

84 MOUNT OF OLIVES SPLIT IN HALF— ZECHARIAH 14:1-4

SCRIPTURE: *Then Yahweh will go out and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. His feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in two, from east to west, making a very great valley. Half of the mountain will move toward the north, and half of it toward the south.* Zech 14:3-4

INTRODUCTION: Zechariah 14 prophesied that Yahweh would stand on the Mount of Olives and it would split into two parts. These parts would then move north and south, resulting in a great valley. Because the Mt. of Olives remains unmoved from its 500 B.C. location, this prophecy is considered, by many, to be future to us. We will seek to show these images are figurative and were fulfilled in the first century with the national judgment of Israel. We will also seek to establish that the “nations” fighting in the city of Jerusalem were not the Romans, as is commonly believed in preterist circles, but warring zealot-led Jewish factions engaged in civil wars.

1. NATIONS ARE OFTEN CALLED MOUNTAINS IN PROPHETIC LANGUAGE (see preterist paper #80).

- A. “Behold, I am against you, destroying mountain [Babylon], says Yahweh, which destroys all the earth. I will stretch out my hand on you... and will make you a burned mountain.” Jer 51:25.
- B. “Let Mount Zion [Judah] be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice...” Ps 48:11
- C. “You [Israel] will thresh the mountains [other nations], and beat them small...” Is 41:15
- D. “Break out into singing, you mountains [Israel]...for Yahweh has redeemed Jacob.” Is 44:23
- E. “The mountains [nations] may depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving kindness shall not depart...” Is 54:10
- F. “Son of Man [Ezekiel], prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, ‘You mountains of Israel, hear the word of Yahweh...’” Ez 36:1
- G. “Then the mountains [Gog’s nation] will be thrown down, the steep places will fall, and every wall will fall to the ground.” Ez 38:20

2. THE SPLIT IN THE MOUNTAIN REPRESENTS THE DIVISION JESUS BROUGHT TO ISRAEL.

- A. “Don’t think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I didn’t come to bring peace, but a sword.” Mt 10:34
- B. “He who is not with me is against me. He who doesn’t gather with me scatters.” Lk 11:23
- C. “Do you think that I have come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, no, but rather division.” Lk 12:51
- D. “For from now on, there will be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. They will be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against her mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” Lk 12:52-53
- E. “So there arose a division in the multitude [of Jews] because of him [Jesus].” Jn 7:43-44
- F. “Others said, ‘How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?’ So there was division among them [the Jews].” Jn 9:16
- G. “Therefore a division arose again among the Jews because of these [Jesus’] words.” Jn 10:19

3. THE FINAL NATIONAL JUDGMENT OF OLD COVENANT ISRAEL FORETOLD

- A. Around 500 BC, Zechariah 14 prophesied the first century national judgment of Israel and the establishment of the new Jerusalem. Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 and the book of Revelation center on this same theme.
- B. “As He [Jesus] sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things [national judgment] be? What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?’” Mt 24:3

4. JOSEPHUS DOCUMENTED FIERCE DIVISIONS LEADING UP TO THE WAR.

“There were...disorders and civil wars in every city; and all those that were at quiet from the Romans turned their hands one against another. There was also a bitter contest between those that were fond of war, and those that were desirous for peace. At...first this quarrelsome temper caught hold of private families, who could not agree among themselves; after which those people that were the dearest to one another broke through all restraints with regard to each other, and every one associated with those of his own opinion, and began already to stand in opposition one to another; so that seditions arose every where...” Josephus, “Wars of the Jews” 4.3.2

5. JOSEPHUS REVEALED JEWS FROM OTHER NATIONS FLOODED INTO JERUSALEM.

“...the captains of these troops of robbers, being satiated with rapines in the country, got all together from all parts, and became a band of wickedness, and all together crept into Jerusalem, which was now become a city without a governor, and, as the ancient custom was, received without distinction all that belonged to their [Hebrew] nation; and these they then received, because all men supposed that those who came so fast into the city came out of kindness, and for their assistance, although these very men, besides the seditions they raised, were otherwise the direct cause of the city’s destruction.... Moreover, besides the bringing on of the war, they were the occasions of sedition and famine therein. Josephus, “Wars” 4.3.3

6. BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE ROMAN AND JEWISH WAR IN JERUSALEM:

- 66 Fall**—Zealot priests and other rebels take control of the temple (their “fort”)—a tyrannical force in the city.
67 Spring—Vespasian sent to Palestine to put down the rebellion, starting in Galilee.
68 Winter—Zealot ranks swell in Jerusalem, as Jewish rebels come from other nations.
68 February—Idumeans join the zealots. Blood-bath of moderates, including the two high priests.
68 February—Zealots now in complete control of Jerusalem.
68 June—Nero dies. Vespasian’s army camps outside Jerusalem awaiting orders from the new emperor.
69 April—Simon of Gioras became “Master of Jerusalem”—a cruel and blood-thirsty tyrant.
69 Dec—Vespasian went to Rome to become emperor (after Nero and 3 short-lived emperors: Galba, Ortho, Vitellius).
69 Dec—Jerusalem divided into sometimes 2 or 3 warring rebel factions. Hapless residents suffer assaults, famine.
70 May 10—The very first Roman battering ram struck the walls of Jerusalem. Outer wall breached the end of May.
70 August/Sept—Romans took Jerusalem. Jerusalem and temple destroyed. Zealot priests killed.

7. ZEALOT OCCUPATION OF THE TEMPLE WAS AN ABOMINATION. CHRISTIANS WERE TO FLEE JERUSALEM.

Jesus warned his followers to leave Judea: “But when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not...then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” Mk 13:14

8. JOSEPHUS REPORTED TWO GREAT EXITS FROM JERUSALEM DURING THIS TIME.

1. “A great many of the people left their own country, and fled into foreign provinces.” Wars, 2.14.2
2. “After this calamity had befallen Cestius [pre-war effort by Romans to stop the rebellion], many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink.” Wars 2.20.1

9. ZEALOT-LED ISRAEL WAS “THE NATIONS” THAT TREAD JERUSALEM UNDER FOOT. TRANSLATOR BIAS MISLEADS READERS TO BELIEVE GENTILES TRAMPLED JERUSALEM.

A1. Correct translation: “They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the nations until the times of the nations are fulfilled.” Lk 21:24

A2. Incorrect translation: They will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations [nations=ethos #1484]. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles [nations=ethnos #1484] until the times of the Gentiles [nations=ethnos #1484] are fulfilled. Lk 21:24

B1. Correct translation: “Leave out the court which is outside of the temple, and don’t measure it, for it has been given to the nations. They will tread the holy city [Jerusalem] under foot for forty-two months.” Rev 11:2

B2. Incorrect translation: But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles [nations= ethos #1484]. They will tread the holy city under foot for forty-two months. Rev 11:2

10. FACTS REGARDING THE WORD “NATIONS” (goy Heb #1471 and ethos Gr #1484)

A. Definition of nation: *The Hebrew word “goy” primarily refers to a nation or a group of people. In the Old Testament, it is often used to describe non-Israelite nations, commonly referred to as “Gentiles.” However, it can also refer to the nation of Israel itself, emphasizing the collective identity of a people group. The term underscores the idea of a distinct community bound by common cultural, ethnic, or political ties. biblehub.com*

B. Example of Israel referred to as nations (plural): “God said to him [Jacob], ‘I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations will be from you, and kings will come out of your body.’” Gen 35:11

C. Jews in Jerusalem at Pentecost were from every nation: “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.” Acts 2:5

D. The book of Revelation references Israel as “nations” repeatedly. See Preterist Paper #51

CLOSING THOUGHTS: Jesus split the nation of Israel with the presentation of the Gospel. His life separated the sheep from the goats, the humble from the proud, believers from unbelievers. He demonstrated the mercy of God with His death and resurrection as well as the justice of Yahweh with national judgment, the Day of the Lord.

Highly recommend: “The Wars of the Jews” by Josephus, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm>

Excellent source for research: Josephus.org

See: P.P. #51 “Key Repeated Patterns of Revelation” (regarding “nations”)

See: P.P. #76 “Evidence from Josephus Regarding the Beast” (regarding “trampling”)

YouTube: Bob Cruickshank, “Jesus’ Last Days Splitting of the Mount of Olives” Zech 14:1-4 (somewhat different from this paper.)