

QUEST 52

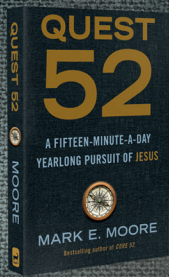
Quest52.org



How Threats to the Temple Were Handled:

“I think that it is almost impossible to make too much of the Temple in first-century Jewish Palestine.” E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, p. 262

1. After Jeremiah predicted the Temple’s destruction (Jer 6–7; cf. Micah 3:12) he was threatened with death (Jer 26:1–19).
2. Sabbeus and Theodosius were executed for supporting a rival Temple in Egypt (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.79).
3. Among the Essenes, an attempt was made on the ‘Teacher of Righteousness’ by the ‘Wicked Priest’ because of his criticism of the Temple (1 QpHab 9.2–10; cf. 12.3–5; 4QpNah [169] 1.1–3).
4. Jesus, Son of Ananias was brought before the Roman procurator because of his prophecy against the Temple (Josephus, *J.W.* 6.300–305).
5. For literary accounts of threats to the temple see *T. Levi* 10:3; 14:1–15; *T. Judah* 23:1–5; *1 Enoch* 90:28–29.
6. This was reflected in later rabbinic literature: *b. Yom.* 39b; *Lam. Rab.* 1.5 §31.
7. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.5.3 (cf. *Wars* 2.12.1): “When that feast which is called the Passover was at hand, at which time our custom is to use unleavened bread, and a great multitude was gathered together from all parts to that feast, Cumanus was afraid lest some attempt of innovation should then be made by them; so he ordered that one regiment of the army should take their arms, and stand in the temple cloisters, to repress any attempts of innovation, if perchance any such should begin; and this was no more than what the former procurators of Judea did at such festivals. But on the fourth day of the feast, a certain soldier let down his breeches, and exposed his privy members to the multitude, which put those that saw him into a furious rage, and made them cry out that this impious action was not done to approach them, but God himself; nay, some of them reproached Cumanus, and pretended that the soldier was set on by him, which, when Cumanus heard, he was also himself not a little provoked at such reproaches laid upon him; yet did he exhort them to leave off such seditious attempts, and not to raise a tumult at the festival. But when he could not induce them to be quiet for they still went on in their reproaches to him, he gave order that the whole army should take their entire armor, and come to Antonia, which was a fortress, as we have said already, which overlooked the temple; but when the multitude saw the soldiers there, they were affrighted at them, and ran away hastily; but as the passages out were but narrow, and as they thought their enemies followed them, they were crowded together in their flight, and a great number were pressed to death in those narrow passages; nor indeed was the number fewer than twenty thousand that perished in this tumult. So instead of a festival, they had at last a mournful day of it; and they all of them forgot their prayers and sacrifices and betook themselves to lamentation and weeping; so great an affliction did the impudent obscenity of a single soldier bring upon them.”



QUEST 52

Quest52.org



Other Predictions of the Temple's Destruction:

1. *T. Levi* 10:3 predicted the tearing of the Temple curtain and 15:1–2 says, “Therefore the temple, which the Lord shall choose, shall be laid waste through your uncleanness, and ye shall be captives throughout all nations.” *T. Judah* 23:3 adds that the sanctuary will be consumed by fire.
2. *Sib. Or.* 3:337–40 attributes the destruction to unfaithfulness, “And temple of the great God and long walls shall all fall to the ground, since in thy heart the holy law of the immortal God Thou didst not keep, but, erring, thou didst serve unseemly images.”
3. *Liv. Pro.* 10:10–11 predicts the demolition of the entire city and 12:11 specifies the utter destruction of the Holy of Holies and the tearing of the curtain.
4. Josephus avers: “But as for that house, God had for certain long ago doomed it to the fire” (*J.W.* 6:250; cf. *Ant.* 20.205–6).
5. The late first-century *1 Enoch* provides an apocalyptic description of the Temple's replacement (90:28–29a): “And I stood up to see till they folded up that old house; and carried off all the pillars, and all the beams and ornaments of the house were at the same time folded up with it, and they carried it off and laid it in a place in the south of the land. And I saw till the Lord of the sheep brought a new house greater and loftier than that first and set it up in the place of the first.”
6. Temple critique hardly abated in later Rabbinic literature (cf. *y. Sota* 6.3; *b. Yoma* 39; *Lam. Rab.* 1.5 §31). *Tg. Isa.* 5:5 reads: “And now I will declare unto you what I am about to do unto my people: I will take away my Shekinah from them, and they shall be for a spoil; I will break down their sanctuaries, and they shall be for a trampling,” or *t. Menah* 13.22, “On what account was Shiloh destroyed? Because of the disgraceful disposition of the Holy Things which were there... On what account did they go into exile? Because they love money and hate one another.”
7. For further references one is commended to Craig A. Evans, “Predictions of the Destruction of the Herodian Temple in the Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Scrolls, and Related Texts,” *JSP* 10 (1992): 89–147. It is also instructive to point out that Jesus' major critique of the Temple hierarchy revolved around economic exploitation as did that of Qumran as well as the rabbis; cf. Craig A. Evans, “Early Rabbinic Sources of Jesus Research,” *SBLSP* 20 (1981): 59–65 and “Opposition to the Temple: Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 235–53.