

Preterism – Tacitus

"Prodigies had indeed occurred, but to avert them either by victims or by vows is held unlawful by a people which, though prone to superstition, is opposed to all propitiatory rites. Contending hosts were seen meeting in the skies, arms flashed, and suddenly the temple was illumined with fire from the clouds. Of a sudden the doors of the shrine opened and a superhuman voice cried: 'The gods are departing.' At the same moment the mighty stir of their going was heard. Few interpreted these omens as fearful. The majority firmly believed that their ancient priestly writings contained the prophecy that this was the very time when the east should grow strong and that men starting from Judea should possess the world" (Tacitus' Histories 5.8.13-14).

Let's first address the statement "Contending hosts were seen meeting in the skies, arms flashed":

1.) Tacitus is clearly describing the war that occurred in 70AD, and is likely drawing from Josephus as a source for this statement.

2.) As Beatrice Groves notes in "The Destruction of Jerusalem in Early Modern English Literature", p. 194, others have understood this statement as Tacitus drawing upon "light". Tacitus repeatedly notes the connection to something bright: "flashed" and "illumined". Others have correctly noted that the horses and their riders (contending hosts) gave off an incredible amount of light that beamed through the sky. In John Crowne's work "The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian in two parts : as it is acted at the Theatre Royal" he likewise plays close attention to the impact of "light"

"Sag.Through all the Air they scattered Rays so bright, As if their prancing Steeds were shod with Light."

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A35280.0001.001/1:7.3.1?rgn=div3:view=fulltext>

"The stormy Air all fill'd with Prodigy; A numerous Army in the Skye appears, And every Troop a bloody Banner bears. They march along in the Moons timerous light, Then dive in air and vanish from our sight."

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A35280.0001.001/1:7.2.2?rgn=div3:view=fulltext>

It is clear then that the text ought to be rendered such that the focus is upon the glorious and blinding light of the fiery steeds. These would be light scattering horsemen. An army in battell aray.

3.) Nowhere does Tacitus claim that the contending hosts were actually angels gathering the elect of God, and nowhere does Tacitus state that Jesus himself was present. This is read into the words of Tacitus to support the false narrative.

4.) The feat of arms was used to display the prowess of the roman army, and in doing so was glorious and blinding. This would be tactical.

Let's address the second statement: "suddenly the temple was illumined with fire from the clouds. Of a sudden the doors of the shrine opened and a superhuman voice cried: 'The gods are departing.' At the same moment the mighty stir of their going was heard. Few interpreted these omens as fearful."

1.) Tacitus states that the temple was illumined with fire from the clouds, again a depiction of the fire that resulted from the war and destruction blooming to the sky.

2.) Tacitus then states the doors of the temple opened and a "superhuman voice cried" -> The gods are departing. First off all several questions must be asked. a) what was this superhuman voice? b) why is it assumed that this superhuman voice is God? c) where is the superhuman voice coming from? If it is coming from inside the temple, why is God there? His glory had already departed the temple in the book of Ezekiel and had not returned d) who are "the gods"? e) why are there multiple gods departing, and why would God claim this? f) where in scripture do we see the terminology at all connected to Matthew 24:29-31?

3.) The problem with this statement is that we have no clarity as to what is actually being referred to here? Matthew 24:29-31 says that this event occurred "after the tribulation", yet you claim this event occurred during the tribulation. The sign of the son of man would appear in heaven, not in the temple. The Son of Man would be coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, yet Tacitus doesn't describe anything similar. The angels would be sent, they didn't cry out in

the temple? They were sent with the Lord to gather the elect together. This didn't happen in 70AD, and isn't the scene that Tacitus or Josephus is describing.