jerusalem were killed upon the Idumean incursion. Was this one-third of the city? (See letter "F".)

**C. Comment:** The entrance of the army of Idumeans into the city to join with the murderous zealot forces, resulted in an immense shift of power from civilian to zealot control. Josephus documented unimaginable cruelty and indiscriminate murder.

**D. Scripture:** *"The number of the armies of the horsemen is two myriads of myriads..."* Rev 9:16 (YLT)

**D. Josephus:** "... and every body [of the Idumeans] caught up their arms, in order to maintain the liberty of their metropolis; and twenty thousand of them were put into battle-array, and came to Jerusalem, under four commanders...." Wars 4.4.2 (Idumeans identified Jerusalem as their Holy City along with the Jews.)

**D. Comment:** In ancient times, a myriad was ten thousand. If this language means of the myriads, there were two, this would match the 20,000 Idumeans Josephus reported.

**E. Scripture:** *"Thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those who sat on them, having breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of lions. Rev 9:17a*

**E. Josephus:** Jesus of Gamala remarked on the Idumeans' military attire: "As for the multitude that is with you, one may see them so decently adorned in their armor..." Wars 4.4.3

**E. Comment:** Josephus does not report on the colors of the Idumeans' uniforms, but a quick look on websites makes these colors, red, blue and yellow, very plausible. Lions symbolize deadly ferocity.

**F. Scripture:** *"Out of their mouths proceed fire, smoke, and sulfur [brimstone]. 18 By these three plagues were one third of mankind killed: by the fire, the smoke, and the sulfur, which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails. For their tails are like serpents, and have heads, and with them they harm."* Rev 9:17b-19

**F. Josephus reported 8,500 dead the first night of the invasion:** “And now the outer temple was all of it overflowed with blood; and that day, as it came on, they saw eight thousand five hundred dead bodies there.” Wars 4.5.1

**F. Josephus reported 12,000 more deaths, soon after the Idumean invasion:** “...and there were twelve thousand of the better sort [of men] who perished in this manner [imprisoned and quickly killed].” Wars 4.5.3

**F. Comment:** This passage is an assemblage of symbols meant to portray a ghastly picture. Fire, smoke and sulfur recall the cataclysmic destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 19:24-28. Coincidentally, Jerusalem is referred to as Sodom in Rev 11:8. Horses represent tremendous power. “Serpents” symbolize cunning deceptions. The “heads” and “mouths” are emblematic of lying. “Tails” symbolize the most debased sensuousness. In truth, the entire induction of the Idumeans into siding with the zealots in Jerusalem, was a three-fold deception. John of Gischala, the slippery double agent, lied to Ananus to gain his confidence, lied to the zealots to frighten them into calling for the Idumeans, and the zealots deceived the Idumeans causing them to participate in the slaughter of the people of Jerusalem. The massacre in the city upon the entrance of the Idumeans, was quick, gratuitous and extensive, with over 20,000 dead.

## 2. PARALLELS OF REV 11 AND JOSEPHUS’ REPORT OF THE DEATH OF THE TWO LEADERS OF JERUSALEM.

**Scripture:** “When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them [the two witnesses], and overcome them and kill them. Their dead bodies will be in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 From among the peoples, tribes, languages, and nations, people [rebels] will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. 10 Those who dwell on the earth [rebels] will rejoice over them, and they will be glad. They will give gifts [celebrate] to one another, because these two prophets tormented those [rebels] who dwell on the earth.” Rev 11:7-10

**Josephus:** “But the rage of the Idumeans was not satiated by these slaughters [Jerusalem guards and others]; but they now betook themselves to the city, and plundered every house, and slew every one they met... they sought for the high priests... and as soon as they caught them they slew them, and then standing upon their dead bodies, in way of jest, upbraided Ananus with his kindness to the people, and Jesus with his speech made to them from the wall. Nay, they proceeded to that degree of impiety, as to cast away their dead bodies without burial... I should not mistake if I said that the death of Ananus was the beginning of the destruction of the city, and that from this very day may be dated the overthrow of her wall, and the ruin of her affairs, whereon they saw their high priest, and the procurer of their preservation, slain in the midst of their city.” Wars 4.5.2

## 3. JOSEPHUS DESCRIBED ANANUS AND JESUS OF GAMALA, THE TWO LEADERS OF JERUSALEM, AS VENERABLE AND GREAT DEFENDERS OF THE PEOPLE.

**Scripture:** “I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lamp stands, standing before the Lord of the earth.” Rev 11:3-4

**Josephus:** “I said that the death of Ananus was the beginning of the destruction of the city, and that from this very day may be dated the overthrow of her wall, and the ruin of her affairs, whereon they saw their high priest, and the procurer of their preservation, slain in the midst of their city. He was on other accounts also a venerable, and a very just man; and besides the grandeur of that nobility, and dignity, and honor of which he was possessed, he had been a lover of a kind of parity, even with regard to the meanest of the people;... Jesus [of Gamala] was also joined with him; and although he was inferior to him upon the comparison, he was superior to the rest; and I cannot but think that it was because God had doomed this city to destruction, as a polluted city, and was resolved to purge his sanctuary by fire, that he cut off these their great defenders and well-wishers, while those that a little before had worn the sacred garments, and had presided over the public worship; and had been esteemed venerable by those that dwelt on the whole habitable earth [common people] when they came into our city, were cast out naked, and seen to be the food of dogs and wild beasts. And I cannot but imagine that virtue itself groaned at these men’s case, and lamented that she [virtue] was here so terribly conquered by wickedness. And this at last was the end of Ananus and Jesus.” Wars 4.5.2

**See: P.P. #34 “The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11”**

**\*Note regarding Ananus:** In AD 62 Ananus unlawfully ordered the death of Jesus’ half-brother, James. Josephus characterized Ananus as insolent at that time. Please note that Paul was responsible for many Christian deaths previous to his conversion. We are using the characterization Josephus attributed to Ananus during the war which was unconditionally positive.

**You can read the 14 page Idumean invasion of Jerusalem** in Josephus “Wars of the Jews” book 4, chapters 3-6.