Jesus & the Rise of Early Christianity

A History of New Testament Times

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For
Diane Nicolios
and
Evonne Paddison,
friends

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	David Noel Freedman (ed.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
Ag.Ap.	Josephus *Against Apion*
Annals	Tacitus *Annals of Imperial Rome*
Ant.	Josephus *Jewish Antiquities*
BARev	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BibRev	*Bible Review*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*
BT	*The Bible Translator*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the *Damascus Document*
CH	*Church History*
DJG	Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall (eds.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*
DLNTD	Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (eds.), *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*
DPL	Ralph P. Martin and Gerald F. Hawthorne (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*
ET	English Translation
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
HE	Eusebius *History of the Church*
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IBM	*Ancient Greek Inscriptions in the British Museum,* 4 vols.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IGRR	Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes, 4 vols.
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods*
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament* Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
J.W.	Josephus *Jewish War*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
Life	Josephus *Life*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OGIS	W. Dittenberger (ed.), *Orientis graeci inscriptiones selectae*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review* (Melbourne)
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Preface

Several goals were in mind when I set out to write this book. One was to show that Jesus himself is the "engine" that drives the story of the New Testament. In other words, this book arose from the long-held conviction that the "Christ of faith" was one and the same as the "Jesus of history." So long as an unbridgeable gap is seen to lie between "Jesus" and "Christ" then "Christ" can be held at arm's length as one deity among others on offer and that Christianity itself can be regarded merely as a matter of religious poetry and mystical worship. But such a gap is historically untenable, as I hope to establish. It is my conviction that Christ's claims on individuals and societies are tenacious and real because they are based on the genuine historicity of Jesus as the Son of David, on his death for sins and upon his bodily resurrection.

All this, in turn, must be seen as the fulfillment of the hopes and promises of the Law and Prophets. Herein a second goal was in mind, namely, to demonstrate that the ministry of Jesus, the early preaching about him and the rise of the churches was nothing less than God keeping the "sure promises" made to David. In short, I sought to establish a history that would make clear the inference of the New Testament, that the history in the New Testament was a sacred history, fulfilling and ending all that had gone before in the sacred history of the Old Testament. As such, a New Testament history could not be conceived of simply as a mere succession of haphazard events. God lay behind this history as he undergirded the history of the Old Testament.

In this regard, I have not sought to master or cite the huge and unmanageable body of secondary literature that is now to be found in the libraries of universities and seminaries. Rather, I have attempted to grasp the meaning of the primary texts from the inside, as it were, with only selected reference to secondary literature.

Looking back from a completed task I express my surprise at the degree to which the story of the New Testament can be recovered by standard methods of research and analysis even though the whole narrative, of course, is lost to us forever because of the unbridgeable distance of time and culture that separates us from those critical decades of the first century that witnessed the rise of Christianity.

If I may be permitted an expression of regret, it is that I did not venture forth upon this project years earlier. Having completed it I feel that after a lifetime of attempting to do so by other means, I am now at last beginning to grasp the message and meaning of the New Testament. Much light has broken forth for me as I have attempted to set out the sequence of events and establish some kind of relationship between Jesus and his followers and between those followers and the world to which they went. I can only pray that readers can, by what they read, save some time in their own pilgrimage and be that much further advanced in their understanding to form their own conclusions about the One who gave rise to a movement whose direction and fortunes are still being worked out among us.

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The maps were prepared by my daughter-in-law Jane Barnett, to whom I am deeply grateful.

Paul W. Barnett

1

The New Testament as History

1.1. History in the New Testament

The small volume of literature called the New Testament is simultaneously theology, religion and history. It is theology because it teaches about God. It is religion since it inspires the worship of God. But it is also equally history.

Of its twenty-seven writings, the four Gospels and the book of Acts, which are cast in narrative form, represent more than half the total volume of the New Testament. Each of the twenty-one letters is also historical in the sense that each arises out of a concrete or "occasional" situation. This is true even for such generalized letters as James and 1 and 2 Peter. Paul's letters are most obviously occasional, containing many personal allusions and, in the case of Galatians 1—2, extensive autobiographical details. Even the Apocalypse is historical in these senses. Its self-identified author, John, was on Patmos Island when he wrote to seven congregations in Roman Asia. Furthermore, there is a kind of coded narrative relating to the birth, rapture and rule of the "man child" in Revelation 12.

The New Testament is historical in another, more fundamental, sense. The *kērygma* embedded as speeches in the book of Acts and echoed throughout the New Testament letters is a recital of *events* relating to Jesus the man crucified, risen, ascended and returning.

> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. (1 Thess 4:14)
>
> [Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the age. . . . Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time. (Heb 9:26-28)
>
> You were ransomed . . . with the precious blood of Christ. . . . He was destined

> before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times. . . . God . . . raised him from the dead and gave him glory. (1 Pet 1:18-21)

Every part of the New Testament, whether a Gospel, the book of Acts, a letter or the Apocalypse, is written by authors who are convinced that they are overarched by a Jesus who is behind them, above them and ahead of them. Each document is itself rooted in a specific historical situation while at the same time conscious of the overarching Jesus.

But this "Jesus story" is not freestanding. Quite the contrary. The writers of the narratives of the New Testament tell their story of Jesus as a continuation of God's story of his people Israel recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. The genealogy of Jesus reaches back to Abraham in Matthew's Gospel and to Adam in Luke-Acts. Above all, the same God who is the subject of the Old Testament story is the subject of the New Testament story. God's mighty acts of creation, redemption and revelation are continued in his powerful works, wonders and signs in the man, Jesus of Nazareth, and especially in his death and resurrection (Acts 2:22).

Yet the story of Jesus in the *kērygma* spoken and written is no mere addition to the story told in the Old Testament. Jesus the Christ is portrayed in the New Testament as the goal or fulfillment of the hopes and promises of the Law and the Prophets (see, e.g., Rom 10:4; 16:25-26; 1 Cor 10:11). "All the promises of God find their Yes in him," declared the apostle Paul (2 Cor 1:20). Thus in Jesus there is a new beginning of the story; three of the four Gospels have the word *beginning (archē)* in their opening sentences.[1] The seed of promise sown in the Law and the Prophets came to birth in Jesus and the rise of Christianity. As the testament of promise was history, so too the testament of fulfillment was history, a *renewed* history.

Is it possible to write a New Testament history? The answer must be yes. The historical content of the *kērygma* written in the Gospels and Acts and the rootedness in history of all the literature of the New Testament make possible an attempt to retell the story of Jesus and the rise of his movement.

1.2. The practice of New Testament history

1.2.1. Change. A primary task of the historian is to notice change and to account for it. Thus history writing has a particular interest in "the transformation of things (people, institutions, ideas and so on) from one state into another."[2] History is not concerned with the things that *are* so much as with things that *happen* and with the new directions that occur as a consequence. Understood in this way, history deals with phenomena and, where possible, seeks an explanation for those phenomena.

1.2.2. Incidental information. The historian's craft depends on the quality of the available primary sources. Sources that are close to the person or event in

question and that have the marks of integrity enhance the possibility of excellent history writing. Here, however, a subtle distinction needs to be made between sources that were intentionally written narrative, on one hand, and those from which information is gleaned incidentally, on the other. The Tudor historian G. R. Elton draws attention to the difference between

> [evidence] produced specifically for [the historian's] attention, and that produced for another purpose.. . . the products of the ordinary events of life.[3]

The Gospels and the book of Acts belong to the first category. The letters of the New Testament, which are often concerned with the occasional, that is, with the ordinary events of life, are of special interest to the historian. Because they are innocent of any attempt to convey new information about the historical Jesus or the rise of early Christianity, the information that they do contain is the more valuable.

1.2.3. The significance of Galatians. These observations may be illustrated by reference to Paul's letter to the Galatians. Galatians, written c. 48,[4] is Paul's earliest letter and in all probability the earliest written evidence of Christianity. Note too that this document is a letter, a historical document concerned with the ordinary events of life, not an intentionally written narrative like a Gospel or the book of Acts. The details given by Paul are part of his apologetic for his apostleship, which was at that time under attack.

Galatians does not yield information on every topic. For example, the letter tells us that Jesus Christ was the "Son [of God]" whom "God . . . raised . . . from the dead" (Gal 2:20; 1:1). He died as a result of having been crucified—a detail that is dwelt upon in the letter (Gal 2:20; 3:1; cf. 6:12, 14). Yet we learn nothing here of Jesus' history prior to his crucifixion.

Nor does Paul tell us how many months or years elapsed between the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his own conversion. During that period Paul, who had by then "advanced in Judaism beyond many of [his] own age," was a persecutor of "the church of God" and a would-be "destroyer" of "the faith" (Gal 1:13-14, 23). But we are not able to establish from Galatians the extent of the time frame of this persecution. (The tenor of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians implies this to have been a brief period. Paul's persecution of the church of God occurred during the sequence of the appearances of the risen Christ, the last of which was to Paul [1 Cor 15:3-9; Gal 1:23].)

Apart from these limitations, however, Paul's letter to the Galatians conveys considerable information about early Christianity. In describing the period between the historical Christ and the conversion of Paul, this letter points to such phenomena as the faith, the church of God (that is, the church in Jerusalem), the churches of Christ in Judea and those who were apostles, Cephas (Peter) and James the brother of the Lord (Gal 1:13, 16, 18-19, 22-23). Clearly each of these was

in place prior to Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus (Gal 1:17). Paul, a leading younger scholar within Judaism, had attempted to destroy the faith that had been so offensive to him (Gal 1:13, 23).

The time between Paul's conversion and the writing of Galatians can be divided into two parts. The first, which was of fourteen years duration (Gal 2:1), began at his conversion and included his visit to Arabia, his return to Damascus and his first return visit to Jerusalem (where he stayed with Cephas and met James), followed by his withdrawal to Syria-Cilicia (Gal 1:15-18, 21).

The second part began with his journey to Jerusalem (Gal 2:1), where it was agreed that he and Barnabas should "go" to the Gentiles and that James, Peter and John should "go"[5] to the circumcised (Gal 2:7-9). Evidently Paul and Barnabas journeyed to Galatia (Gal 3:1), where they established churches (Gal 1:2) based on a circumcision-free message. The letter was written out of concern that this message was being overturned in Galatia (Gal 1:6-9; 3:1; 5:2-12) by the teachings of local agitators and in Antioch in Syria by the decision of Jewish believers, including Peter and Barnabas, not to eat with Gentile believers, which was in effect an attempt to impose the law on Gentiles (Gal 2:11-14).

This letter not only mentions these historical details but also has as its main topic a matter of significant change of direction so far as Judaism was concerned, namely, Paul's insistence on the inclusion of believing Gentiles as members of the true family of Abraham, apart from circumcision (Gal 3:6-18). Paul is arguing his case to readers who have recently encountered an opposing view. The letter to the Galatians bears witness to a raging dispute over this question between Paul and believers who were conservatively Jewish.

The point is that this letter, which does not set out to provide a narrative, nonetheless contributes many historical details that are the more valuable because they emerge incidentally rather than intentionally. These details are almost certainly correct since Paul's remarks would have been the object of scrutiny by his critics in Jerusalem. Any error in fact would have been used against him, as Paul knew well. Thus Galatians serves to provide a sketch of certain aspects of early Christian history from the crucifixion of Jesus in 33 until the writing of the letter in c. 48. In turn, these details can be set up as a template against which the accuracy of the more intentionally written book of Acts may be measured.[6]

1.2.4. Early Christianity and Jesus. The sure facts of "the faith," "the church of God" and "apostles before [Paul]" that are on view in Galatians naturally point back to the historical Jesus as the impetus for things that were so close in time after him. The immediate continuity of these phenomena following Jesus can only mean that he must be seen as the impulse for the speed and direction of such entities as the church, its faith and the apostles. To be sure, the same conclusions are to be drawn from the book of Acts. That text, however, is a deliberately written history that is the object of critical attack. No such problems exist with the gratuitous

information provided by Paul in Galatians.

Therefore, any New Testament history that is true to the "practice of history" must account for the early church of God, its faith and its apostles. In our view, Jesus himself provides the only satisfying explanation for these phenomena. The proper practice of history is to account for such change and the new directions that followed.

1.3. The driving force within the New Testament

A New Testament history, to be true to a proper practice of history, must look for the engine that drives the narrative. To be sure, the times had to be right for the rise of Christianity. Dynamic leaders also were critical, Paul in particular. The readiness of Gentile God-fearers to hear the message of the grace of God was also significant. But a retold narrative would be seriously undiscerning if it explained itself primarily in terms of these factors.

In our view that driving force is Jesus the Christ of God and the intellectual and spiritual impact he had on his immediate followers and through them to others. A New Testament history must somehow appreciate Jesus and grasp the effect he had on others, including those like Paul who, to our knowledge, had not personally known Jesus.[7] Such a history must be the story of Jesus and the unfolding story of his followers in the next generation after him. Like every history of a person and his movement, some attention must be given to the context and circumstances of the movement. But the focus must not be taken from that driving force at the center of the story to its periphery.

A review of New Testament histories suggests that such distractions have not always been avoided. It has proved to be easy enough to devote rather too much space to the Herods, the Pharisees and the Roman provincial system and other details of historical context and not enough to the dynamism of Christology, Jesus' bodily resurrection and the coming of the Spirit.[8]

It is curious how few New Testament histories have appeared in recent years.[9] Several explanations may be offered. One is that intensive specialization associated with doctoral research has narrowed the angle of interest away from the breadth of the New Testament as a whole to often very small constituent parts. Another is the recent focus on the so-called historical Jesus in his context, divorced from his impact on his immediate followers and the subsequent rise of Christianity. Related to this is the reservation of some about even the theoretical possibility of a New Testament "canon," which inevitably calls into question any attempt to sketch a narrative of events within the period represented by that canon.[10] As well, the impact of social studies on New Testament scholarship has tended to diminish enquiry into key people and their impact upon the flow of events that is the stuff of history.[11] Whatever the reason, the lack of publications in this field is to be regretted. The historical span is brief, a mere six decades. Moreover, the few years

involved find numerous tangential links into Jewish and Greco-Roman history, as reference to the indexes of people and places of F. F. Bruce's great *New Testament History* reveals.

1.4. Jesus and the "holy and sure blessings of David"

A New Testament history must do justice to the deep sense of fulfillment by which Jesus and the rise of Christianity are tied to the promises of the Old Testament.[12] Such a narrative cannot be a mere retelling of a sequence of miscellaneous events about John the baptizer, Jesus and the apostles. The story of the New Testament must be understood as but a chapter—the final chapter—of the yet unfinished book of the acts of Yahweh that we refer to as the Old Testament.

The key connecting link between Jesus and the promises of the Old Testament is his identity as the Israelite descended from David upon whom the Spirit of the Lord came. He is "great David's greater son," the Messiah, the anointed of Yahweh, his Christ. To be sure, his messiahship incorporated elements like divine sonship, self-sacrifice for his people and the rule of the Son of Man that, though anticipated in the Old Testament, were not always closely connected with the promises of the son of David. Yet it is his messiahship that dominates the Gospels (see, e.g., Mt 1:17; 11:2; Mk 1:1; 8:29; Lk 1:31-33; Jn 1:41) and that is repeatedly emphasized in the apostolic speeches recorded in the book of Acts (see, e.g., Acts 2:29-36; 3:18-21; 13:32-36; cf. Rom 1:3-5).

1.5. Christ, Christians and Christianity

His name Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus or merely Christ is the constant reminder of the centrality in the New Testament of Christology. This is to state the obvious. Yet many New Testament histories strangely miss this core reality in their retelling of the story of the New Testament.[13]

It is of utmost significance to note that the unbelieving outsiders to the movement uniformly referred to him as "Christ." This is as true for the Jew Josephus, writing in the late nineties, as it is for the Gentiles Pliny, Tacitus and Suetonius, writing in the early second century.[14] To be sure, Christ was his name. But the person of that name had adherents, *Christianoi,* "Christians." This was a word very similar in form to *Augustiani,* who were adherents of Augustus, or the *Herodianoi,* who where supporters of Herod, or the *Neroniani,* who belonged to Nero's faction. In other words, those who stood outside the movement understood Christ to be a leader of followers, the founder of a movement.

These followers of Christ came to be called *Christianoi* in Antioch-on-the-Orontes. It may be mere coincidence, but it is worth noting, nonetheless, that in the same city by the end of the century this movement was first called *Christianismos,* "Christianity."[15]

Two official actions within the empire need to be noticed. One is the hostility

toward Christ and the Christians by various emperors from the time of Nero, as reflected in the accounts of Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny.[16] The other is that successive Roman emperors from the time of Vespasian sought to suppress the descendants of David, king of the Jews, within the empire.[17] Were these actions unconnected, or did the Romans somehow sense a relationship between Christ and his *Christianoi* and between King David and his descendants? Probably they did see just that relationship.[18] In short, Gentile rulers in antiquity may have seen what many modern observers have often not seen, that this man Jesus was the Davidic Christ, the heir of his kingdom. The New Testament and its story of Jesus and the rise of Christianity begin to make sense when we understand this.

Of course, in time this very Jewish understanding of Jesus' identity and mission as Yahweh's Christ dissipated. Jews rejected a *crucified* Messiah, notwithstanding his Davidic descent. The future of Christianity proved to be not with the historic people of Yahweh but with the Gentiles. The closing chapter of the book of Acts makes that clear. Yet for Gentiles, with whom the future of the movement belonged, the preaching of a crucified Jew with the incomprehensible title *Christos,* which meant "smeared one," was regarded as "folly" (1 Cor 1:23). The preachers held true to the fact and significance of the crucifixion and to the reality of his messianic kingdom, but they began to use the title Jesus the Christ as a surname: Jesus Christ. But it is helpful for us to think about the central figure of Christianity at the time of its beginnings as "Jesus the Christ," the son of David.

Excursus 1A: New Testament chronology

As we examine the dating of the birth of Jesus, his ministry, his crucifixion and the apostleship of Paul, in each case we find that external events in the wider flow of Jewish and Roman history prove to be critical. Furthermore, we note that several of these datings are somewhat dependent on others established beforehand. Thus the commencement of Jesus' public ministry at "about thirty years of age" is affected by the date assigned to the nativity. Since the crucifixion must have occurred in A.D. 30 or A.D. 33, the determination of these alternatives is influenced by the decision made about the date of the commencement of that ministry. In turn, the chronology of Paul's apostleship is affected by the opinion reached regarding the date of the crucifixion, whether A.D. 30 or A.D. 33 (see table 1).

1. Jesus' birth (5 B.C.). Matthew and Luke make it clear that Jesus was born during Herod's reign (Mt 2:1; Lk 1:5, 24, 26). Thus Jesus' birthdate must predate Herod's death, which is almost universally accepted as having occurred in 4 B.C.19

However, Luke's account has an awkward internal conflict. Having implied that Jesus was born during Herod's reign sometime before 4 B.C., Luke then states that the nativity occurred at the time of Quirinius's census, which Josephus places in A.D. 6/7,[20] more than ten years after the death of the king. Since there can be no doubt that Jesus was born during the days of Herod, we must conclude either that Luke has made an error or that there is something missing in our understanding of his reference to Quirinius.[21]

So, when in Herod's reign was Jesus born? The command to kill boys from Bethlehem who were two years of age or less from the time the Magi sighted "the star in the east" (Mt 2:7, 16) is one clue, if only we could be sure that such a sighting occurred and when. From the time of the astronomer Johannes Kepler, attention has been drawn to the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, which occurs only every 805 years but which occurred three times in 7/6 B.C. At that time these planets were joined by Mars, forming a brilliant triangle[22] that many have identified as "the star of Bethlehem."[23] Provided a degree of poetic license is permitted to Luke in his reference to the movement of "the star," these astral phenomena may well be "the star" that prompted the travels of the Mesopotamian astrologers to Jerusalem. Certainly the science of astronomy arose in that region.

The rise of a king from the east whose coming was signaled by a star was a widely held belief in antiquity. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures prophesied that

> a star shall come forth out of Jacob;
> a man shall arise out of Israel;
> a man shall come forth from his seed
> and rule many nations. (Num 24:17, 7 LXX)

This prophecy appears to have left its mark in the minds of the Gentiles. Even Tacitus and Suetonius, writing in the second century, refer to the expectation that "from Judaea men would come forth destined to rule the world."[24] The large population of Jews in Mesopotamia may well have disseminated the prophecy of a ruler signaled by a star in a community fascinated by the astral sciences.

If the maximum age of "two years" for the boys from Bethlehem is subtracted from the time of a sighting of the bright lights in the sky in 7/6 B.C., a date of 5 B.C. is suggested for the birth of Jesus.

2. The beginning of Jesus' ministry (A.D. 29/30). The date of Jesus' ministry, both the beginning and the end, are also determined by reference to wider history. When did Jesus begin to preach in public? Luke's remarkably detailed time note is critical here:

> In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor Judea, . . . the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. (Lk 3:1-2)

Two questions are prompted by Luke's information: When did Tiberius begin to reign? For how long did John the Baptist minister before Jesus emerged in his own right? As to the first, the Roman Senate confirmed Tiberius as emperor September 17, A.D. 14.[25] Thus the fifteenth year of his reign would have been A.D. 28/29.[26]

Although the second question is difficult to answer specifically, the four Evangelists leave the clear impression that it was quite brief. Yet John's ministry, including his period of imprisonment prior to his execution, must have occupied a reasonable period to allow him to become famous with the people far and wide, to assemble a devoted band of disciples, to incur the enmity of Herod Antipas the tetrarch of Galilee and to establish in the popular mind that his martyr's death was shameful, provoking the judgment of God on the tetrarch eight years later. In our view the period occupied by John's prophesying and his incarceration is unlikely to have been much less than two years. Hence it appears that the ministry of Jesus began A.D. 29/30.[27]

3. The date of the crucifixion (A.D. 33). In broad terms Jesus' crucifixion is established by the Roman historian Tacitus who stated that Jesus was executed during the principate of Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) at the hands of Pontius Pilate, the governor of the province of Judea (A.D. 26-37).[28] Information from the Gospels allows us to be more precise. Each Gospel notes

that the crucifixion occurred on the day before the sabbath, a Friday. According to John, that Friday was the day before the Passover began (Jn 19:31), that is, 14 Nisan in the Jewish calendar. Careful calculation establishes that the only relevant years Nisan 14 fell on a Friday were A.D. 30 and 33. We eliminate A.D. 30 on the basis that Jesus only began his ministry that year (see 2 above) and because the ministry must have been more than one year's duration.[29] Thus the ministry of Jesus ended by crucifixion in Jerusalem on Nisan 14 (April 3), A.D. 33.[30]

4. The span of Paul's ministry (A.D. 34-65).[31] Critical to the dating of Paul's ministry is the Acts reference to his trial in Corinth before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12-17). The famous inscription in Delphi pinpoints Gallio's year as proconsul: July 1, A.D. 51 to June 30, A.D. 52.[32] Since Paul is likely to have left Corinth before the arrival of the incoming governor could prompt renewed accusations from the Jewish quarter, we must locate Paul's arrival in the latter part of A.D. 50; it will be remembered that he spent "a year and six months" in the Achaian capital (Acts 18:11). In turn this dating is corroborated by the arrival in Corinth of Priscilla and Aquila, who were expelled with other Jews from Italy by the order of the Emperor Claudius in A.D. 49.[33]

Paul's ministry in Corinth A.D. 50-52 thus represents a firm benchmark from which a Pauline chronology before and after can be calculated. The markers within which the earlier part of his ministry occurred are A.D. 33 (the crucifixion) and A.D. 50 (the apostle's arrival in Corinth). Paul's own chronology supplied in Galatians provides pointers to a reconstruction of those eighteen years. Helpful is Paul's reference to his second Jerusalem visit "after fourteen years" (Gal 2:1). These "fourteen years" appear to be reckoned in relationship to the momentous Christophany near Damascus. However, given the Jewish way of citing part years as full years, the time elapsed may have been closer to thirteen years.[34] By subtracting thirteen years (from Paul's conversion to Jerusalem II) from eighteen years (Jesus' crucifixion to Paul's arrival in Corinth) we are left with five years. Those five years will be accounted for by the months between the crucifixion and Paul's conversion and the years between Jerusalem II and Paul's arrival in Achaia.

After his time in Corinth, Paul visited Jerusalem before returning to the Aegean region for a two- to three-year ministry in Roman Asia (A.D. 53-55; see Acts 19:8, 10; cf. Acts 20:31). Forced from Ephesus, Paul traveled through Troas to Macedonia for further ministry there before return-

A.D. 33	Crucifixion of Jesus
A.D. 33/34	Conversion of Paul
A.D. 34-36	Damascus, Arabia, Damascus
A.D. 36	Jerusalem I (Cephas and James)
A.D. 36/37	Syria and Cilicia
A.D. 44	Antioch-on-the-Orontes
A.D. 47	Jerusalem II (James, Cephas and John)
A.D. 47-49	Mission to Cyprus and Southern Galatia
A.D. 49	Jerusalem III (Jerusalem Council)
A.D. 49-52	Mission to Macedonia and Achaia
A.D. 52	Jerusalem IV
A.D. 53-57	Mission in Asia and Macedonia
A.D. 57-60	Jerusalem V (imprisonment in Caesarea)
A.D. 60-62	Journey to Rome (imprisonment)
A.D. 62-63	Further ministry in Asia
A.D. 64/65	Return to Rome (execution under Nero)

Table 1. Chronological summary of Paul's ministry[36]

ing to Corinth for the last time (A.D. 56-57). Paul traveled with others bringing the collection to Jerusalem, where he was arrested and transferred to Caesarea for an extended imprisonment (Acts 24:27). In c. A.D. 60 Paul was tranferred again, this time to Rome, where he languished in prison for "two whole years" (A.D. 60-62; see Acts 28:30). After a possible further period of ministry in the east, Paul returned to Rome, again as a prisoner, before his execution by the Emperor Nero in c. 65.[35]

Excursus 1B: History and myth

Are miraculous events within the New Testament to be understood as historical or as mythological? If it is understood as historical, are such miraculous events to be given the same factual weight as are the nonmiraculous events in the New Testament? For example, are we to regard as equally factual Jesus' journey to the lakeside and the feeding of the five thousand after he arrived there?

Were all the miracles in the Gospels, the book of Acts and the letters (Rom 15:19; 2 Cor 12:12) to be regarded as mythological, whether in line with Jewish or Greco-Roman myths? Alternatively, was there a small core of miracle-events to which many others have been added[37] in embellishment? Or did Jesus perform acts that at that time were genuinely regarded as miracles but that people today would explain in more naturalistic ways?

First, any inquiry into this subject must begin as a ***historical*** investigation.[38] Pannenberg's remark about the resurrection of Jesus applies also to miracles.

> Whether or not Jesus was raised from the dead is a historical question insofar as it is an inquiry into what did or did not happen at a certain time.[39]

This inquiry in turn depends on a number of factors. How many and of what quality are our historical sources and how uncorrupted have they remained though the intervening years? What is their character? Are they intentionally written as history, or, to be preferred, is their information incidental and gratuitous to other authorial intent? How extensive is the accompanying detail of person, time and place? Can the source's reliability be crosschecked at other points? In short, the same investigative methodology ought to be applied to Jesus and the rise of early Christianity as to Alexander the Great and the eastward spread of Hellenism.

Next, miraculous events should be reflected upon in terms of stereotypicality or originality. If the details are similar to the stock-in-trade descriptions within existing contemporary mythological genres of that culture, serious questions will arise. On the other hand, if the accounts are atypical, the possibility of historicity is enhanced. Thus, for example, if the miracles of Jesus were described in the same terms as the miracles of Jewish "holy men" like Hanina ben Dosa and Honi "the circle-drawer," there would be some cause for critical caution regarding the Gospels' accounts of Jesus' miracles.[40] In our view, however, this is not the case. The Jewish ***hasids*** Hanina and Honi are portrayed as merely devout individuals within the Judaism of their repective times. By contrast, Jesus is presented as the intensely intentional fulfiller of the end-time purposes of God.

Only when the question of historical probability is determined does it become a philosophical issue.[41] Do I believe in a supernatural being who is capable of intruding his will into the otherwise "natural" appearance of the course of events? If my answer is negative, then I will dismiss the miracles in the New Testament as unhistorical and account for them in terms of myth. On the other hand, if my response is positive, then I may well conclude that the strength of historical evidence demands acceptance of the historicity of the events.

The view taken by this author is that the miraculous events in the New Testament are factual.

The Gospels and Acts make little sense historically if the miraculous is removed. Those authors were convinced of the truth of the miracles and wrote their accounts out of that conviction. Those accounts, when subjected to the tests of rigorous historical inquiry, stubbornly resist our efforts to discredit and remove them.

> For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (2 Pet 1:16)

Further reading

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Vermes, Geza. *Jesus the Jew.* London: Collins, 1973.

Notes

[1]The Gospel of Matthew is the exception.

[2]G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1967), pp. 10-11. Elton's definitions and views on methodology are of interest since they do not arise out of and are not directed toward biblical studies; rather they are general in character.

[3]Ibid., p. 77.

[4]See excursus 14A.

[5]The verb *go* does not appear in Paul's text in relation to James, Peter and John, but it is to be understood.

[6]See David Wenham, "Acts and the Pauline Corpus II: The Evidence of Parallels," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 1. Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 215-58.

[7]But some scholars have suggested that Paul must have had some contact with Jesus, especially at the time of his death. See, e.g., Martin Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 12.

[8]Analysis of the subject matter of various books of New Testament history suggests this may have happened. See, e.g., Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era* (London: Black, 1964), where no narrative concerning Jesus or early Christianity is given. Even the greatest work in this genre, F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1969), devotes a mere thirty pages to Jesus, with few references to the resurrection. The strength of Bruce's history is the sheer quantity of historical detail that he amasses and that thereby establishes inferentially the historical character of Christianity and its rootedness in the soil of those times. The title of Christopher Rowlands's *Christian Origins* (London: SPCK, 1985) suggests a historical explanation for those "origins" but fails to provide it. Richard L. Niswonger, *New Testament History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1988), devotes his attention to the core "story" of the New Testament but fails to capture the explosive dynamic inherent in that story. Etienne Trocmé, *The Childhood of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1997), devotes one small chapter to Jesus, which he must share with John the Baptist. For this author, the history of Christianity is, in effect, the history of Paul.

[9]Titles are very sparse indeed in D. J. Harrington, *The New Testament: A Bibliography* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1985), pp. 224-26.

[10]For a critique of Walter Bauer and Helmut Koester, who question the phenomenon of "canon," see Peter Balla, *Challenges to New Testament Theology*, WUNT 95 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997).

[11]See Paul W. Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 15-28.

[12]Acts 13:34; cf. Isaiah 55:3.

[13]J. Dominic Crossan's book, *The Birth of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998), is

not at all a history in the sense of a sequential narration of the events within the body of texts we call the New Testament. Rather, it is Crossan's idiosyncratic attempt to explain the rise of Christianity along sociological lines. Whereas this present book sees the narrative of the New Testament driven by "christology, Jesus' bodily resurrection and the coming of the Spirit" (as noted above), Crossan finds no explanation of the phenomenon of early Christianity in these. Neither the word *christology* nor the phrase *Holy Spirit* appears in his subject index, and "Jesus' bodily resurrection" proves to be a mere metaphor (pp. xxvii-xxxi). For further comment on Crossan's *Birth of Christianity,* see later, epilogue, note 5.

[14]See Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History,* pp. 29-37.

[15]By the bishop of Antioch, Ignatius, in his letter to the Magnesians (*Magnesians* 10.3).

[16]Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History,* pp. 29-37.

[17]See later, §2.2.7-8, 10.

[18]See later, ibid.

[19]See Paul L. Maier, "The Date of the Nativity and the Chronology of Jesus' Life," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos,* ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), pp. 115-18.

[20]Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 18.1-3; Lk 2:1-3.

[21]See later, §5.7.

[22]*Time,* December 27, 1976, p. 27.

[23]For a review of alternative explanations, see Paul L. Maier, *The Star of Bethelehem* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 69-81.

[24]Tacitus *Histories* 5.13; Suetonius *Vespasian* 4.5.

[25]However, Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 39-40, argues that Luke is referring to an earlier time when Tiberius's reign became effective in the provinces, that is, A.D. 12. In my view Luke is more likely to be referring to a date when Tiberius's principate became effective throughout the empire by action of the Senate.

[26]For detailed discussion of the dating of Tiberius's accession, see Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 259-73.

[27]This is in line with the careful analysis of Maier, "The Date of the Nativity," pp. 120-24. Luke's statement that Jesus was "about thirty years of age" (Lk 3:23) is not a problem since these words merely mean that he was "in his thirties," that is, closer to thirty than to forty.

[28]Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.2-5.

[29]John mentions three Passovers (Jn 2:23; 6:4; 12:1), possibly four (Jn 5:1). Even Mark refers to "green grass" (Mk 6:39), implying a spring/Passover season.

[30]This follows the historical arguments of Maier, "The Date of the Nativity," pp. 124-26, and the astronomical analyses of C. J. Humphreys and W. G. Waddington, "Astronomy and the Date of the Crucifixion," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos,* ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), pp. 165-81. A strongly argued case is made for A.D. 30 by Riesner in *Paul's Early Period,* pp. 57-58.

[31]For an extensive and detailed survey of scholarship relating to the chronology of Paul's ministry, see Riesner, *Paul's Early Period,* pp. 3-28.

[32]These were the dates for the one-year service of a Senate-appointed consul in a civilian province.

[33]Acts 18:1-2. For an exhaustive argument for A.D. 49 as the date of Claudius's expulsion of Jews, see Riesner, *Paul's Early Period,* pp. 157-201.

[34]An example appears in Acts where Paul refers to his time in Ephesus as "three years" though the precise period was two years and three months (Acts 19:8, 10; cf. 20:31).

[35]See later, §16.6.

[36]Cf. Riesner's comprehensive chronology in *Paul's Early Period,* p. 322. Riesner's chronology differs from my calculations only by degrees, chiefly because he determines an earlier date for the commencement of Jesus' ministry (A.D. 27/28), resulting in an earlier date for the crucifixion (A.D. 30).

[37]For discussion, see Barry L. Blackburn, "The Miracles of Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus,* ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Blackburn (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 352-94.

[38]See Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History,* pp. 15-28.

[39]W. Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth," in *New Frontiers in Theology,* ed. J. M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 3:128.

[40]For discussion of Jesus and such figures as Hanina and Honi, see Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973), pp. 58-82. More generally see Paul W. Barnett, *Is the New Testament Reliable?* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), pp. 111-16.

[41]For useful discussion on miracles and history, with particular but not exclusive interest in the resurrection of Jesus, see Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 1-42.

2

The Impact of Christ

2.1. Introduction

The impact of Jesus in the period after his historical ministry may be felt within the historical sources, both Christian and non-Christian. Here we encounter something quite striking. From the beginning Jesus is known as "Christ," as the following survey indicates. Furthermore, the apostles preached "Christ." The word *Christ* is very common indeed within the Christian sources. It was as Christ that Jesus made his impact on the Greeks and Romans through his followers, the Christians, whom they named after him. Throughout the first century and into the next Jesus was known by the wider world as Christ. The name *Christ* must be regarded as highly significant.

To Jews the designation *Christ* or *the Christ* meant "anointed one," "messiah." This Christ was the object of intense expectation among the Jews at that time.[1] Originally *Christ* was the title, followed by the name, *Jesus*.[2] By analogy, we use a title followed by a personal name to refer to *King* George or *Queen* Elizabeth.

To Gentiles, however, the title *the Christ* was incomprehensible; it meant only "the smeared one." To accommodate the cultural problems of the Gentiles, the title *the Christ* quickly became a surname, as in *Jesus Christ*. However, traces of *Christ* as a title survive within the New Testament, especially where the order is reversed to *Christ Jesus* (See, e.g., Rom 3:24; 6:3, 11, 23; 8:1, 2, 11, 34, 39; 15:5, 16, 17; 16:3; see also Rom 1:2-4; 1 Cor 10:4; 15:22; 2 Cor 5:10; 11:2-3; Eph 1:10, 12, 20; 5:14; Phil 1:15, 17; 3:7).

2.2. Chronological references to *Christ*

We are able to trace chronologically the historical references to *Christ* through the

seven decades from the time of Jesus until the close of the century.

2.2.1. A preformed tradition "delivered" to Paul: A.D. 34(?). In c. 55 Paul rehearses with the Corinthians a tradition as he received it initially.

> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins. (1 Cor 15:3)

The absence of the name *Jesus* with the word *Christ* suggests that the latter is used here as a title, "*the* Christ," pointing back to an early, Jewish stage in apostolic history. Paul had "received" the tradition that "the Christ had died for our sins"; this, in turn, he had "delivered" to the Corinthians.

But when did this "receiving" occur? In Damascus (Acts 9:9-18; Gal 1:17) in c. 34 or at his first return visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18-19) in c. 36, when he went "to visit Cephas" and "saw . . . James the Lord's brother"? There is good reason to think that Paul is referring to Damascus, that is, to a time only year or so later than the historic ministry of Jesus. In Damascus Paul was first baptized; then, according to the book of Acts, he immediately began to proclaim Jesus as "Son of God" in the local synagogues. Both the baptism and his preaching imply the young zealot had received instruction in the new faith.

From whom would such instruction have been delivered? Ananias and other local Damascene disciples may have owed their faith to believers from Galilee, which is about a day's journey from Damascus. But Paul would have also encountered believers from Jerusalem who had fled recently to Damascus from him. As Saul of Tarsus the persecutor, he had been journeying to the city to arrest these faithful followers (Acts 22:2-4; 25:11).

Most probably the tradition Paul relays to the Corinthians he had "received" in Damascus from these fugitives from Jerusalem, who had been taught by the apostles. It is quite unlikely, in our view, that Paul exercised a two-to-three-year ministry in Damascus and "Arabia" on the basis of the Damascus Road Christophany alone. Catechesis, his "receiving" of the "tradition," is demanded in order for him to minister immediately to Gentiles (Gal 1:16-17). Paul's words[3] "*as of first importance,* what I also received" are arguably more likely to mean of "what I also received *at first,*" that is, at his baptism in Damascus. From the first, therefore, Paul understood Jesus to be "[the] Christ," "the Son of God."

2.2.2. The people of Antioch call the disciples Christianoi *(Acts 11:26): late 30s.* The statement, made in the book of Acts, that "in Antioch the disciples were first called *Christianoi*" must be regarded as historical. A historically conscious author like Luke would not have lightly made so absolute a statement.[4]

The *-ianoi* ending of *Christianoi* is the Greek version of a Latin ending, *-iani,* meaning "followers" or "adherents." For example, the followers of Herod the tetrarch were called *Herodianoi* (Mk 3:6), and followers of the emperor Augustus were called *Augustiani.*[5] Thus *Christianoi* was a tag given this sect by the people

of Roman Antioch, probably from an official source. The disciples' preaching of "Christ" to fellow Jews in the synagogues of Antioch provoked disputation and notoriety in the streets of Antioch. In the eyes of the Gentile Antiochenes the association of these people with Christ was the most prominent characteristic of their faction. These people were called *Christianoi* because they were followers of a leader, *Christos.*

2.2.3. The people of Thessalonica accuse Paul of preaching "another king" (Acts 17:3-7): c. A.D. 49/50. A decade later Paul came to the Macedonian metropolis, Thessalonica, where he preached Jesus as "the Christ" in the synagogue. In response, the Jewish opposition instigated public accusations against him and his companions. They translated Paul's synagogue preaching of "the Christ" into the explosively political charge that Paul and his companions preached "another king," that is, treasonably, in opposition to the Roman emperor. The "king" of the people of Roman Thessalonica was the Emperor Claudius; these newcomers were revolutionaries who were inciting the overturning of the public order, as they had done wherever they had been.

In Roman Antioch we infer that the preaching of "the Christ" in the synagogues brought the preachers to the attention of the public and of Roman officials as *Christianoi,* though, so far as we know, without repressive reaction. In Roman Thessalonica, however, it is clear that the synagogue preaching of "the Christ" provoked the public accusations of a political kind that forced Paul to quit the city. The Jewish opponents of Paul adroitly twisted his proclamation of "the Christ" into his subversion of the Roman state by "another king," a rival to the emperor. Jesus' priestly opponents had done a similar thing, converting Jesus' acceptance of their charge that he was "the Christ"—which would have meant nothing to the Romans—to the treasonable accusation that he was "king of the Jews," and for that he was crucified (cf. Mk 14:61 with Mk 15:2, 9, 26).

The point is that in Thessalonica we have evidence that the apostle Paul believed and preached Jesus to be "the Christ."

2.2.4. The emperor Claudius expels Jews from Rome because of "Chrestus" (Suetonius, Claudius *25.4; Acts 18:2): c. A.D. 49.* In c. 49 the emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from the Rome[6] because of "disturbances, *impulsore Chresto,* at the instigation of Chrestus."[7] This brief detail, though disputed as to both meaning and significance,[8] is probably a reference to the Christian Jews dividing and destabilizing the Jewish community of Rome by their proclamation of Jesus *Christus.*[9] We infer that Christ was the "impulse," first for the proclamation of him, and then, as a consequence, for the civil disturbances that led the emperor indiscriminately to expel all the Jews, Christian and non-Christian, from the city (Acts 18:1-2).

This is the first incident involving Christians to be found in a non-Christian writer.[10] If, as most believe, Suetonius is referring to Christ, we have external corroboration for the proclamation among Jews of Jesus as Christ. As with

circumstances in Antioch and Thessalonica, this synagogue preaching of *Christ* created a degree of disturbance that spilled out to the wider community and came to the attention of the Roman authorities, in this case the emperor himself. Once again we see the centrality of *Christ* to Christian proclamation and the sharp response to it by the authorities.

2.2.5. Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, preaches Christ *in Roman Corinth (1 Cor 15:3): A.D. 50.* As noted above in 2.2.1, Paul preached *Christ* in the Achaian capital, Corinth, in 50-52. The second letter also has an echo of Paul's initial mission preaching in Corinth: "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you" (2 Cor 1:19).

As in Thessalonica Jewish opposition brought the preachers of *Christ* into the public political arena. The Corinthian Jews charged Paul before the Roman Proconsul, Gallio, for "persuading men to worship God contrary to the law" (Acts 18:13). On this occasion the book of Acts gives no indication of a political charge arising from the preaching of *Christ* in the synagogue. Since Gallio discerned no political element in the accusations against Paul, he dismissed the case, regarding it as a matter internal to Jewish interests and capable of resolution within their community.

2.2.6. The emperor Nero executes Christians as scapegoats for the great fire (Tacitus Annals *15.44.2-5): A.D. 64.* Another non-Christian to refer to Christ was the great Roman historian Tacitus. He does this in relationship to the fire that destroyed the greater part of the city in 64. Though a boy of seven at the time[11] Tacitus would not have failed to hear of the great fire and of the anger of the emperor Nero that was directed to the Christians as suitable scapegoats for destroying the city. As one who would later become a consul of Rome, Tacitus was well placed to know the official account of the fire and of the onslaught against this "superstition," as he called it. (A *superstitio* was a sect, based on fanatical beliefs, not recognized by and, therefore, contrary to the Roman state.)[12]

Later, as governor of the province of Asia, Tacitus would write an account of the action that was taken against the Christians,[13] whom he spurns for their "hatred of the human race," that is, for their studied aloofness from Roman society. Tacitus digresses briefly to give an account of the origin of the movement and its subsequent history. These "Christians" took their name from a certain *Christus* who had been executed (for treason, one supposes) in Judea by the governor Pontius Pilate. This had been during Tiberius's reign. But the movement, temporarily checked, immediately "broke out afresh," not only in Judea where it began, but also in Rome, where by the time of the great fire it had become multitudinous and, we infer, a matter of political concern.

Tacitus explains that the name of these people *(Christiani)* derived from the name of the founder *(Christus)*. Apparently they were given their name because of the one whom they followed.

2.2.7. The emperor Vespasian searches out descendants of David (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History *3.12): A.D. 71(?).* Hegesippus was a second-century Jewish Christian whose writings are now lost to us. A number of passages from Hegesippus are quoted or referred to in the writings of Eusebius, the fourth-century historian of early Christianity.

According to Hegesippus, two events occurred immediately after the capture of Jerusalem in 70. One was that apostles and disciples of the Lord assembled in Jerusalem along with the relatives of Jesus, most of whom were still alive. They met to appoint a successor to James, the brother of Jesus, who had been martyred in Jerusalem in 62. Their unanimous choice was Symeon, son of Clopas. Clopas was brother of Joseph, who, like Joseph, probably also came from Nazareth. Thus Symeon was a cousin of Jesus and James. The appointment of James from c. 41-62 and of Symeon in c. 71 as his successor indicates a strong inclination to appoint a relative of Jesus to the leadership of the Jerusalem church.[14]

The second event, which is connected with the first, is that the new emperor, Vespasian, took a most unusual step in regard to Jewish affairs:

> In addition . . . Vespasian, after the capture of Jerusalem, ordered a search to be made of all the family of David, that there might be left among the Jews no one of the royal family and for that reason, a very great persecution was inflicted on the Jews.[15]

This is puzzling. Why would a Roman emperor seek to eradicate the family of David, except that the emperor saw the royal Jewish dynasty as some kind of threat to his own recently established dynasty in the seat of power, Rome?

Before he became emperor in 69 Vespasian had been the commander-in-chief of the Roman invading forces in Israel. Josephus, who had been captured by Vespasian and who had come under his patronage, pointed out that a world ruler was expected to arise in Israel.

> What more than all else incited [the Jews] to the war was an ambiguous oracle, likewise found in the Sacred Scriptures, to the effect that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world.[16]

The "oracle" was probably the prophecy from Numbers 24:7, 17 that

> A ***man*** shall come forth out of [Jacob's] seed
> and he shall rule many nations.
> A star shall come forth out of Jacob;
> a ***man*** shall come forth out of Israel.[17]

Vespasian knew of this oracle through his recent captive Josephus, who opportunistically prophesied to his captor, "*You* will be Caesar, Vespasian, you will be emperor, you and your son here."[18] Josephus commented later that "the oracle . . . signified the sovereignty of Vespasian, who was proclaimed Emperor on Jewish soil."[19]

Confirmation of Josephus's interpretation of Numbers 24:7, 17 is probably to be found in the words of Tacitus and Suetonius, who refer to a time when "men from Judaea" would "rule the world."[20] The plural *men* points to Vespasian and his son, Titus, both of whom campaigned in Israel and each of whom subsequently became emperor.

But Vespasian would have been aware of and concerned about other possible interpretations of the "ruler" oracle. Most probably Vespasian was aware of the hope of a Jewish messianic ruler, a rival to himself who, he had reason to believe, would spring from the house of David. At the time of the great fire in 64, Vespasian must have been aware of the presence in Rome of a considerable number of *Christiani*, the followers of *Christus*, a pretender from Israel.

Had Vespasian heard that there had been a gathering of the relatives of the Davidide *Christus* in Jerusalem in Israel (as noted in the immediately previous passage of Hegesippus)? Surely one of these was a potential new *Christus* who might aspire to be the world ruler in opposition to Vespasian? Vespasian's systematic elimination of members of the Davidic family would certainly explain the rapid turnover of bishops in the Jerusalem church after the capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The first such bishop was Symeon, son of Clopas who was the brother of Joseph and the cousin of Jesus the Christ.

2.2.8. The emperor Domitian interviews descendants of David in Rome: A.D. 81(?). Vespasian was succeeded by two sons, Titus (79-81) and Domitian (81-96). *Flavius* was the family name of these emperors; they are referred to as the Flavian dynasty. Josephus, who was adopted by Vespasian, became known as Flavius Josephus.

Like his father, Domitian ordered the execution of the descendants of David. It is clear that the the Flavian dynasty saw the house of David as a threat to their imperial dynasty. Our source of information, once again, is Hegesippus, whom Eusebius quotes at length.[21]

Domitian's order prompted an accusation by "some heretics" against the grandsons of Jude, the brother of Jesus. Presumably these men, the great-grandsons of Joseph and the grandnephews of Jesus and James, lived in Nazareth, the traditional home of the Davidide clan.[22] Officers of Domitian escorted these men to Rome to be personally questioned by the emperor, evidence that Domitian considered the threat of a Davidic ruler to be a very serious matter.

In the case of Vespasian a connection between the emperor's fear of the house of David and his apprehension of the Messiah/Christ of the Jews has to be inferred, though it is a reasonable inference. With Domitian, however, the connection is explicit. The emperor asked them whether they were of the house of David and for information about "Christ and his kingdom." The grandsons of Jude, in agreeing that they were of the family of David, added that they were "related to the Christ himself."

This might have led to their immediate execution. However, when Domitian discovered that these royal descendants were humble farmers with small holdings and hard, worn hands and that Christ's kingdom was a heavenly end-time kingdom, the emperor dismissed them and called off the persecution. Upon their return (to Galilee?) the grandsons of Jude were appointed leaders of the church because of their faithful witness and their relationship to the Christ.

2.2.9. The "tribe of Christians" in Rome: A.D. 90s. Writing from Rome c. 95, the Jewish historian Josephus makes his famous reference to Jesus in the so-called *Testimonium Flavianum.*[23] His account, though primarily concerned with the execution of Jesus sixty years earlier, pointedly notes that the "tribe of Christians . . . has still not disappeared." Though this Jesus was merely a "wise man" (a rabbi) and a miracle worker, it was claimed—either by Jesus or by his followers, or both—that he was "the Christ ."[24] For this he was executed by Pilate, who was responding to information from the Jewish leaders. Josephus appears puzzled that the "tribe of Christians"—signifying a group of some size—had not yet disappeared with the death of its founder, "the [so-called] Christ."

The words "tribe of the Christians, so called after him" demand that this "tribe" took its name from "Christ," whether Josephus originally wrote of Jesus as "the Christ" or as "the so-called Christ." The tribe of the "Christians" cannot be named after "Jesus"; there is no connection between the words *Jesus* and *Christian.*[25]

Moreover, the events that overtook Jesus indicate that he was known as "the Christ." The temple authorities arrested Jesus and handed him over to the Romans, who subjected him to a *Roman* trial, followed by *Roman* execution. Were Jesus a miracle-working "wise man" and nothing more he would scarcely have suffered the fate of the Jesus described in the *Testimonium.* No capital crime against Roman rule is implicit in Jesus' miracle working or teaching. But if Jesus claimed to be "the Christ," or if others claimed it for him, then this could be considered a matter of treason and subject to Roman action. Here Josephus's undisputed text from later in the *Antiquities,* that Jesus was "the so-called Christ," accords well with the Gospels' account of the Roman trial and execution of Jesus as "king of the Jews."

2.2.10. Persecution of the family of David under Trajan: A.D. 98-117. The persecution of the descendants of David did not cease with the Flavian dynasty, but continued with the new emperor, Trajan. Eusebius, depending once more on Hegesippus, reports that some people accused Symeon son of Clopas as "a descendant of David and a Christian."[26] Clopas was subsequently executed under Atticus, Trajan's Roman governor in Judea. A settled anti-Davidide policy is implied. Subsequently, the accusers, who were themselves descendants of David, were rounded up along with other fellow descendants of David.

Successive Roman emperors from Vespasian to Trajan reveal serious political concern that a messianic ruler from the family of David might arise within the empire.

2.2.11. Summary. From the immediate aftermath of Jesus' public ministry he was proclaimed to Jews in Israel and the diaspora as the Messiah/Christ, in fulfillment of the covenantal promises of Yahweh.

The disputes and divisions within the synagogues of the diaspora spilled out into wider Greco-Roman society. Because of semantic problems with "the Christ" (= "the smeared one"), Gentiles came to refer to him not by a title but by a name, *Christ*. His followers were identified as *Christianoi,* "adherents of Christ."

At least from the forties Christ came to be recognized as a "king" and therefore as some kind of rival to the Roman "king," Caesar. By the time of the great fire in Rome in 64 "Christians" were seen as a *superstitio,* an aloof sect, and a threat to the social order.

The members of the Flavian dynasty, including Vespasian and Titus, who had campaigned in Israel, were concerned about the oracle prophesying a world ruler who was to arise in Israel. Vespasian and Domitian (and probably also the short-reigned Titus) identified this world ruler from Israel as a member of the house of David. It is likely that they understood that the politically threatening *Christus,* the leader of a rapidly spreading *superstitio,* was descended from David. Vespasian and Domitian sought to eliminate the descendants of David from the empire; relatives of Jesus were caught in their net. There is evidence that the same concerns continued into the principate of Trajan.

2.3. Jesus as "son of David" and "the Christ" in the early church

It is evident that the concept of Jesus as a descendant of David was firmly lodged within the tradition of early Christianity, finding clear references in the writings of Paul, Luke, Matthew and Revelation. Paul speaks of Jesus Christ as "of the seed of David" *(ek spermatos Dauid)* in two passages, Romans 1:3 and 2 Timothy 2:8. Both passages have identical words, and both are expressed in terms of accepted tradition:

> The gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who *was descended from David* according to the flesh and [who was] designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead. (Rom 1:1-4; emphasis added)

> Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, *descended from David,* as preached in my gospel. (2 Tim 2:8; emphasis added)

Paul may or may not have formulated these precise words; the scholars debate this question.[27] Whatever the case, we may take it that the ideas predate Paul, even if the words were originally written by him. Paul was able to meet James the Lord's brother and know firsthand of Jesus' Davidic descent, as well as other personal

details about the early life of Jesus (Gal 1:18-19). Both passages echo Paul's preaching ("Paul . . . set apart for the gospel" [Rom 1:1]; "as preached in my gospel" [2 Tim 2:8]. Jesus' physical descent from David was part of Paul's apostolic preaching to the Gentiles.

Luke, Paul's mission colleague, gives considerable expression to Jesus' Davidic descent, both in the Gospel and in the book of Acts. Joseph must go "to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David" (Lk 2:4). David is Jesus' "father" (Lk 1:32, 69). Luke's genealogy clearly places David as an immediate forebear of Jesus (Lk 3:31). The early chapters of the gospel are dominated by Jesus' Davidic descent.

Luke's account of the apostolic preaching in Acts establishes that Jesus is one of David's descendants (so Peter [Acts 2:29-31]) and "of [David's] posterity" (*spermatos;* so Paul [in Acts 13:23, as in Rom 1:3 and 2 Tim 2:8, above]). Through his references to the statements of Peter and Paul in his two-volume work, Luke carefully establishes for his readers that Jesus is of the line of David. Moreover, the apostles preached to the Jews that Jesus was "the Christ" (Acts 2:36; 3:6, 18, 20; 4:10, 26; 13:33; 17:3; 26:23).

Matthew, too, makes much of Jesus' Davidic roots. His opening words, which form a kind of title to his Gospel, are "the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David" (Mt 1:1). The genealogy that follows concludes with "Jesus . . . who is called Christ" (Mt 1:16), and the summary of the genealogy focuses on Abraham, David and "the Christ" (Mt 1:17; cf. Mt 11:2). In the course of the Gospel Jesus is called "Son of David" on a number of occasions (Mt 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15). Matthew, more than any other New Testament writer, draws together the notions of "Son of David" and "the Christ," which for him are joined together in the man, Jesus of Nazareth.

The Apocalypse identifies Jesus as the descendant of David in three passages, which may have liturgical echoes. Jesus declares, "I am the root and offspring of David" (Rev 22:16), fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of a son of David: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, / and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Is 11:1; cf. Is 53:2).

Moreover, Jesus claims messianic authority when he sends the message to the church in Philadelphia that he has "the key of David" (Rev 3:7; cf. Is 22:22). This great key, carried by the king's steward on his shoulder, gave the steward absolute power to close and shut the door to the royal house. Jesus has that key and with it the authority to open and shut the door to the messianic kingdom.

John's reference to Jesus as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," identifies him as the Messiah of popular Jewish expectation. Four Ezra, an intertestamental work, speaks of a lion who will serve God against an eagle, an enemy of God.

> As for the lion whom you saw . . . speaking to the eagle and reproving him for

his unrighteousness and all his deeds, as you have heard:
This is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept to the end of days,
who shall spring from the seed of David. (4 Ezra 12:31-32)

The messianic rule of Jesus is made explicit in the assertion "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ [= Messiah], and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev 11:15). This is the message that the prophets and witnesses of God must speak though it will bring them suffering and death as they do (Rev 10:7-11; 11:4-10).

In sum, the Davidic descent of Jesus is widely attested across New Testament sources. It was firmly embedded within the tradition that Paul received from believers before him, and Paul incorporated this tradition in his preaching to Gentiles. It finds strong affirmation in the two-volume work of Luke, where it dominates the nativity stories and the genealogy and is asserted in the apostolic sermons of Peter and Paul. Even more powerful is Matthew's presentation, where Jesus is repeatedly identified as "the Son of David" in the genealogy and in various individual references; Matthew explicitly connects "Son of David" with "the Christ." Revelation picks up several Old Testament references and at least one intertestamental reference asserting that Jesus is the messianic descendant of David.

Jesus as "Son of David"/Messiah was part of the public proclamation of Paul and, in all probability, of John the apocalyptist. Luke-Acts was written for new converts of Gentile cultural background. It should come as no surprise, then, that Roman authorities knew of and reacted with alarm against early Christianity as a messianic movement with a messianic leader who might be a threat to imperial authority.

2.4. *Christos* in the early church

The word *Christos,* "Christ," appears hundreds of times in the New Testament letters and the Apocalypse.[28] Yet it is rarely used in the Septuagint (thirty-seven times), the Bible used by the New Testament writers. Significantly, too, it is used not in an absolute sense ("*the* Christ") but in a qualified sense (for example, "the anointed of the Lord," or "the anointed of God"). The theology of Christ as found in the early church was not influenced by an existing theology of "the Christ" in the Septuagint.

Paul, who is chronologically our earliest historical witness to Christ, often uses the name as a title. Paul was called to be a "servant of Christ" within a year or so after the ministry of the historic Jesus (Gal 1:10, 15-16). Yet even then Cephas and James, among others, were "apostles [of Christ] before [Paul]" (Gal 1:17; cf. 1 Cor 1:1). The leaders of the earliest church in Jerusalem in the immediate aftermath of the first Easter saw themselves as "apostles of Christ." Where did this view of Jesus as Messiah/Christ originate? From the earliest church leaders or from Jesus himself?

If the disciples ascribed messiahship to Jesus, did they do so because they believed that he had been raised from the dead? Was their perception of the resurrection of Jesus the genesis of their recognition of him as "the Christ"? To be sure, the resurrection must have given powerful endorsement of Jesus and his historic mission among them. But it is doubtful that Jesus' messiahship began at that point. Judaism had a long tradition of the translation to heaven of righteous men who, however, were not deemed to be the Messiah.[29]

In our view the disciples are unlikely to have believed and preached Jesus to be "the Christ" unless that was Jesus' own view of himself. Long ago Weiss asked,"How could belief in [Jesus'] messiahship emerge as an entirely new phenomenon if he himself had not provided the impulse for it?"[30] On grounds of historical probability, Jesus as the Messiah/Christ derived from Jesus himself.

2.5. The Christ/Messiah in the era of Jesus

Many scholars call into question the proposition of the central importance of a Davidic Messiah within the hopes of the Old Testament[31] or in the life and times of Jesus. The reality, however, is otherwise. The hope of such a Messiah was critical to the Old Testament, and it was a matter of lively anticipation in the time of Jesus.

2.5.1. The Davidic Messiah promised in the Hebrew Scriptures. Three passages provide the source of the messianic hope of the Old Testament. Two are from the Torah: Genesis 49:10 ("the scepter shall not depart from Judah") and Numbers 24:17 ("there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" [KJV]). The third is from the Former Prophets: 2 Samuel 7:12-16 ([David,] "thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" [KJV]). The "Sceptre" that will be "from Judah" (Gen 49:10) and "out of Jacob" (Num 24:17) is prophesied by Nathan to be David's "son." But the eternal nature of the kingdom prophesied shows that David's immediate son, Solomon, did not fulfill the prophet's understanding of this oracle.

In turn these three passages are picked up in the writing prophets, especially Isaiah 11:1 ("there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse"). The absence of a reference to David should not obscure the extent of the influence of these texts in the prophets, or the literature following between the testaments. The various elements—the "the Sceptre . . . from Judah" (Gen 49:10), the ruler "out of Jacob" (Num 24:17) and the "seed" and the "throne" of David (2 Sam 7:12-16)—are echoed and re-echoed throughout the Prophets (e.g., Is 4:2; 9:7; Jer 33:15-30; Ezek 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; Amos 9:11; Dan 2:44; Joel 2:32; Mic 5:2-3; Zech 6:12-13), in the Psalms (in particular Ps 89) and in the intertestamental literature, including that from Qumran. These images represented the "core" belief and hope of the covenant people in the time of Jesus. The long-awaited messianic king was a son of David.

2.5.2. A messiah of Davidic descent in the era of Jesus questioned. Many scholars,

however, question whether the hope of a Davidic Messiah was central to the beliefs of Judaism at the time of Jesus and the rise of early Christianity.

Two related lines of argument are used. First, it is claimed that there were a multiplicity eschatologies and messianic figures current in Second Temple Judaism.[32] For example, the *two* messiahs of Qumran hope, one a priest (the messiah of Aaron) and the other a layman (the messiah of Israel),[33] has created difficulties for the view that there was a central and dominant Davidic hope. According to Kenneth E. Pomykala, "there never existed a continuous, widespread, dominant or uniform expectation for a davidic messiah in early Judaism."[34]

Second, the various messianic pretenders of the epoch of Jesus of Nazareth did not claim to be of Davidic descent.[35] There were two periods in which various popular kings arose: after the death of Herod in 4 B.C. (Judas, Simon and Athronges) and during the Jewish revolt against Roman rule, 66-70 (Simon bar Gioras). Josephus does not use messianic or eschatological language of these leaders, yet such concepts regarding them are sometimes inferred by scholars since Josephus studiously avoids Jewish apocalyptic language for his Greco-Roman readers. Thus Athronges was a popular charismatic king of humble origin and a shepherd—all in the manner of David. Simon bar Gioras too, it is claimed, was "Davidic," in the sense that he was a popular military leader who sought to restore justice to the poor, and who to secure his own arrest appeared in the royal robes of a king of the Jews. Yet—it's proclaimed—these self-proclaimed messiahs like Athronges and Simon did not mean to imply their physical descent from David. Indeed, it is argued, such genealogical connection is beyond confirmation at that time. Such "messianic" pretenders did not arise from the text-based scholars like those in Qumran or among the scribes of the Pharisees where genealogies could be checked; rather they belonged to the historic *un*learned tradition of the popular king, going back to David.

Taking these arguments in reverse order, it is agreed that Josephus generally blanches out of his narratives elements of Jewish apocalypticism, for example, "the Christ." Hence it has to inferred—from silence—that Athronges and Simon were self-professed messiahs, as is currently being claimed.[36] In this regard it has not been noted as it deserves to be that the one person so-called by the name *Christ* in the extensive writings of Josephus is Jesus, the founder of the "tribe of Christians."[37]

Moreover, many of the messianic aspects claimed to be present in Athronges and Simon bar Gioras are entirely speculative. That Athronges was a shepherd, as David had been, is a slender basis for claiming that this man was Davidic-like or messianic. Simon did not in fact emerge from his underground hiding "clothed in royal robes . . . sacrificing himself as an offering to God,"[38] as Horsley and Hanson claim. Rather, as Josephus himself explains, Simon was dressed in white tunics with a purple cape over them to create a scare, which it did—for a moment. Then Simon

gave himself up to the Romans and was shipped off to Rome for execution at the climax of a victory parade through the streets of the city. But this was standard procedure for vanquished leaders of resistance to Rome and implied no messianic status.

Further, the immediate historical context of Athronges and Simon was one in which various unlikely persons, namely, Judas Maccabeus (son of a poor priest) and Herod (son of an Idumean married to a Nabataean), had acquired the throne of Israel. The throne was there for the taking, but that did not mean the pretender claimed to be messianic or Davidic. If the claimant was of humble origin, as Athronges and Simon bar Gioras were, it will come as no surprise that he was a charismatic leader and that he appealed to the peasantry, promising justice for the poor. How else can a "nobody" achieve power unless he is charismatic? By what other means can he find a following among his own class unless he promises a better future than the past had been? Athronges and Simon were formidable fighters, but so too was Herod. This hardly made Athronges or Simon or Herod a messiah. To be sure, a messiah was a king, but not every king was Messiah.

Raymond E. Brown is entirely justified in saying that "there is no evidence that any Jew claimed or was said to be the Messiah before Jesus of Nazareth (or until a century after his death)" and that to assert otherwise is to subscribe to a "fiction."[39]

2.5.3. Evidence for a Davidic Messiah in the time of Jesus. What, then, was the place of Davidic hopes in Israel during the era of Jesus? I will argue for the proposition stated by Vermes that "Jews of the inter-Testamental period, when entreating God to send the Messiah, thought of him as the son of David."[40]

How are we to establish a method for answering this question? Investigation of expressions of worship and prayer is more likely to yield a probable answer than would the mere counting of references to David or a messiah in extant texts. Here there are four important sources. The first is the first-century B.C. *Psalms of Solomon* 17 and 18. Written in the aftermath of the Hasmonaeans at a time of disillusionment, the pseudonymous author prayed as follows:

> Behold, O Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David. . . .
> And gird him with strength, that *he may shatter unrighteous rulers.* . . .
> With *a rod of iron he shall break* in pieces all their substance. . . .
> And there shall be no unrighteousness in his days in their midst,
> For all shall be holy and their king, the anointed (= the messiah) of the Lord.
> (*Psalm of Solomon* 17:21, 32)

Here is a king of David's line, the Lord's anointed, who will overturn unrighteous rulers and establish God's justice, as in the famous messianic Scripture Isaiah 11:4 ("he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, / and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked").

The second is to be found in the parts of the Eighteen Benedictions composed for synagogue use in the era of Jesus:[41]

> Be gracious, O Lord, our God, according to your great mercies
> to Israel thy people, and Jerusalem thy city,
> And Zion, residence of thy glory;
> and to thy Temple and dwelling place;
> And to the kingdom of *the house of David*, thy righteous *Messiah.*
> Blessed art thou, O Lord, God of David, Builder of Jerusalem. (Palestinian rescension, emphasis added)

> Make *the branch of David* soon spring forth,
> And let his horn be exalted by thy salvation.
> [For we await thy salvation (always).]
> Blessed art thou, O Lord, who makest salvation spring forth. (Babylonian rescension, emphasis added)

Two critical messianic texts of the Hebrew Scriptures underly these prayers: 2 Samuel 7:4-17 and Isaiah 11:1. In the first the Lord, through the prophet Nathan, promises David a "son"/"a house." In the second, which is based on the first, the Lord promises a "branch" from the trunk of Jesse, the father of David.

The third window into current messianic hopes can be viewed through Jesus' dialogue with his interlocuters in the temple on the eve of his arrest. He asks, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?" (Mk 12:35; see Mt 22:42; Lk 20:41). The aphoristic riddle that follows ("so how is he his son?"), which must be historically genuine, demands the genuineness of the scribal opinion which Jesus is questioning.

The fourth source is found in an unlikely passage within the narrative of the Gospel of John. This passage indicates a hope then-current among Jews for a messiah descended from David:

> When [the people of Jerusalem] heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really the prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" (Jn 7:40-42)

This is the sole reference to David in the Fourth Gospel. The Christ defined by Davidic descent does not engage this writer as it does Matthew and Luke. He displays no redactional interest in David. Rather, he is concerned ironically to display the ignorance of those who currently question Jesus' messiahship. They assume, wrongly, that Jesus was born in Galilee. Therefore he cannot be the Christ. The writer knows what they do not know, that Christ was born in Bethlehem. John gratuitously adds,

"the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David." The writer is innocently rehearsing current expectations about the lineage of the Messiah.

Granted, then, the centrality of the Davidic hope to practical piety of the second temple period, how are we to explain the *two* messiahs of Qumran, in which the priest-messiah appears to have priority? The answer is that a Davidic Messiah was "a relatively stable core"[42] belief within Judaism between the testaments, but that the very rationale of a separatist group like the Qumran Essenes meant giving priority to a messiah who was a *priest.* They separated from Hasmonaean society because the Hasmonaean priesthood was corrupt and in need of purification. Yet even here the leader-elect of the community at the end of days is a Davidic figure, shaped by the hopes raised in Isaiah 11:2 ("The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, . . . the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD"):

> The Master shall bless the Prince of the Congregation . . . that he may establish the kingdom of his people forever . . .
> May the Lord raise you up to everlasting heights . . .
> [May you] . . . ravage the earth with your *sceptre*; may you bring death to *the ungodly* with the breath of your lips!
> [May he shed upon you the *spirit of counsel*] and everlasting might, the *spirit of knowledge* and *of the fear of God* . . .
> You shall be as a [lion].[43]

The Qumran scribes also interpolated a Davidic gloss on the well-known text of Gen 49:10, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah":

> *The ruler shall not depart from Judah.* Whenever Israel rules, there shall not fail to be *a descendant of David* upon the throne . . . until *the Messiah* of righteousness comes, *the branch of David.*[44]

Thus even within the Qumran community, where the emphasis was on the purified priesthood and prominence was given to the messiah of Aaron, the hope of a Davidic Messiah was clearly present.

In short, notwithstanding the ambiguity of the two messiahs of Qumran, the evidence from the *Psalms of Solomon,* from the synagogue liturgy and from incidental information from Mark and John supports the proposition that the core hopes of Jews of the era were for a messianic figure from the house of David. Those hopes are entirely consistent with the all-pervasive expectation running through the Law and the Prophets for a messiah in the line of David, from the tribe of Judah.

2.6. The impact of Christ on *kērygma* and gospel

It is evident that the early evangelists proclaimed Jesus as the Christ.

> The Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I. (2 Cor 1:19)

> The sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory . . . announced to you by those who preached the good news to you. (1 Pet 1:11-12)

> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him. . . . Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God. (1 Jn 4:15; 5:1; cf. 1 Jn 2:22)

The preachers' focus on Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, is also evident in the written gospel. The conviction of the preachers reflected in the Epistles is also the conviction of those who would come to write the Gospels.

Mark, writing for Gentiles, opens with these words: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk 1:1). During the course of this Gospel, Peter confesses Jesus to be "the Christ," and the Roman centurion proclaims that Jesus was the "Son of God" (Mk 8:29; 15:39).

Luke, also writing for Gentiles, having established in his nativity stories the Davidic descent of Jesus, concludes his Gospel narrative with Jesus' words: "Then [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead' " (Lk 24:45-46). John, who probably also wrote for Gentiles, thus states his aim in writing: "these [signs] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn 20:31).

Finally, we note the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, written for Jews: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1).

It should be noted that in both the preached and written gospel *[the] Christ* and *the Son of God* are often set side by side. This corresponds with an important messianic Hebrew Scripture where the Anointed One (Messiah) is identified as the Son of God:

> [The LORD's] Anointed One. . . .
> The decree of the LORD: . . .
> "You are my Son;
> today I have become your Father." (Ps 2:2, 7 NIV)

The One who will do God's will (his Anointed One/Messiah) has a filial relationship with God (his Son). This becomes clear in the teaching of Jesus, though the role of the Messiah and his relationship to God as his Son will be deepened and extended.[45]

2.7. Jesus' messianic consciousness

Since an understanding of Jesus's role as messiahship and son is so evident in the mind of the early church, reflected in the preached and written word, we must ask, what was the impulse for this understanding? Were this evidence late in its

appearance or limited to one historical strand, we might explain it as imposed upon Jesus externally. However, this is not the situation, historically speaking. The letters of Paul, our earliest data, but also those of Peter and John, point clearly to a messianic view of Jesus. As noted above (2.1.1 and 2.2) the witness of the letters rests on early established traditions. Inevitably and logically we must conclude that the idea of Jesus as the Christ/the Son of God originated not with the early church but with Jesus himself. This was his understanding, which he effectively communicated to his disciples.

This conclusion is, in our opinion, inescapable, a matter of historical logic. It is the most plausible and coherent theory to explain the phenomenon of the Christology of the New Testament.

But where did this consciousness of Jesus originate? Here historical logic must stop and conjecture begin. Who can penetrate the mind of another, not least from this historical distance and with the limitations our sources impose upon us? Tentatively, I propose that Jesus' awareness of his identity (Messiah/Christ) and relationship with God (his Son) arose from four quarters:

- First, Joseph taught his son of his Davidic descent.[46]
- Jesus studied the Scriptures through the eyes of a son of David, long since expected.
- The preaching of John the Baptist established that this was God's appointed hour.
- When Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, God's voice affirmed to Jesus that he was God's Son. God's eschatological hour had struck.

It was one thing for Jesus' understanding to be so informed and for him to convey that understanding to those close to him, but it is quite another for the early church to have accepted that view and to have preached it. This Messiah was *crucified,* an unthinkable occurrence. Had that been the end of Jesus, it is doubtful that messianic assertions would have been made about him, as they undoubtedly were. The "tremendous confirmatory event"[47] of his bodily resurrection coupled with his own messianic/filial consciousness as communicated to his associates inspired the spread of this new faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Historical evidence from the first century, both from inside and outside the New Testament, bears witness to the growth of the fledgling faith.

2.8. Conclusion

It is a matter of secure historical record, found in both the Christian and non-Christian sources, that Jesus was believed to be and proclaimed to be Messiah/Christ and that his followers took their name from his *(Christos/Christianos).* Contrary to widespread opinion, a messianic son of David was a central hope of the Old Testament and continued to be the "core" hope of the covenantal people beyond the close of their canonical Scriptures. Various leaders arose in Jesus'

era, each claiming to be "king." Yet though the long-awaited Anointed One was to be a king, not every king was to be the Messiah. Herod was king of the Jews, but he was no messiah. The earliness and the breadth of the witness to Jesus (the) Christ/the Son of God suggest that this idea did not derive from the early church but from Jesus himself.

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Notes

[1]See, e.g., *Psalm of Solomon* 17:32.

[2]For discussion, see Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981), p. 74.

[3]Greek *en prōtois,* "at the first," is allowed, but not preferred, by Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 718, 722.

[4]For many, the book of Acts is tendentious and not a reliable historical source, a view not shared by this author. See later discussion, excursus 10A. The word *Christianos* occurs in only one other place in this book (Acts 26:28), enhancing probable historicity.

[5]See C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), pp. 556-57.

[6]To be questioned are the arguments of J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St Paul's Corinth* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1983), pp. 130-40, that (1) Orosius's dating of Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4 to Claudius's ninth year (i.e., 49-50) is unfounded and that (2) the Suetonius incident is the same as that described in Dio Cassius 60.6.6, which occurred in 41. H. D. Slingerland, "Suetonius Claudius 25.4 and the Account in Dio Cassius," *JQR* 79 (1989): 305-22, has convincingly shown that Dio and Suetonius are referring to different events.

[7]Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4. The spelling of *e* for *i* was fairly widespread and is not thought to preclude identifying *Chrestus* as *Christus* (cf. Tertullian *Apology* 3). See F. F. Bruce, "Christianity Under Claudius," *BJRL* 44 (1962): 315-18.

[8]E. A. Judge and G. S. R. Thomas, "The Origin of the Church at Rome," *RTR* 25 (1966): 81-92, suggest that *Chrestus* was not Jesus the Messiah but a messianic pretender whose name has not survived. H. D. Slingerland, *Claudian Policymaking and the Early Imperial Repression of Judaism at Rome* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), pp. 203-17, has rejected altogether the *interpretatio Christiana,* which he says arose through the influence of the fifth-century historian Orosius. Slingerland has to posit a quite independent *Chrestus.* For an extensive defense of the identification of *Chrestus* as (Jesus) *Christus,* see Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 157-201. A combination of considerations supports the historic view as from Orosius: (1) The name *Chrestus* is associated with Claudius's expulsion of *Jews* who were expecting a messiah, *Christus.* (2) That Romans confused the spelling is evident in the oldest manuscript of Tacitus *Annals* 25.44.3, which misspells *Christianos* as *Chrestianos* (Riesner, *Paul's Early Period,* p. 164). (3) Expelled from Italy by Claudius were the *Christian* Jews Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-3), supporting the possibility of turmoil within the Jewish community in Rome over Jesus the Christ.

[9]So F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), p. 281.

[10]Suetonius, who had been secretary to the emperor Hadrian and who had access to state documents, wrote his *Lives of the Caesars* c. 120.

[11]The details of Tacitus's birthplace, upbringing and early life are uncertain.

[12]See generally Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 48-67, who quotes Cicero and Plutarch (60-61). According to Cicero, "Religion has been distinguished from superstition not only by philosophers but by our ancestors. [Superstition implied] groundless fear of the gods" (*Nat.D.* I.117.2.72). Plutarch states that the superstitious man "enjoys no common world with the rest of mankind" (*On Superstition* 166c).

[13]Tacitus *Annals* 25.44.2-5.

[14]According to Eusebius, there were fifteen bishops in the Jerusalem church, beginning with James the Lord's brother until the time of Hadrian's invasion of Palestine (132-135). In this period the Jerusalem church was entirely Jewish (*HE* 6.5).

[15]Eusebius *HE* 3.12.

[16]Josephus *J.W.* 6.312; cf. Eusebius *HE* 3.8.

[17]This is the wording in the Septuagint; the Masoretic Text does not mention a "man."
[18]Josephus *J.W.* 3.401.
[19]Ibid., 6.313.
[20]Tacitus *Histories* 5.13; Suetonius *Vespasian* 4.5.
[21]Eusebius *HE* 3.19.
[22]See later, §5.3.
[23]Josephus *Ant.* 18.63-64.
[24]Josephus's words, "He was the Christ," are almost certainly not original to him. In a later section of the *Antiquities.* Josephus refers to Jesus as "the so-called Christ" (*Ant.* 20.200). It is likely that these or similar words originally occurred in the *Testimonium Flavianum.* The words, "tribe of the Christians, so called after him," demand that this "tribe" took its name from "Christ," whether or not Josephus believed Jesus to be the Christ. For discussion of problems of the authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum,* see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus,* 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991, 1994), 1:56-69; Craig A. Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources," in *Studying the Historical Jesus,* ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 466-68.
[25]A connection between the words *Christ* and *Christian* is found in 1 Peter 4:14, 16: "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed. . . . [I]f one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God."
[26]Eusebius *HE* 3.32.
[27]Many scholars regard the Pastoral Epistles as deutero-Pauline. For discussion, see later, §16.6.
[28]Paul uses the word *Christ* more than one hundred times in 1 and 2 Corinthians alone, letters written in the midfifties.
[29]Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), pp. 12-13.
[30]Quoted in ibid., p.19.
[31]So E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 B.C.E.-66 C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1992), pp. 295-96.
[32]Classically argued by Morton Smith, "What Is Implied by the Variety of Messianic Figures?" *JBL* 78 (1959): 66-72; see, too, Jacob Neusner, William S. Green and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
[33]1QS *Rule of the Community* 11.
[34]Kenneth E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism,* SBL 7 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), p. 271.
[35]See Richard A. Horsley and James S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1985), pp. 88-134.
[36]Ibid., pp. 116-17, 125-27.
[37]Josephus *Ant.* 20.200; cf. 18.63. This is a point not noted in Horsley and Hanson.
[38]Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits,* p. 127.
[39]Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p. 820 n. 6.
[40]Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973), p. 133.
[41]Quoted from ibid., p. 132. It is not known which is the earlier of the two passages.
[42]An evocative phrase from William Horbury, "The Messianic Association of the 'Son of Man,' " *JTS* n.s. 36 (1985): 38.
[43]Liturgical Fragment: "The Blessing of the Prince of the Congregation." See Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 208 (emphasis added).
[44]4Q252 *Commentary on Jacob's Blessing;* see Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls,* p. 224.
[45]See later, §8.7.1-2.
[46]See later, §5.1-2. The (likely) influence of Mary on Jesus should not be forgotten. Timothy learned the Scriptures from his Jewish mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15).
[47]Cf. C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1967), pp. 3, 17.

3

The Hellenistic Background to Jesus

3.1. Introduction

In the centuries immediately before and after Jesus, Israel was a small principality subject to the will of greater powers, first the Persians, then the Greeks and finally the Romans. Only during the era of Herod the Great did Israel expand again to become a significant nation. Yet this was a relatively brief era, and even then Herod was quite dependent on the approval of the great Romans, Mark Antony initially and finally Augustus.

Jesus lived and early Christianity arose within this broad period. A genuine figure of history, Jesus' life and ministry[1] crossed the reigns and regions of Herod, his sons Antipas, Archelaus and Philip, five military prefects of Judea and ten high priests. The rise and spread of early Christianity, too, is historical. Thus, the historical Jesus and the historical early church are properly studied against their historical and cultural backgrounds.

3.2. Overview: Persian, Greek and Roman rule

From the sixth to the fourth centuries B.C. Israel was a satrapy within the vast Persian empire. At its height this empire extended from India in the east to the Aegean in the west and from the Black Sea in the north to Egypt in the south. The Aramaic language, the *lingua franca* of the Persian empire, became the language of the Jewish people, including Jesus himself. His words spoken from the cross—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani" (Mk 15:34)—are Aramaic. Nonetheless, Hebrew, the language of the sacred Scriptures, was retained by the Jewish religious teachers.

In the fourth century B.C., in a series of brilliant military victories, Alexander

the Great, king of Macedonia, conquered the Persian empire. In the years following Alexander's death the former Persian empire was fought over by and then divided up among his generals, his so-called successors, or *diadochoi* (see table 2). Little Israel lay between the most powerful of these new kingdoms, Egypt to the south, Syria to the north. From 301 to 200 B.C. Israel was under the control of the Ptolemies in Egypt, and broadly speaking, from 200 B.C. until 63 B.C., when the Romans arrived, she lay within the realm of the Seleucids in Syria.

The Roman encroachment eastward meant the progressive collapse of the Hellenistic empires, first the Seleucids in 64 B.C. and then the Ptolemies in 31 B.C. Inevitably, Israel came under Roman rule. In A.D. 6 the Romans made Judea a province, with Caesarea Maritima the new capital. In 66 Vespasian invaded Galilee and in 70 his son Titus oversaw the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the great temple. Yet another Roman-Jewish war erupted 132-135 in which the Jews were again defeated. After that Jews were banished from their ancestral homeland. Jerusalem became in turn Roman, Byzantine and, until the twentieth century, Turkish.

Of the nations that conquered Israel—Persia, Greece, Rome—the Greeks presented the greatest challenge to her cultural and religious survival. Notwithstanding the military might of Rome, which twice overwhelmed her, it was the more subtle influence of Greek culture (Hellenism)[2] during the three centuries before Roman provincialization of Judea in A.D. 6 that most threatened Israel's covenantal loyalty to Yahweh her God. Throughout those many years Israel was surrounded by Hellenism and indeed permeated and penetrated by Hellenism. Roman power was imposed from above, but Hellenism seeped in from all sides, potentially corrupting the people from within. Although Christianity was born during the era of Roman hegemony, the cultural background against which the new religion is most helpfully understood is not Roman but Greek.

3.3. The spread of Hellenism

Although Jesus was a Jew steeped in the Scriptures and the religious culture of his covenantal people, much of the environment of Galilee owed its character to Greek influence. Indeed, the greater part of the economic, administrative and cultural landscape of Galilee of Jesus' era was Greek rather than Jewish.

334-323 B.C.	Alexander conquers the Persian Empire
323-301 B.C.	Wars between Alexander's "successors" *[Diadochoi]*
301-200 B.C.	Ptolemaic dynasty controls Israel from Alexandria
200-165 B.C.	Seleucid dynasty controls Israel from Antioch
165-40 B.C.	Jewish autonomy under the Hasmonaean dynasty
40[3]-4 B.C.	Herod "the Great"

Table 2. The Hellenistic era: Overview of Jewish history 334-4 B.C.

During the period 300-200 B.C. Palestine was part of the Greco-Egyptian empire based in Alexandria. The rule of ancient Egypt was continued by the intermarriage of the descendants of the Pharaohs with the Macedonian invaders. The first new ruler was Ptolemy, who gave his name to the kingdom and empire that he founded. Palestine was part of that empire, becoming an extension of Egypt.

In Palestine as in Egypt proper, the Ptolemies created major administrative units that they called *hyparchies.* The hyparchies Gaulanitis, Galilaia, Samaraia, Judaia, Peraia and Idumaia continued under those names into New Testament times. Each hyparchy was presided over by a *hyparch,* "under-ruler." The hyparchies were further subdivided into *toparchies,* each led by a *toparch,* "ruler of a place." Within the toparchies were the *kōmai,* "towns," each subject to a *komarch,* "town ruler." Thus the Ptolemies created a vast bureaucratic structure. Although Palestine passed out of Ptolemaic control, many of the structures remained in place during the subsequent centuries, even after the coming of the Romans in 63 B.C. The larger units became subject to differing regimes, some under the Romans (Judea, Samaria and Idumaea), others under a Herodian ruler (Galilee, Peraea and Trachonitis). The toparchies and the *kōmai,* with their *toparchs* and *kōmarchs,* remained in place as from Ptolemaic times.[4]

The Ptolemies gave special attention to Israel as a temple state. They were concerned that the high priest not become, *de facto,* a king. Alongside the high priest they appointed a high-ranking official (*prostatēs tou hierou,* "leader of the temple"), answerable to them, as a counterbalance to the high priest. They also established a senate (*gerousia,* "council of elders") as a further check on the high priest. The Sanhedrin of New Testament times did not develop out of the covenantal history of Israel; it evolved from the Ptolemaic *gerousia.* This was a critical expression of Hellenism at the heart of Judaism.

The Macedonian newcomers were quickly influenced by the divinely sanctioned king-centered culture of Egypt. Following the practice of the pharaohs, the Ptolemaic rulers claimed ownership of most of the land, which was worked by free tenants under strict supervision. In Israel this represented a radical break from earlier covenantal practices, which allowed ordinary Israelites to own land and pass it on to their heirs. Many plantations newly established on the king's lands were devoted to cultivating such crops as grains, papyrus, dyes and balsam for international export trade. The Ptolemies had state monopolies on the production of oil, various cloths, metals, salt and spices. Moreover, the Greeks brought with them various new technologies, like the water wheel for irrigation, the treadmill, the iron plough, the oil press and the winepress. Thus Hellenism changed the patterns of land ownership, farming and trade, effecting nothing less than an agricultural revolution in Israel during the Ptolemaic era. By the time of Jesus the agricultural world of Galilee owed more to the Ptolemaic era than to covenantal history.

Severe levels of taxation, which were operative in Jesus' era, were introduced by the Ptolemies. The collection of taxes by means of contractors (*telōnai,* "publicans"), which was in operation in New Testament times, at least in Judea, had its origins in the Ptolemaic century. In Galilee, however, tax and customs officials like Levi/Matthew may have been employed directly by the tetrarch.

The Ptolemies tended to administer their subjects through wealthy and aristocratic Jews such as members of the *gerousia*, senior bureaucrats, large estate owners, businessmen, or tax contractors. These Jews had to learn the language of their masters, that is, *koinē,* "common," Greek. A simplified form of the more classical Attic Greek had spread rapidly in the wake of Alexander's conquests. This *koinē* Greek was the *lingua franca* of the eastern Mediterranean in Jesus' day. In the new Hellenistic cities, various academies and schools arose, teaching Greek philosophy, history, mathematics, literature and science. Gadara, an elevated city east of the Sea of Galilee, appears to have been prominent as a center of Greek learning.[5]

The Jews of the upper echelons not only learned *koinē,* they also came to love things Greek, including Greek religion and philosophy. Herondas, a Jew of the period, referred in rapturous terms to Ptolemaic Egypt:

> For all that is and will be, can be found in Egypt:
> Riches, stadiums, power, fine weather,
> Reputation, theatres, philosophers, gold, young men,
> The sanctuary of the kindred gods, the king,
> A just one, the museum, wine, every good thing,
> Whatever you want, and women.[6]

Indeed, only those Jews who learned and loved the culture of Greece had any future, economically and politically speaking. Those who lacked the skills of Hellenism were conscious of their disadvantage. A voice from the period complained about promised wages withheld by his masters: "They had seen that I am a barbarian . . . [and] that I do not know how to live like a Greek *[hellenizein].*"[7]

There was another social world within Israel. By contrast with those caught up in the heady world of Hellenism, the poorer Jews strongly resisted these subtle and pervasive outside influences. They reacted to troubled times with an apocalyptic style of writing through which God revealed a blessed future for them (*apokalyptein,* "to reveal").[8] According to these texts, although the present was evil, the future—which belonged to God—was good. The devil and his angels were responsible for the present woes, but in the final moment God and his angels would prevail. At a universal resurrection and judgment the righteous poor would be separated from the unrighteous. The wicked would be punished, but the righteous who had suffered in this life would be vindicated.

During these years of spreading Hellenism, the apocalyptic worldview, along with adherence to the law of Yahweh, participation in his temple and celebration

of the anniversaries of his great saving events, came to be very important as defining elements in the corporate life of the covenant people. The various Jewish resistance movements against Hellenism throughout this period sprang out of covenantal apocalypticism. Surviving examples of apocalyptic writings have been found at Qumran, almost certainly written by the sectaries who lived there. Other apocalyptic writings from the period after the Old Testament are generally associated with the Pharisees. This conservative reaction came to be sharply expressed after the accession of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, in 175 B.C. and his subsequent interventions in Jewish affairs.

3.4. The "extreme of Hellenism"

Israel lay between the two great Hellenistic dynasties, the Ptolemies based in Alexandria and the Seleucids based in Antioch. During the century of Ptolemaic rule the pro-Greek elites among the Jews naturally looked to Alexandria. In 200 B.C., however, the Ptolemies were defeated at the battle of Paneion.[9] Israel would now belong to the less sophisticated but more militarily ambitious kingdom of Antioch. Many Jews switched their loyalty to the northern metropolis.

From the time of the victory of Antiochus III in 200 B.C. until the death of Seleucus IV (175 B.C.), life in Israel continued much as it had during the previous century when the Ptolemies ruled. This was to change dramatically with the advent of Antiochus IV in 175 B.C.10 The problems under Antiochus IV, however, had their origins in the actions of his father, Antiochus III, who had incurred a crushing debt to Rome as a consequence of military misadventures in Greece.[11] Massive annual reparations had to be found, historically the heaviest ever known to have been imposed.[12] Moreover, at that time Antiochus III also lost a sizable part of his tribute-paying empire, located to the north and east. He and his successors, his sons Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV, were forced to take desperate measures to find money wherever they could. They looked to two sources in particular: the plundered treasures of various temples in that region, including the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, and Egypt, the now weakened southern kingdom of the Ptolemies.

In 174 B.C. Antiochus IV removed the conservative high priest Onias III, replacing him with his Hellenizing brother, Jason, who secured his appointment by bribery. Under Jason the treasures of the temple were pillaged for Antiochus, and overt practices of Hellenism were introduced. A gymnasium was established with *epheboi,* an order of "youths" who wore a distinctive dark mantle and broad brimmed hats, as in the Greek cities.[13] Greek-style male athletic competitions began to be held in Jerusalem. Because, as in Hellenistic custom, these competitions were conducted naked, efforts were made to obscure the circumcision of the competitors

There was such an extreme of Hellenization[14] and increase in the adoption of

foreign ways because of the surpassing wickedness of Jason, who was ungodly and no high priest. (2 Macc 4:13)

Things came to a head after 168 B.C. in Egypt when, after intervention against him by the Romans, Antiochus was ignominiously forced to withdraw. He was angered to find numbers of the people of Israel still loyal to the Ptolemies, their previous masters. Thereafter events swiftly took their course. Antiochus IV decided to abolish Jerusalem as a temple-state and redesignate it as a Greek city-state, renaming it New Antioch.

In the period 168-167 B.C. Antiochus moved to demolish the walls of the city. He established a Greek-style acropolis where the newly defined citizens met, the so-called Antiochenes of Jerusalem. Worse, Antiochus launched a concerted attack on the fundamentals of the covenant faith of Israel. This he did through his new puppet high priest, Menelaus, a convinced Hellenizer, who had by then out-bribed Jason for the office. Menelaus, the first high priest in history who was not descended from Zadok the priest, discontinued services in the temple, destroyed copies of the Scriptures, forbade circumcision and abolished the covenantal food laws. In climax an altar dedicated to Zeus was erected upon the altar in the temple of Yahweh. Unclean animals (pigs) were sacrificed upon it. Altars in honor of Greco-Syrian deities were now set up throughout Israel, and local people were required to offer sacrifice. Henceforth it would be a capital offense to circumcise a son, possess a scroll of Scripture or refuse to eat swine sacrificed on a local altar.

Behold, our holy place, our beauty
and our glory have been laid waste;
the Gentiles have profaned it. (1 Macc 2:12)

Although from Israel's perspective this amounted to severe religious persecution, from Antiochus's viewpoint the destruction of Israel's religion was primarily a matter of politics and of money.

3.5. The Maccabean revolt

Antiochus's Hellenizing actions provoked a variety of reactions by the Jews. Apart from those wealthy elites who had benefited materially from the Ptolemaic regime in Alexandria and from the Seleucid dynasty in Antioch, it is safe to conclude that the great majority of the people were appalled by the threat to their religious heritage presented by the hegemony of their conquerors. This broad opposition became focused in two factions in particular. In the years to come, the principles embodied in these factions would be repeatedly reincarnated.

One faction, the "Hasidaean," though not known from the records before this time, was clearly already in existence at the time of Antiochus's reforms.[15] In all probability the Hasidaeans arose during the Ptolemaic era, perhaps going back even earlier into Persian times. The Hasidaeans are believed to have written the

earliest apocalypses, for example, the original parts of the book of Enoch.[16] In time the Hasidaean faction would subdivide into the two other groups: the Pharisees and the Essenes.[17] The Pharisees remained part of mainstream Jewish society, as they were in Jesus' day. The Essenes, however, eventually formed separatist enclaves.

During the previous years of increasing Hellenism the Hasidaeans had withdrawn to the wilderness, the traditional place of purity from the time of the Exodus. But now a time of conflict had come. What was to become of them? In their strictness to the Torah they refused to defend themselves on the sabbath (1 Macc 2:29-38; 2 Macc 6:11). One thousand fell at the edge of the Gentile sword. They believed, as many Jews after them would, that by such actions God was showing his ultimate mercy toward them. The theological understanding of the author of 2 Maccabees is clear.

> I urge those who read this book not to be depressed by such calamities, but to recognize that these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people. (2 Macc 6:12)

If passive acceptance of death in preference to breaking God's covenant law was the way of the Hasidaeans, it was not to be the way of the members of the Hashmon family. One of that family, Mattathias of Modein, a poor priest, had five sons. When the edicts of Antiochus came to be imposed outside Jerusalem, Mattathias offered notable resistance. Antiochus's officers erected a Gentile altar and insisted that the people make a sacrifice. At a critical moment Mattathias came forward and struck dead a Jew in the act of offering sacrifice on the altar.

When Mattathias's family heard of the sabbath fate of the Hasidaeans they determined, "Let us fight against every man who comes to attack us on the Sabbath" (1 Macc 2:41). Many Hasidaeans joined forces with Mattathias.[18] Under the leadership of his son, Judas, nicknamed *maccabeus,* "hammer," the Jews defeated the Greek forces, ultimately recapturing Jerusalem in 165 B.C. In a great ceremony the temple was purified and rededicated to Yahweh (1 Macc 4:36-59; 2 Macc 10:1-8). Judas's rededication is remembered annually by Jews in the feast of *Hanukkah,* "Dedication." The Hasmonaeans took the path of direct action in and for the zeal of the name of Yahweh, in contrast with the passive attitudes of the Hasidaeans.

> When Mattathias saw it he burned with zeal. . . . He ran and killed him on the altar. (1 Macc 2:24)

The New Testament mentions a number of individuals whom it calls "zealots." These were men who had a life-and-death commitment to Yahweh. One of these, Simon the *Cananaean,* "zealot," was to become a disciple of Jesus.[19] Another, Saul of Tarsus, persecutor of early Christians who was to become the apostle to

the Gentiles, described himself in the earlier part of his life as having "zeal" (Phil 3:6; Acts 22:3). During the war from 66 to 70 a faction of poorer priests known as "the Zealots" arose; they occupied and defended to the end the temple sanctuary within the walls of Jerusalem.[20] The "zealot" phenomenon that periodically arose when the covenant of Israel was threatened probably was inspired by the "zeal" of Mattathias. It was not so much a movement as a mindset triggered into action at special moments. The zealot in other matters held to the apocalyptic worldview and to the symbols of the covenant—Torah and temple. What marked the zealot from other Jews was the specific zeal for Yahweh that took direct action regardless of the cost.

3.6. The Hasmonaean Dynasty

Not content with the mere recapture of Jerusalem, Judas set about securing political autonomy from the Seleucids. A partial sovereignty of Israel, which had been lost centuries earlier, was now regained. Judas the victor was succeeded by his brothers and their descendants (see table 3) who together are referred to as the "Hasmonaean" or "Maccabean" dynasty (165-37 B.C.). The Hasmonaean rulers, having become semi-independent of the Syrian kingdom, by stages then expanded their boundaries to encompass Transjordan to the east, Samaria and Galilee to the north and Idumaea to the south, events that would have important consequences. The Messiah of Israel, Jesus, was a Galilean; Herod the Great, in whose time Jesus was born, was an Idumaean. Hellenism had threatened to engulf the Jews. But the Hasmonaean rulers, exploiting the growing weakness of the Syrian kingdom, made Israel a relatively secure island in the sea of Hellenism.

165-37	Hasmonaean Rule in Israel	Hasmonaean Dynasty
165-160	Judas	Mattathias
160-142	Jonathan	Judas Jonathan Simon
142-134	Simon	
134-104	John Hyrcanus	John Hyrcanus
103-76	Alexander Jannaeus	
76-67	Alexandra	Alexander Jannaeus + Alexandra
67-37	Civil War	

Table 3. Hasmonaean rule

3.7. Hasidaeans, Essenes and Pharisees

The Hasmonaean victories came at a high price. Ironically, these rulers were corrupted by the Hellenism they had risen to oppose. At first they were virtual puppets of the Syrian kingdom; they lacked the military power to survive in their own right. Later, however, as the Seleucids diminished as a military force the Hasmonaeans were able to strengthen their kingdom and expand their borders. Moreover, their growing territorial power was accompanied by a strengthening of

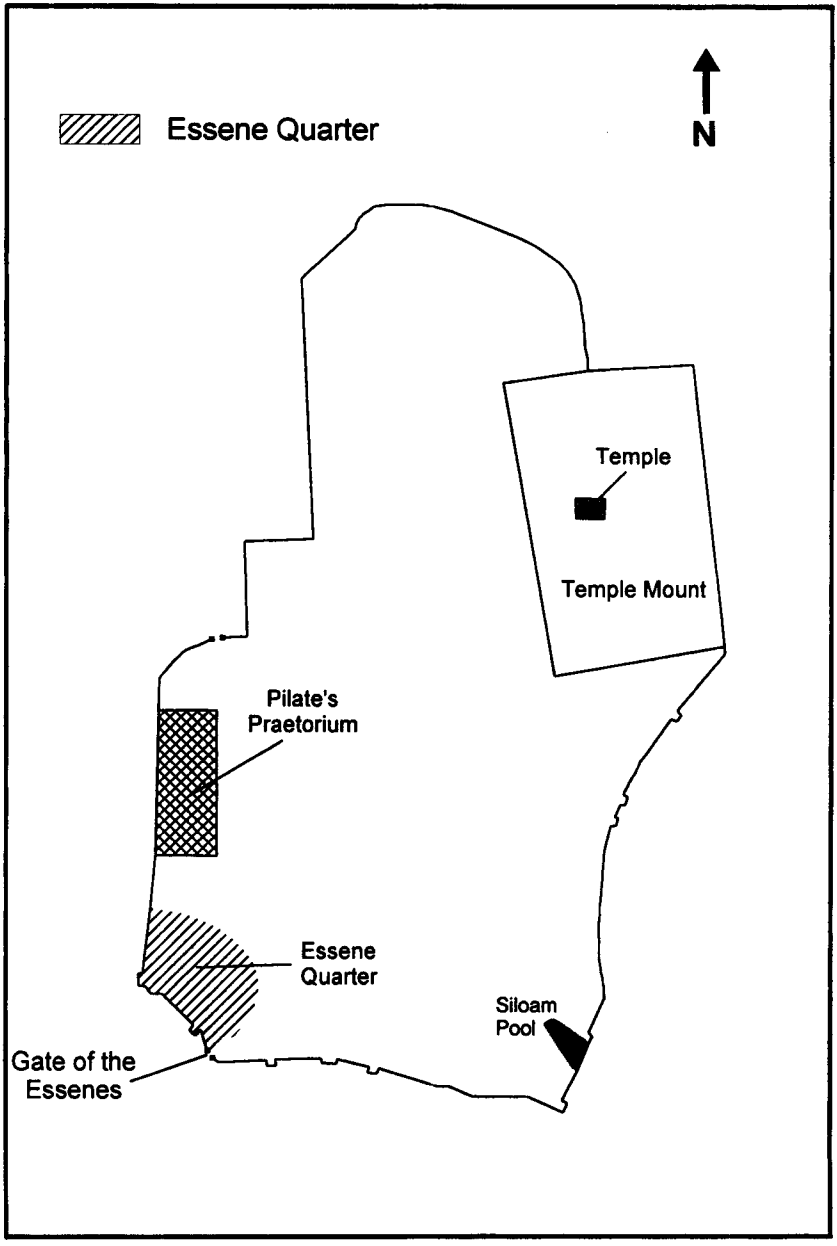
their own dynastic power at home. As a family of priestly lineage, the various kings from Jonathan onward also took to themselves the position of high priest, cementing their authority. As priest-kings who succumbed to ungodly behavior they lost the support of their former pious allies, the Hasidaeans. An anonymous apocalyptist late in the New Testament period was to reflect critically about them.

> Then there shall be raised up unto them kings bearing rule, and they shall call themselves priests of the Most High God: they shall assuredly work iniquity in the holy of holies. (*Assumption of Moses* 6)

During the years of growing Hasmonaean strength, the Hasidaeans themselves became divided. Those who continued within Jerusalem and other cities and towns would become, in time, the sect of the Pharisees. The Pharisees identified with the broad stream of Jewish life, symbolized by their continued participation in the worship in the temple, presided over by Hasmonaean high priests. The Pharisees expressed their "separation"—the word *Pharisee* originally may have meant "separatist"[21]—by the creation of voluntary societies, which came to be known as "synagogues" (*synagogue* is a Greek word meaning "a gathering together"). Here the people would meet on the sabbath to hear the Law and the Prophets read and preached. These expositions reflected the interpretation of Scripture sanctioned by the Pharisees.

Other Hasidaeans, in protest against the emerging Hasmonaean corruption, withdrew physically from the temple society into separatist communities. These devout Jews became known as the "Essenes."[22] According to Josephus, who gives their number as four thousand,[23] "[The Essenes] occupy no one city, but settle in large numbers in every town."[24] Philo, a younger contemporary of Josephus, observed that the Essenes "are living together in large communities in several cities of Judaea and in many villages."[25]

Were there Essenes in or near Jerusalem? A good case has been made for an Essene community located to the south of the Mount Zion section of the present old city.[26] Josephus mentions "the gate of the Essenes," which he locates at the southwest corner of the walls as they existed at that time.[27] A gate in the wall at exactly this position has been unearthed by archaeologists in recent times. The existence of ritual baths inside the gate and of latrines outside the city wall (consistent with known Essene practices) gives support to the proposal that an Essene community was located here. The existence of a community of Essenes in Jerusalem at the time of the origin of the earliest church in the same city raises interesting questions about possible relationships between the two communities, especially since the two communities appear to have been located next to each other.[28] The Essenes, like the first Jerusalem Christians, supported one another in the common access to material goods;[29] unlike the Essenes, however, these first Christians did not separate themselves from the temple.



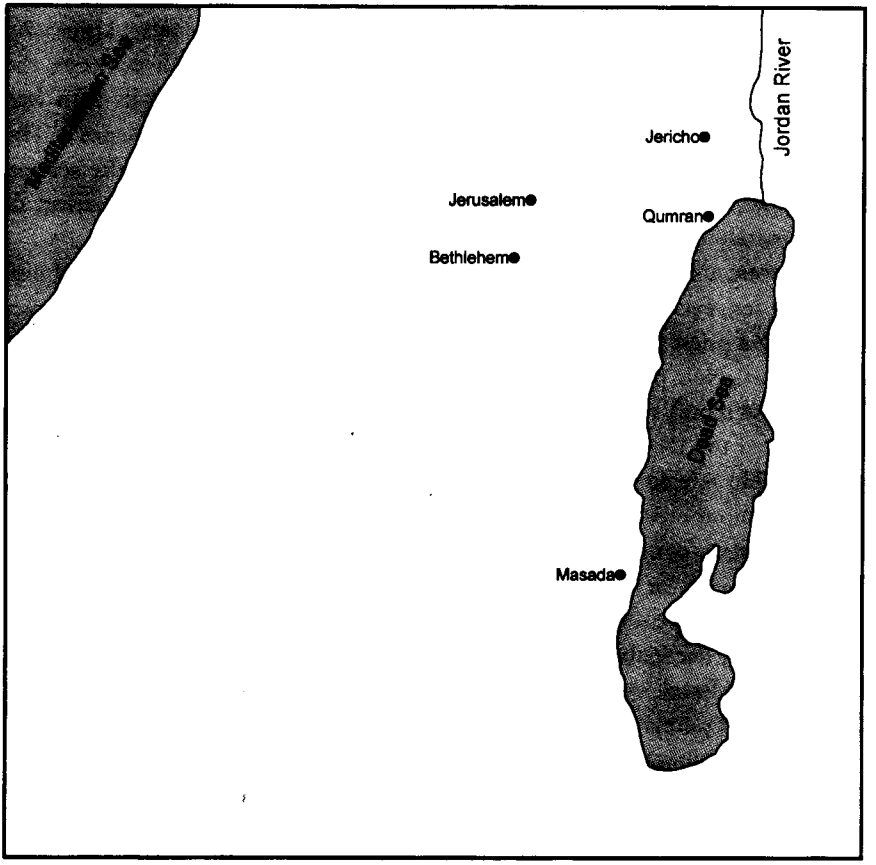
Map 1. Jerusalem: The Essene Quarter

3.8. The Qumran sect

One group of Essenes—probably the primal group—established a community in the desert at Qumran, overlooking the Dead Sea.

Between 1947 and 1956 various scrolls and remains of scrolls were discovered in caves near the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea. Because of the lack of humidity in this desert area, these writings had been preserved in the caves for two thousand years. From the fragmentary remains of the Dead Sea Scrolls scholars have sought to establish the origins and history of the people who wrote these documents.[30]

From 1953 to 1956 excavations were conducted at the site adjacent to cave 4, where the first scrolls were found. Coins and remains of pottery found in the caves and in the archaeological site establish a connection between the scrolls and the community who lived at the nearby site. Here was a self-contained community of rather modest size. The structures included a watchtower, an assembly space for



Map 2. The Dead Sea

communal meals, workshops, storage rooms and—significantly—a scriptorium. Crumpled paper and bottles with dried ink were discovered. The ink remains coincide with ink samples from the documents, suggesting that the scrolls were copied at Qumran. Elaborate arrangements had been made to build conduits to bring water from the Judean hills to the east for the use of the community. Ritual bathing was provided for the community members in a place of very low rainfall.

Evidently this was a separatist community; the members refer to themselves by various names: "sons of Zakok," "sons of light," "members of the new covenant," "poor," "devout." Mention is made of a revered figure, their founder, the "teacher of righteousness." But there are also sinister figures: the "man of lies" and the "wicked priest." It is not clear whether the "man of lies" and the "wicked priest" are the same or different persons. If they are different, the "man of lies" may have been a Hasidaean leader from whom the "teacher of righteousness" separated himself and his followers. The "wicked priest" is generally believed to have been one of the then corrupt Hasmonaean kings who had grasped the role of high priest in Jerusalem. Based on this hypothesis, the Qumran community was an offshoot of the Hasidaeans, who in turn had separated in protest from mainstream Jewish religious life as the Essenes.[31] The community at Qumran had occupied the site from the middle of the second century B.C. until the arrival of the Roman legions in A.D. 68, a period of approximately two hundred years.

They were a strongly hierarchical community of celibate males,[32] divided into groups of ten, each with a priestly leader and a lay leader. The whole community was led by a priest and a lay leader. Entry to the community was by stages over several years. New members surrendered their property to the community upon entry. Strict moral, ritual and ceremonial rules applied to the members. Pliny the Elder visited the Dead Sea region, perhaps during the Roman campaign against the Jews. He referred to the Essenes as "without women and renouncing love entirely, without money."[33]

The members of the community regarded themselves as the final and true Israel. All the prophecies of the Scriptures were seen to be fulfilled in them. They were God's "sure house"; wider Israel was apostate. Religious anniversaries of the great feasts were of particular interest. Here they adopted a different calendar from temple-based Israel, which followed the lunar calendar of 354 days, as did the Gentiles. At Qumran they followed a solar calendar of 364 days. Thus they celebrated the biblical feasts at different times from the general population, who followed the corrupt calendar of the temple hierarchy.

According to their beliefs, the "teacher of righteousness" had inaugurated a messianic age of about forty years. They looked forward to the coming of two messiahs: one a Davidic and lay messiah, the other an Aaronic priestly messiah.

They also anticipated the coming of a prophet-messiah.

While the community was separated from a corrupt Israel, the group most feared and abominated the Gentiles. They expected in the near future a great end-time war between themselves ("the sons of light") and Satan's hosts ("the sons of darkness"), the Gentiles. Since the *War Scroll* was written in the first century B.C., the Gentiles *(Kittim)* mentioned there were probably the Romans. Although it contains detailed directions for war, the *War Scroll* is probably a theological rather than a military work. It took as its theme the belief that God himself would win this great end-time battle for his faithful elect.

The community derives its fame, appropriately, from the large number of texts its scholars wrote over its two-century history: community rules, rules of holiness, eschatological writings, commentaries, astronomical texts, psalms, hymns, poems and curses.[34] This small center was a place of exceptional scribal industry. In the course of writing their own texts the Qumran scribes quote extensively from almost all the books of the Old Testament. Among their texts was an almost complete manuscript of Isaiah, predating the previous earliest edition by a thousand years. Much of this literature refers to Jewish works written in the previous several centuries, for example, the intertestamental works 1 Enoch and Jubilees. Josephus was aware of their activities: "They display an extraordinary interest in the writings of the ancients."[35]

The discovery of the scrolls and the restoration of the monastery at Qumran prompt us to ask, were there scholarly religious communities other than Qumran that have left no trace? According to Josephus, the Essenes "settle in large numbers in every town."[36] If the Qumran community was but one of a number of Essene groups, we may reasonably assume that parallel scribal activities also occurred in other Essene settlements throughout Israel.

But this must have occurred also among the other descendants of the Hasidaeans, the Pharisees. They, too, established strong traditions of biblical exegesis and interpretation; the Gospels give evidence of this (cf. Mt 2:4; 17:10; 23:2; Mk 12:35; Jn 5:39; 7:15, 52). One inference to be drawn from the Qumran discoveries is that there was extensive scribal activity among the various factions of those faithful to the historic covenant, in reaction to the spread and influence of Hellenism.

Was John the Baptist part of or influenced by the Qumran community?[37] John was baptizing in the Jordan, quite close to Qumran and during their latter years. Like them he lived in the wilderness where he practiced a cleansing rite. Moreover, as a Nazarite he had, like them, renounced strong drink (Lk 1:15; cf. 1Q28b *Rule of the Blessings* 4:28). Further, his fiery apocalyptic expectations were in line with theirs (Mt 3:7-12; Lk 3:7-9).

These common elements do not amount to an affirmative conclusion. Ritual immersion was commonplace among the Jews of the period; even the Hellenistic-

style mansion in the upper city of Jerusalem had ritual baths for daily lustration. John, however, called people to a single act of baptism, signifying their return to their covenant God. Further, a common eschatology is no proof of John's association with Qumran; intense apocalyptic expectation was standard among most Jews at the time. A most striking difference, however, was that the Qumran people were absolute separatists whereas John appears to have invited the whole nation to submit to baptism in the Jordan. Dressed in camel hair as Elijah had been, John did not recoil from the unclean who came to him; the sectarians' white priestly garb, however, symbolized a separation from uncleanness that was fundamental to their beliefs.[38]

Is there any connection between the Qumran sect and Jesus? One writer has argued that the "wicked priest" mentioned in the scrolls was identified at the time as Jesus and that the "teacher of righteousness" was John the Baptist.[39] Since the ministries of John and Jesus can be dated to c. 28-33 (see Lk 3:1-2), this would mean that the scrolls must have been written after that date. This hypothesis runs contrary to the almost universal consensus based on paleography that the scrolls were written in the period between one and two centuries before Jesus, that is, during the Hasmonaean era. In 1990 when Accelerator Mass Spectrometry dating techniques were applied to the critical texts, the paleographic judgment was entirely confirmed. According to F. G. Martinez, "These latest analytical techniques eliminate once and for all the theories of a . . . Jewish Christian origin for the manuscripts."[40] Apart from this there is not the slightest evidence that Jesus had any direct contact with the Qumran sect or that he somehow persecuted John the Baptist!

Nonetheless, although we may dismiss theories that the scrolls refer to either John or Jesus, we must recognize that the community was active during the period of the ministry of Jesus.[41] Although Qumran is away from any direct route Jesus may have taken between Galilee and Jerusalem, it is possible he visited the community; Qumran is close to Jericho. In any event, it is probable that Jesus knew of the Essenes—whether at Qumran or some other Essene settlement. This emerges in his sharp denunciation of several teachings known to be associated with the Essenes/Qumran.

First, before a candidate joined the Essenes, according to Josephus, he must swear certain oaths, including "that he will ever hate the unjust and fight the battle of the just."[42] The *Rule of the Community* called for the member to "love the sons of light" and to "hate the sons of darkness."[43] By contrast Jesus called for love of enemies and prayer for them (Mt 5:44-48).

Second, the Qumran sect was exceedingly strict about the observance of the sabbath. Forbidden were working, speaking idly, decision making, walking or food preparation.[44] For his part Jesus pointedly healed on the sabbath, asserting that the sabbath was made for man (Mk 3:1-6; Jn 5:1-9; 9:13-17; Mk 2:27).

Third, Qumran was a selective and exclusive community of holy ones. It was decreed that "no madman, or lunatic, or simpleton, or fool, no blind man, or maimed, or lame, or deaf man and no minor shall enter the community, for the angels of holiness are with them."[45] Jesus' ministry, however, was directed to the very people in need—demoniacs, diseased and disabled—whom Qumran would not admit.

Public interest in the scrolls and Qumran sect has been extensive because of the sensational nature of the discoveries in 1947 of original texts, many of them well-preserved, from more than two thousand years ago. The large hoard of ancient texts, biblical and nonbiblical, has stimulated a massive investment of scholarship, which has often been accompanied by controversy. Our understanding of the Jewish world of the era has been dramatically expanded. Doubtless there will be an ongoing interest in the scrolls and the sect that gave them birth. They may be, as it were, the tip of a scribal iceberg now lost to us. There may have been other Essene scribal communities, each producing texts supporting their beliefs. On the other hand and less probably, there may not have been any other such groups engaged in scribal labors. Khirbet Qumran may have been all that there was and may have been, indeed, quite marginal to the life and times of Israel in the Hasmonaean era. Whatever the case, the sectaries hastily hid their precious writings in the nearby caves as the Roman tenth legion approached in 68.[46] They were prudent to do so; the legionaries quickly destroyed the little monastery. Roman arrowheads and layers of ash tell the story of the Roman assault. Contrary to the hopes of the *War Scroll,* the "sons of darkness" extinguished the "sons of light"; the covenant Lord did not rescue them.

3.9. Messianic hope

The remains of the Qumran community provide evidence of deep disillusionment at the impiety and materialism of the Hasmonaean rulers. But there is also evidence of profound unhappiness from another quarter.

From the second century B.C. the Romans had been steadily moving eastward, conquering one by one the now weakened Hellenistic kingdoms and creating provinces along the way. In 63 B.C. the famous general Pompey arrived in Jerusalem. The end of Hasmonaean rule was now in sight. Roman military and administrative might was irresistible.

The arrival of the Romans created a climate of anxiety. Jews once more faced Gentile occupation, more overtly onerous than that of the Greeks three centuries earlier. The people could not look to the Hasmonaeans. After Judas's initial success, that dynasty had quickly lost the support of the devout people.

The hearts of the people longed for the arrival of the long-awaited deliverer, the kingly descendant of David, the Lord's Anointed, the Messiah. An anonymous author, writing under Solomon's name, composed a series of poems

known as the *Psalms of Solomon,* which prophesied the coming of the messianic deliverer.

> Behold, O Lord, and raise up for them their king, the Son of David,
> At the appointed time which, O God, you did choose,
> That he may reign over Israel, your servant.
> And gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers,
> And may cleanse Jerusalem from the Gentiles that trample her down in destruction.
> Wisely and righteously let him expel sinners from the inheritance,
> And destroy the sinners' pride as a potter's vessel.
> With a rod of iron may he break in pieces all their resources.
> Let him destroy the lawless Gentiles by the word of his mouth.
> At his rebuke the nations shall flee from his presence.
> And he shall convict sinners in the thoughts of their hearts,
> And he shall gather a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness.
> And he shall judge the tribes of a people that has been sanctified by the Lord, his God.
> And he shall not permit unrighteousness to lodge any more in their midst,
> Nor shall any person who approves of evil dwell with them.[47]

This anonymous author upholds a "separatist" ideology; the expulsion of "sinners" is evidence of that. But he is not an Essene. He looks for the deliverance of Israel as a whole, not merely of the faithful and elect remnant. Almost certainly this writer is a Pharisee.

Despite their "zeal" for Yahweh's covenant at the beginning, the Hasmonaeans had compromised themselves with Hellenism and by their own lust for power. God's good future for his people did not lie with them. Hope was now focused on a coming king from David's line as prophesied in the Jewish Scriptures. Moreover, this prophecy is "messianic," as the appeal to "potter's vessel" and "rod of iron" from Psalm 2, a psalm about the "LORD's anointed," makes clear. This "righteous king"[48] would reign over Israel and cleanse Jerusalem from Gentiles like Pompey. He would gather and sanctify his people, refusing to allow unrighteousness or evil among them. Jesus' close association with "sinners," the moral outcasts from the synagogue, as recorded in the Gospels, offended the Pharisaic spirit of separation from the "unholy" reflected in the Scriptures (Mt 11:19; Mk 2:16; Lk 15:1-2; 19:7).

The expectations of the Jews in the time of Jesus a century later appear to have been influenced by the *Psalms of Solomon.* Devout folk were looking for the "consolation of Israel . . . the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:25, 38) and "the kingdom of God" (Mk 15:43). It was, however, to be a victory for Israel and Jerusalem based the violent exclusion of the Gentiles. But Jesus preached forgiveness to the enemy (Mt 5:43-48; Mk 11:25). He prophesied not the victory of

Jerusalem but its destruction by the Gentiles (Lk 21:20-24).

3.10 Conclusion

The impact of Hellenism on Israel was considerable. Wealthy Jews—to generalize—succumbed to Hellenism, gladly embracing its allure. By contrast, poorer Jews reacted bitterly against Hellenism. For some, like the early Hasmonaeans, the reaction was violent, a matter of "zeal." For others, like the Hasidaeans, the reaction was pious and passive. Among these the Pharisees continued as part of the temple-based wider community, expressing their separation by strict adherence to the laws of the covenant, as they would teach the people in the synagogues to do. Others—the Essenes—withdrew physically from the temple and the community at large, settling at the edges of towns and cities. One group, known by sensational archaeological discoveries, separated itself absolutely, establishing its monastery on the desert shores of the Dead Sea, where in a series of caves its life and beliefs lay hidden for two millennia.

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Notes

[1]5 B.C.(?)-A.D. 33. See Excursus 8A for discussion of the time frame of Jesus' ministry.

[2]*Hellenism,* the name given to Greek culture, derives from the word *Hellēn,* "a Greek." *Hellēnismos,* "Hellenism," as a cultural force was well recognized by Jews of the period and is referred to in 2 Maccabees 4:13.

[3]Herod's reign could be dated from 40 B.C., when he was formally appointed king by the Roman senate, or from 37 B.C., when he finally overcame his enemies and effectively became king.

[4]The Gospels are silent about these officials, but they are mentioned by Josephus.

[5]See Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism.* 2 vols. (London: SCM Press, 1973), 1:83-88.

[6]Quoted in ibid., 1:37-38.

[7]Quoted in ibid., 1:39.

[8]Apocalyptic writing has its roots in the literature of the Old Testament, e.g., Isaiah 24—27, 56—66, Joel and Zechariah. See Hengel, *Judaism,* 1:175-210, for discussion of the development of apocalyptic writing during Hellenistic era. Early apocalyptic writing was less dualistic than it was to become; so Hengel, *Judaism,* 1:190. Apocalyptic literature is quite diverse; the above descriptions are a simplification of that diversity. For broader though brief discussion of apocalyptic literature, see, e.g., Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins* (London: SPCK, 1985), pp. 56-64; L. J. Kreitzer, "Apocalyptic, Apocalypticism," with extensive bibliography, in *DLNTD,* pp. 55-68.

[9]Paneion takes its name from Pan, the god of remote places. (The English word *panic* derives from the notion of fear associated with Pan's isolated world.) During the Herodian era Herod Philip renamed it Caesarea Philippi in honor of Caesar Augustus. Earlier, his father, Herod the Great, had built a temple dedicated to Augustus. In this remote Gentile region Peter declared Jesus to be the Messiah (Mk 8:29).

[10]He styled himself *Theos Epiphanēs,* "God manifest," as if he were the incarnation of Zeus, the supreme god of Olympus. He was also called Antiochus *Epimanēs,* "madman," by some of his people.

[11]The Peace of Apamaea, 188 B.C.

[12]Fifteen thousand talents, repayable over twelve years.

[13]This was an institution of the Greek city-states of the classical period, which required men aged eighteen to twenty to be enrolled for military training. During the Hellenistic era, the gymnasium provided a broad-based academic education for the wealthy elite.

[14]Greek *akmē tis hellēnismou,* "a climax of Hellenism."

[15]At the time the Maccabean revolt began in 167 B.C., reference is made in 1 Maccabees 2:42 to the "assembly of the pious" *(synagōgē asidaiōn).*

[16]Hengel, *Judaism,* 1:181, 189.

[17]The name *Hasidaean* derives from the Aramaic *hase,* equivalent to the Hebrew *hasid,* "pious." The plural *hasen* in Greek is *Essēnoi* and may indicate that the Essenes referred to by Josephus and Philo and a group many associate with the Qumran community, originated from the Hasidaeans of the second century B.C.

[18]According to 2 Maccabees 14:6, Judas was leader of the Hasidaeans. But this may refer to the Hasidaeans who were prepared to fight in the period before the present crisis was averted rather than to those stricter Hasidaeans who accepted death rather than fight on the sabbath.

[19]Simon is called the *kananaios* (Aramaic, rendered in Greek) in Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:18 and the *zēlōtēs* (Greek = "zealot") in Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13.

[20]See M. Smith, "Zealots and Sicarii, Their Origins and Relation," *HTR* 64 (1971): 1-19.

[21]See later, §7.4.

[22]See earlier, §3.5.
[23]Josephus *Ant.* 18.20; so, too, Philo *Every Good Man Is Free* 75.
[24]Josephus *J.W.* 2.124.
[25]Philo *Apology for the Jews* 11.1.
[26]Bargil Pixner, "Jerusalem's Essene Gateway," *BARev* 23 (1997): 23ff.
[27]Josephus *J.W.* 5.145.
[28]Brian Capper, "The Palestinian Cultural Context of Earliest Christian Community of Goods," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, 4. *Palestinian Setting*. ed. R. Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 4:341-350.
[29]According to Josephus, "They hold their possessions in common. . . . [T]hey live by themselves and perform menial tasks for one another. They elect by show of hands good men to receive their revenues and the produce of the earth and priests to prepare bread and other food" (*Ant.* 18.20, 22). Philo notes that "no one among them ventures to acquire any property . . . but they bring them into the middle as a common stock. . . . Each of these men . . . when they have received their wages give them up to one person who is appointed as the universal steward and general manager. [They] live together and eat at the same table" (*Apology for the Jews* 11.4, 10, 12).
[30]There is voluminous literature on the scrolls and Qumran. See, e.g., Neil S. Fujita, *A Crack in the Jar* (New York: Paulist, 1986); Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. xxxii-lvii.
[31]Josephus gives an extensive account of the Essenes in *J.W.* 2.119-163; cf. *Ant.* 18.18-22.
[32]The Essenes generally were celibate. They maintained their community by adopting the boys of others (*J.W.* 2.120). However, one branch of the Essenes engaged in marriage to propagate the race (*J.W.* 2.160-61).
[33]Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 5.17.4.
[34]These are conveniently listed cave by cave, classified as biblical or nonbiblical manuscripts, in Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 466-519.
[35]Josephus *J.W.* 2.136.
[36]Josephus *J.W.* 2.124.
[37]For discussion, see Fujita, *Crack in the Jar*, pp. 112-17.
[38]Notwithstanding these differences, John's proposal that forgiveness of sins might occur other than by the temple sacrifices would have been a point of agreement with the Qumran theology.
[39]B.E. Thiering, *Jesus the Man* (Sydney: Doubleday, 1992), p. 125.
[40]Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. xlviiii.
[41]See J. J. Rousseau and R. Arav, *Jesus and His World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 82-84.
[42]Josephus *J.W.* 2.140.
[43]1QS *Rule of the Community* 1.9
[44]See, e.g., *CD* 10.
[45]CD 15.
[46]Josephus *J.W.* 5.42, 69.
[47]*Psalm of Solomon* 17:21-27; see Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations*. 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), 1:111.
[48]*Psalm of Solomon* 17:32.

4

Herod, Idumaean, King of the Jews

4.1. An intruding dynasty

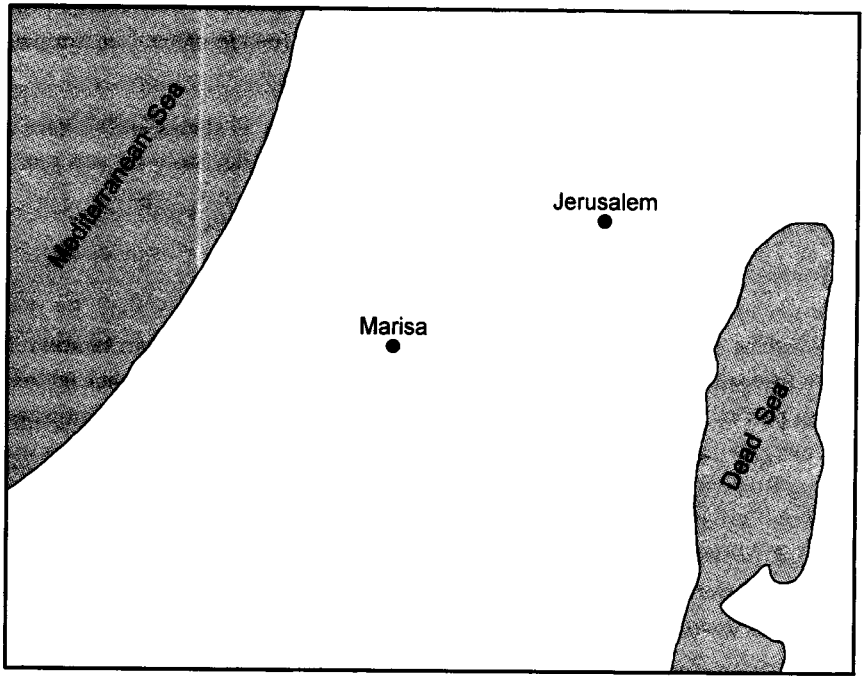
4.1.1. The Idumaeans. The Idumaeans were descendants of the Edomites,[1] a desert people occupying the region between the Gulf of Aqaba and the Dead Sea. In the time of the exodus they had blocked the route of the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land (see Num 20:14-21). By the latter part of the Hellenistic era, they had migrated from south of the Dead Sea to occupy a tract of land east to west between the Dead Sea and the coastal plain and north to south between Bethlehem almost to Beersheba.

Apart from the arid land adjoining the Dead Sea, much of the new Idumaea was quite productive. Small areas were devoted to grain, as well as to olives and fruit; goats, sheep and camels grazed throughout the region. The Idumaeans became major suppliers of olive oil to Egypt. The manufacture of glass and pottery developed in the area at this time. The two great roads—the coastal Via Maris and its desert parallel through Petra—passed sufficiently close to Idumaea to provide her major source of prosperity, trading with the considerable volume of travelers on these roads.

The major city of Idumaea was Marisa,[2] an ancient settlement that flourished in the Hellenistic era, becoming a settlement of about ten thousand. Marisa was destroyed by the Parthians in 40 B.C. during the war between the Hasmonaean protagonists, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus.

During the rule of the Hasmonaean John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.), the Jews conquered the Idumaeans.[3] This was to have remarkable consequences in the coming years as the Idumaeans accepted the Jewish religion. Previously they had been deeply influenced by Greek deities. But now, whether by force or by more

gradual means, the people of Idumaea adopted Judaism, though with varying degrees of understanding.[4]



Map 3. Marisa, capital of Idumaea

4.1.2. Antipas, Antipater and Herod. Herod's grandfather Antipas and his father, Antipater, became wealthy and powerful, borne up by Idumaea's rising prosperity. It is likely that this powerful Idumaean family was domiciled at Marisa. Herod himself was very wealthy, apart from riches accrued later as king of the Jews. Although Antipas and Antipater, like Herod, had adopted Judaism to some degree, each displayed a considerable interest in the wider world of Hellenism. (Hellenism had probably more heavily influenced Idumaea than it had Judea, where the Pharisees and Essenes staunchly opposed it.) Even the leaders' names—Antipas, Antipater and Herod—were Greek.

Both Antipater and Herod in turn proved themselves to be ambitious for power within the wider Jewish community to which Idumaea had been annexed. Both were shrewd and ruthless politicians exploiting the power vacuum at the end of the Hasmonaean era. In this regard both men demonstrated canny opportunism as each courted successive Roman generals whose campaigns brought them to the eastern Mediterranean.

Initially Antipater became governor of Idumaea. From that base he involved

himself in Jewish matters, taking sides in the struggle for power in Israel between Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, the sons of Alexandra. Hyrcanus found himself allied with Antipater, who won the support of the Roman general Pompey against Aristobulus. Pompey had recently invaded nearby Syria (64 B.C.). Through Pompey's intervention, Hyrcanus became the ruler of the Jews in name, but Antipater was the real power in the land. Josephus knew of this.

> [Hyrcanus] seems to have been mild and moderate in all things and to have ruled by leaving most things to his administrators to do, since he was not interested in general affairs nor clever enough to govern a kingdom. That Antipater and Herod advanced so far was due to his mildness.[5]

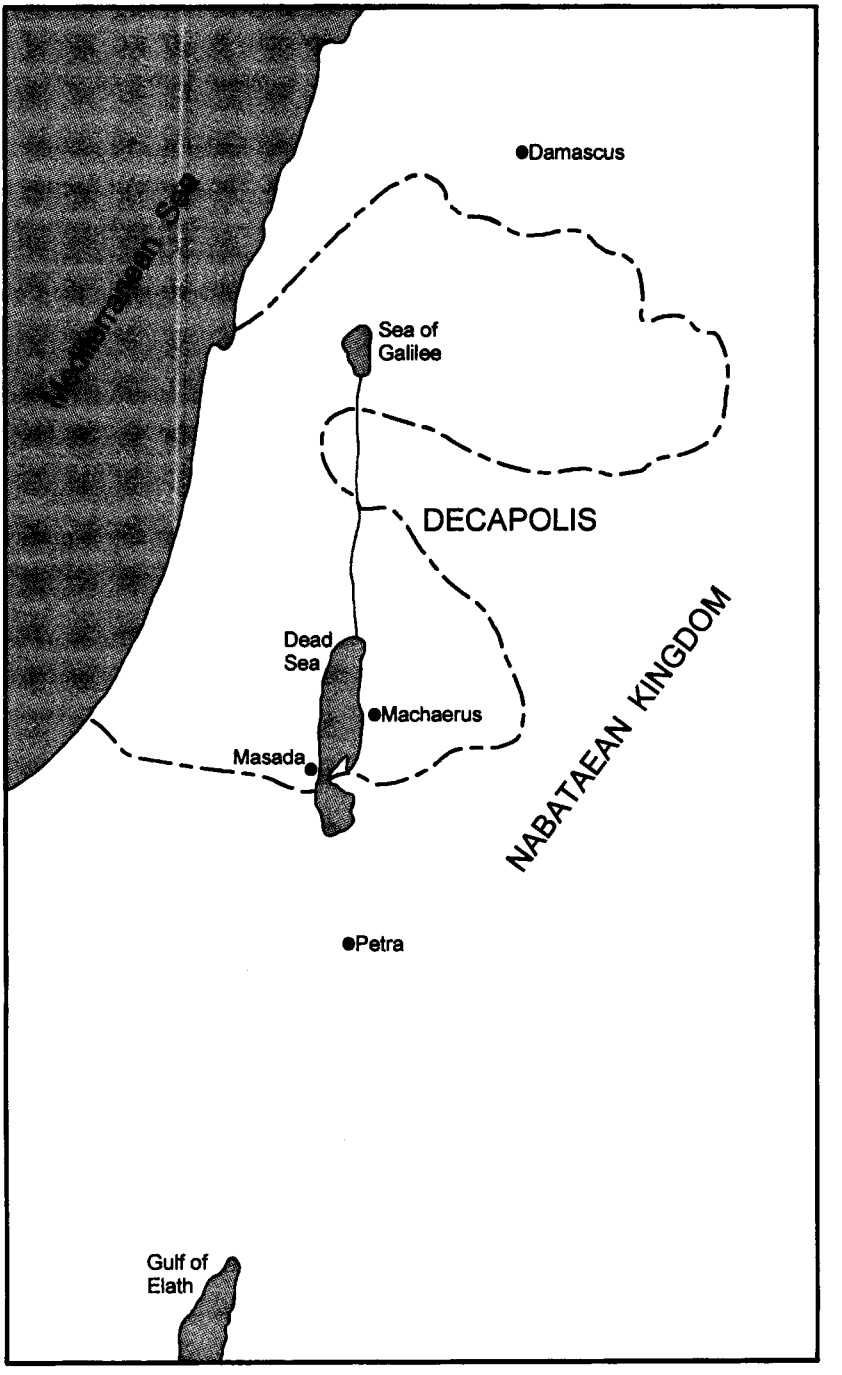
For the next twenty-five years Antipater adroitly wooed other great Roman military leaders who came to the east: Julius Caesar, Cassius and Mark Antony. By these relationships Antipater acquired Roman citizenship and immunity from taxation. In effect, Antipater became a client of these notable Romans, looking out for their interests in that part of the east and enjoying the benefits of patronage in return. Antipater's effective grip on Jewish power and his strongly established network of friendships with leading Romans and with powerful leaders in adjoining countries laid the foundation for Herod's ultimate emergence as "king of the Jews."

4.1.3. Idumaeans and Nabataeans. Another tribal group that became prosperous during the same general period, and with whom the Idumaeans had close family and financial connections, were the Nabataeans, their eastern neighbors, whose capital was Petra. The Nabataeans obtained their wealth exploiting the trade routes that passed by Petra.

The Idumaean Antipater was married to Cypros, from an aristocratic Nabataean family in Petra. Herod, then, was part Idumaean, part Nabataean. There would be ongoing relationships between the Herods and the Nabataeans. Herod's sister Salome sought marriage to Syllaeus, a Nabataean. Herod declined the request because Syllaeus was uncircumcised. Herod's son, Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee-Peraea (4 B.C.-A.D. 37), was initially married to the daughter of Aretas IV, the greatest king of the Nabataeans. Aretas invaded Antipas's territories in the late thirties because Antipas had rejected his daughter and married Herodias. The invasion hastened the tetrarch's ultimate downfall.

4.2 Herod "the Great" (37-4 B.C.)

4.2.1. Herod, king of the Jews. Herod was as clever in securing the confidence of the leading Roman generals as his father, Antipater, had been.[6] First he won the patronage of Mark Antony, but subsequently he gave homage to Octavian (who later became known by his title, *Augustus,* "Revered One"). Herod was appointed king of the Jews in Rome by the Senate in 40 B.C. following the special advocacy of Mark Antony. For the next three years he waged a military campaign in Judea



Map 4. The Nabataean kingdom

for Mark Antony against the Parthians of Mesopotamia who had forged an alliance with the Hasmonaean Antigonus, son of Aristobulus. By 37 B.C. Herod had defeated his enemies and effectively assumed the kingship bestowed on him in Rome three years earlier.

For the next seven years Herod ruled his kingdom under the hegemony and patronage of Mark Antony and his consort Cleopatra. The defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 B.C. at the battle of Actium, however, left Herod quite vulnerable. At great risk he journeyed to Rhodes to meet the new master of the now undivided Roman world, Augustus. Remarkably, Herod left Rhodes stronger than ever; Augustus and Herod became firm allies.

Thus the Jews were destined to have not a righteous king of the line of David, as hoped for in the *Psalms of Solomon,*[7] but an Idumaean, a descendant of Israel's hated enemy, the Edomites, a people descended from Esau, the apostate brother of Jacob.[8] The Jews were to suffer grievous oppression under Herod's rule for almost four decades.

Himself a child of Hellenism (his name means "hero"—as of Greek gods and heroes),[9] Herod was to be a father of Hellenism among his people. Moreover, Herod's sons, his grandson and his great grandson were to rule sections of Israel for a century after his death. The fortunes of the Jewish people in Palestine were inextricably linked to the Herodian dynasty for approximately one and a half centuries, that is, from the arrival of Pompey in Jerusalem in 63 B.C. (see table 4).

65	Era of the influence of Antipater
63	Pompey's capture of Jerusalem
40	In Rome: Herod appointed "king" by the Roman Senate
40-37	War in Israel: Herod + Romans vs. Antigonus + Parthians (Herod "client" of Mark Antony)
37	Herod undisputed ruler of Israel
31	Battle of Actium: Augustus sole Roman leader
	Herod's removal of Hyrcanus
	In Rhodes: Herod embraced as "client" by Augustus
29	Murder of Herod's wife Mariamne
20	Oath of loyalty by the nation to Herod
12	Herod's border disputes with Nabataeans; Herod's loss of Augustus's confidence
7	Oath of loyalty by the Jewish nation to Augustus and Herod
	Herod's execution of his sons Alexander and Aristobulus
5?	*Birth of Jesus of Nazareth*
4	Golden-eagle incident at the temple in Jerusalem; martyrdom of Pharisees
	Herod's execution of his son Antipater
	Death of Herod

Table 4. Roman rule by Herod, king of the Jews[10]

4.2.2. Herod's rivals removed. Herod's doorway to power was his father Anti-

pater. Like his father, Herod flattered those above him while crushing the opposition beneath him. Further, Herod was a prodigious warrior and hunter, as well as a resourceful and determined military leader. He seized decisively the opportunity provided him through his father's position.

Once in power the removal of dynastic rivals by the new king was customary. Nonetheless, the ruthlessness and thoroughness of Herod's purges attract notice in the historical sources. Surviving members of the ousted Hasmonaean dynasty were his particular targets. First Herod defeated and then executed his military foe Antigonus in 37 B.C., and killed Antigonus's son, the high priest Aristobulus, in 36 B.C. Hyrcanus II, a former high priest, suffered the same fate in 30 B.C. despite his alliance with Herod's father. Mariamne, Herod's wife and Hyrcanus's granddaughter, was murdered in 29 B.C. Her mother, Alexandra, fell before Herod in 28 B.C. Although Herod particularly punished the Hasmonaeans, the king's jealousy extended beyond them. In 27 B.C. he removed Costobar, governor of Idumaea, who was married to Herod's sister, Salome.

Herod's latter years saw fierce competition for the succession between the sons of various of his nine wives.[11] Among these were Mariamne's sons Alexander and Aristobulus, whose popularity he measured against his own unpopularity and whose possible vengeance for their mother's death he had reason to fear. Herod executed Alexander and Aristobulus in 7 B.C. Competing with them and also with the now aged king was Antipater, a son of his first wife, Doris. In 4 B.C., five days before he died, Herod executed Antipater. The chief survivors of these final bloody years, who themselves were also fierce rivals, were the sons of the Samaritan Malthace, Archelaus and Antipas. The immediate future was to lie with them, not with the descendants of the Hasmonaeans. However, Aristobulus's son, Agrippa I, was to become king of Trachonitis in 37, then of Galilee-Peraea in 39 and finally of a united Israel in 41.[12]

The Roman emperor, no stranger to interdynastic bloodletting, was struck by Herod's ferocity toward his own sons: "When [Augustus] heard that Herod king of the Jews had . . . put to death . . . the king's son . . . , he said, 'I'd rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son.' "[13]

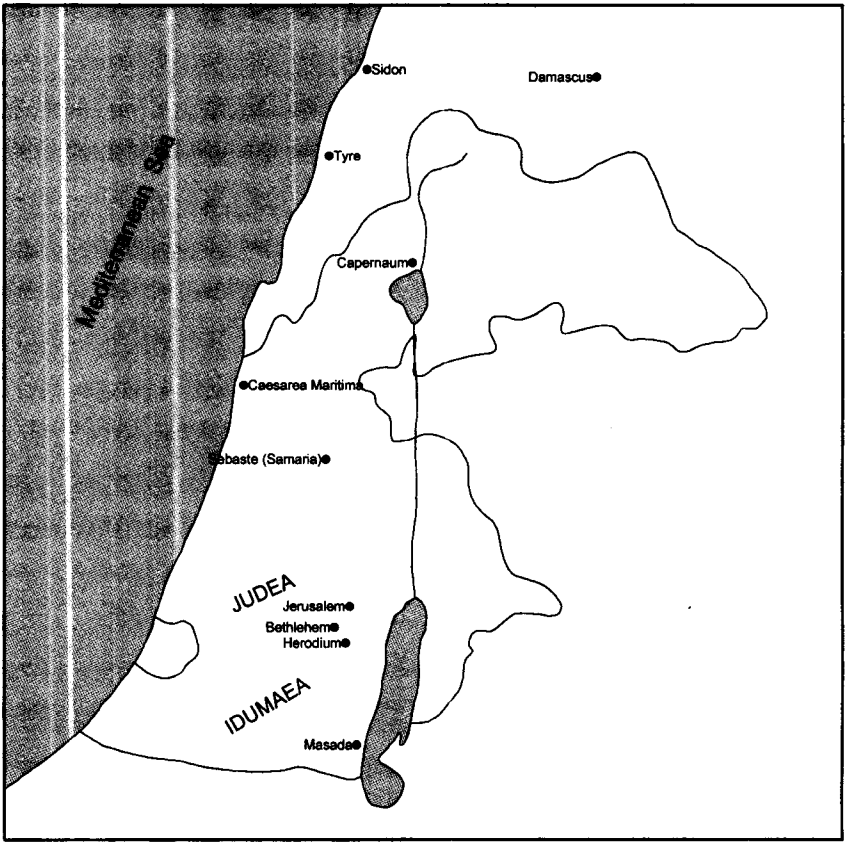
Josephus, too, is critical of Herod's behavior toward potential rivals, including those from within his own family.

> [Herod] died on the fifth day after having his son Antipater killed. He had reigned for thirty-four years from the time when he had put Antigonus to death, and for thirty-seven years from the time when he had been appointed king by the Romans. He was a man who was cruel to all alike and one who easily gave in to anger and was contemptuous of justice.
>
> As for the affairs of his household and his relation with his sons, he had in his own opinion at least, enjoyed very good fortune since he had not failed to get

the better of those whom he had considered his enemies, but in my opinion he was very unfortunate indeed.[14]

4.3. Herod, "friend and ally of the Romans"

The Roman policy was to install a "client" king over a conquered people as a first step toward more direct rule in a Roman province under the administration of a Roman governor. This policy made good sense. The Romans shrewdly recognized that an indigenous appointee was more likely to be able to control his people than the Romans themselves could, provided, of course, that this local ruler was absolutely loyal to his Roman masters. Herod was the first such client king to rule the Jews for the Romans.



Map 5. The territory of Herod the King

Initially the Roman potentate Herod served, from 40 B.C., was Mark Antony, who was based in Alexandria with the Greco-Egyptian princess, Cleopatra, his coregent.

It was customary for a client ruler to name important buildings after the one he served. Herod named his new fortress in Jerusalem after Antony, as Josephus notes: "The fortress he restored at a lavish cost in a style no way inferior to that of a palace, and called it Antonia in honour of Antony."[15]

According to Josephus "the fortress . . . called Antonia" was used as a garrison for Roman soldiers who supervised the temple area.[16] The vast gatherings of Jews at the great feasts always presented the possibility of serious disturbances. Jesus may have been taken for trial by the governor, Pontius Pilate, to the Antonia, though it is more likely that this took place in the precincts of Herod's former palace some distance away in the upper city. No such doubt surrounds the arrest of the apostle Paul. At his final visit to Jerusalem c. 58 he was rescued from an angry mob in the temple precincts by a cohort of Roman soldiers posted in the Antonia fortress (Acts 21:31).[17]

In 31 B.C., however, Antony and Cleopatra's control of the eastern Mediterranean region was brought to an end. Their forces were defeated by Augustus at the sea battle of Actium off the western coast of Greece. Augustus now ruled the entire empire—east and west—unopposed. Herod promptly redirected his loyalty to a new master, Augustus, who actually extended Herod's position and prestige beyond that enjoyed under Antony.[18] Augustus bestowed on Herod the title "friend and ally of the Romans."[19]

The Romans had clear expectations of such a "friend and ally," including the provision of auxilary troops to support the legions if need arose. Above all he was to secure his borders against invasion from the east. Egypt, a prime source of grain supplies for Rome, was vulnerable to invasion from Parthia.

There were also limitations. A client king could not enter alliances with other kings. Moreover, client monarchies were not hereditary; the Roman emperor must agree to the succession. However, beyond those expectations and limitations Herod seems to have enjoyed a free hand within his kingdom and beyond. Nor does he appear to have had to pay tribute to the Romans, allowing him to amass even greater wealth during his lifetime.[20]

Herod formed a close attachment to Caesar (Augustus) and also to Augustus's son-in-law, Agrippa, who was the second most powerful Roman. These too were to have significant buildings named after them as Josephus, a Jerusalemite, knew well.

> But what Herod valued more than all these privileges was that in Caesar's affection he stood next after Agrippa, and in Agrippa's next after Caesar. His own palace, which he erected in the upper city, comprised two most spacious and beautiful buildings, with which the Temple itself bore no comparison; these

he named after his friends, the one Caesareum, the other Agrippeum.[21]

Thus Herod's reign falls into two broad but unequal subdivisions. In the first, 40-31 B.C., Herod struggled to secure his place under the hegemony of Antony and Cleopatra. During these years—more or less—Herod set about eliminating rivals and opponents from the Hasmonaean dynasty, which he and his father before him had overturned. In the second broad era, 30-4 B.C., Herod was subject to the new master of the world, Augustus, whose greater confidence he came to enjoy. Herod was now secure both externally and internally. Consistent with the Romans' expectations of a client king over a volatile people whose frontiers were exposed, Herod extended his boundaries, built up his military strength, established a ring of defensive buffer colonies, created defensive fortresses in Jerusalem and throughout his realm and established an extensive network of spies. It was during this latter period that Herod applied himself to his remarkable building program, both inside and outside Israel.

4.4. Herod, a Hellenistic monarch

The process of the Hellenization of Palestine began in the aftermath of Alexander's conquests of the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria. Despite their initial "zeal" for Yahweh and his covenant, the Hasmonaeans succumbed, as we have seen, to the enticements of Hellenism.[22] Hellenization continued and indeed was accelerated through Israel's most powerful king since Solomon, Herod the Great.

Whereas under the Hasmonaeans this Hellenization was unexpected and surprising, in Herod's case it was intentional. The expectation of Herod's Roman masters was that their "friend and ally" would promote Greco-Roman culture to prepare a subject people for their ultimate assimilation as a province under direct Roman rule.[23] There is every reason to believe that Herod pursued this program freely and with enthusiasm.[24]

He carefully modeled the upper echelons—his court, bureaucracy and army—along the lines of the kingdoms of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. Effectively all positions of authority within these structures were occupied by Greeks or Hellenized Jews. Attending Herod were a cluster of men with Greek names—Nicolaus the historian, Ptolemy the administrator of finance, Andromachus and Gemellus the advisors and Irenaeus the rhetorician.[25] These offices were typical of a Hellenistic monarchy.[26] Greek was the language of Herod's court and of his inscriptions and coins; Hasmonaean coins, by contrast, were mostly in Hebrew.

Thus the foci of power, to which ambitious people gravitated upward, was not Jewish but generally Greek. Herod's conciliar advice came not from the Sanhedrin of the Jews, of which we hear little during the years of his reign, but from his own "gentlemen" or courtiers. (Herod killed most of the existing members of the Sanhedrin when he came to power.)[27] The ever-suspicious Herod surrounded

himself with military units that were drawn not from Jewish but from non-Jewish sources—Germany, Thracia and Gaul.[28] Early in his reign he appointed Boethus, an Alexandrian, as high priest in order to gain permission to marry Boethus's beautiful daughter Mariamne,[29] thus also gaining control of the office of high priest. Herod's policies made statements about foreigners and foreigners' values that were plain for all to see and that in time brought to bear their own influence among the people.

This was quite evident also in cultural matters. Soon after he came under Augustus's patronage (that is, after 30 B.C.) Herod built a theater, an amphitheater and a hippodrome in Jerusalem. Here he attempted to introduce Hellenistic athletic and music contests four times per year, as well as Roman-style chariot and horse races and fights between gladiators.[30] Of greatest offense to his people, however, were the iconic trophies for the victors that Herod displayed in Jerusalem. Such was the protest about these images that Herod was forced to remove them. Nonetheless, the games and spectacles continued and contributed to the weakening of inherited values among the covenant people of Yahweh. The corrupting influences of Antiochus IV were being revisited upon the Jews by their own king.[31] Josephus knew this well.

> Herod . . . gradually corrupted the ancient way of life, which had hitherto been inviolable. As a result we suffered considerable harm at a later time as well, because those things were neglected which had formerly induced piety in the masses.[32]

Building and town planning played their part in changing cultural values. The architectural styles Herod employed in his imposing structures in Jerusalem and Caesarea, but also in Jericho and Samaria, were not indigenous but foreign, whether Greek or Roman. These edifices, though mute, were eloquent; the future lay not with Israel's covenantal past but with the Gentiles, their buildings, technology, values and practices.

In all of this Herod saw himself as "benefactor" in the style of a Hellenistic monarch. In regard to such kings Luke commented, "those in authority over them are called benefactors" (Lk 22:25).[33] Herod expressed his "benefactions" in his construction of monumental buildings inside and outside Israel and his provision of famine relief, again, both inside and outside his kingdom.[34] Although Herod's generosity beyond Israel was chiefly directed toward the Gentiles, he did manage to protect Jews of the Diaspora from local oppression.[35]

Nonetheless, Herod was far from unfettered in his programs and policies. Conservative values were powerfully upheld by the Pharisees as the moral and theological watchdogs of the general population. These could find sharp expression in acts of "zeal," as in the violent opposition to the introduction of images at the athletic games noted above, in their opposition to the loyalty oath to Augustus

and Herod[36] and in the golden-eagle incident described in section 4.9.[37]

This innate stubborn resistance against Hellenism may explain Herod's caution in a number of areas. He avoided portraiture in his coins and human and animal representations in decorations in his palaces. He refused permission for his sister to marry Syllaeus unless the Nabataean was circumcised. He is believed to have abstained from eating pork. In this author's view, however, these were token gestures designed to mollify his subjects.[38] Their broader backdrop was provided by his avoidance of any suggestion of a Hellenistic ruler-cult. Positively and of greatest significance, however, as we shall see, was his erection of the massive temple for Yahweh. To avoid offense Herod employed a thousand priests specially trained as masons and carpenters for work on the sacred precincts. But the architectural style of that great structure was Greco-Roman rather than Jewish.

Notwithstanding his concessions to traditional scruples at a number of points, the overall impact of his reign, doubtless intentional, was to move his people in the direction of Greco-Roman values and standards. Herod would have realized better than anyone that his success in this must accelerate the Romanization of his realm and its ultimate loss from his family to the Emperor's provincial prefects. Perhaps, though, he knew that his obstinate subjects would not be ready for such drastic change for many years and that his sons could look forward to inheriting his kingdom.

4.5. Herod, builder in Jerusalem

Herod was a prodigious builder in all of his kingdom, including in Jerusalem.[39] His most famous structure, of course, was his great temple to Yahweh.[40] However, the temple itself was not large in comparison to the massive podium on which it stood. To provide a level base for the temple in the steep ravines of Jerusalem it was necessary for Herod's engineers to erect a marble platform 912 feet (south) by 1,536 (east) by 1,035 (north) by 1,590 (west), an area approximating fifteen football fields. The platform was supported by massive walls of carefully chiseled masonry, some stones being forty feet in length. This great marble podium was enclosed on all sides by roofed porticoes. Within this enclosed space and occupying less than one quarter of the whole was the temple itself.

The open space on the platform between the porticoes and the temple was called the Court of the Gentiles, where hundreds of thousands of pilgrims could assemble for the great feasts.[41] Many people remarked on its size and beauty. Josephus commented that "it was a structure more noteworthy than any under the sun."[42] The Babylonian Talmud exclaims, "He who has not seen Herod's temple has not seen beauty."[43] And Philo describes the buildings as "of most exceeding beauty and magnificence so as to be universal objects of admiration.[44]

Josephus was struck with wonder at the size of the complex and the speed of its erection before its official opening only one and a half years after work had

begun.[45] He gave credence to the popular belief that no rain fell by day during this initial construction period, a sign that it was "a manifestation of the power of God."[46] Jesus, however, prophesied the destruction of the temple following its desecration (Mk 13:1-2, 14). As an eyewitness Josephus graphically describes those terrible events in August-September 70.[47]

The walls supporting the vast platform on which the temple was built, as well as the platform itself, survived the ravages of the Roman assault in 70. The western wall, on which the temple platform rests, is today a famous shrine of Jewish prayer and piety.

Another great structure erected by Herod, as mentioned above, was "[his] own palace . . . in the upper city."[48] This comprised two buildings (named after his patrons Augustus and Agrippa) and was located south of the present Jaffa Gate of Jerusalem. These buildings were commandeered by the Romans after Judea was made a province in A.D. 6 as the military barracks and residence for the prefect on the occasions he visited Jerusalem.[49] This complex of structures is probably the "praetorium" mentioned in the Gospel of John (Jn 18:28, 33; 19:9) where the Roman trial of Jesus most likely occurred (Mk 15:1-5; Jn 18:28; cf. Josephus *J.W.* 2.301). Although Jesus was taken inside a barracks section for flogging (Mt 27:27-31; Mk 15:16-20), it is likely that the trial of Jesus took place in an open court between the two buildings, which formed one complex, rather than in a public area outside the complex. The Roman trial of Jesus may not have been quite as public as is usually assumed.

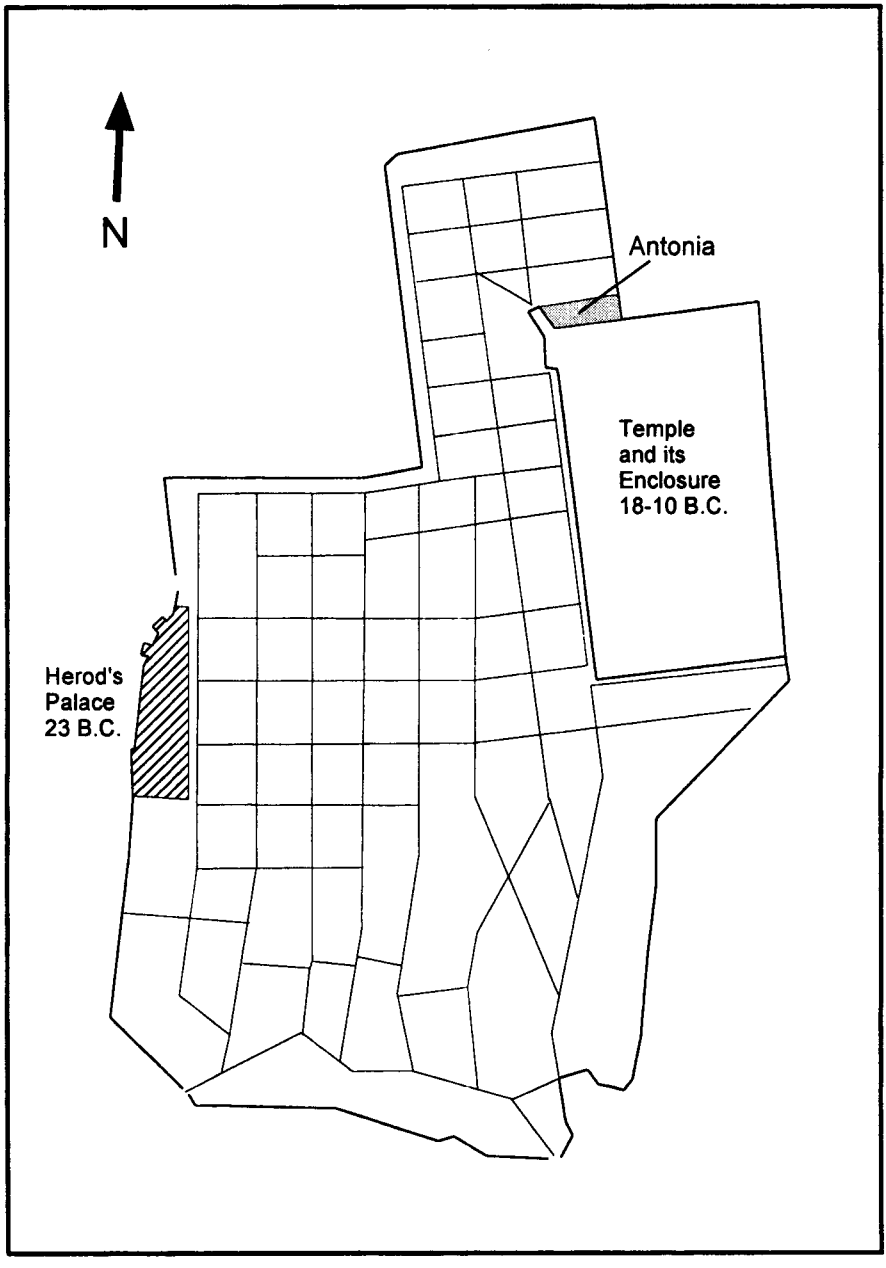
Josephus describes a trial scene thirty years later under Florus, the Roman procurator. The procurator was seeking to punish some malefactors involved in recent disturbances in Jerusalem. While the circumstances are different from those associated with Jesus, Josephus's account gives some idea of the details of Jesus' trial.

> Florus lodged at [Herod's] palace and on the following day had a tribunal placed in front of the building and took his seat. The chief priests, the nobles and the most eminent citizens then presented themselves before the tribunal.[50]

From this passage we note that (1) on arrival in Jerusalem from Caesarea the governor lodged at the former palace of Herod (as, doubtless, Pilate also did), (2) the judgment tribunal[51] was located in front of the building (as, probably, Pilate's bench also was), and (3) the leaders of the indigenous people were present to make the accusation, which in this case, however, they declined to do. Jesus' accusers were limited to the temple hierarchy; Josephus's account also includes "nobles" and "eminent citizens."

4.6. Herod, builder of a great seaport

Herod's vision extended far beyond the boundaries of his realm. A major problem



Map 6. Herod's Jerusalem

for Herod was the lack of any safe harbor on his coastland. Ships from Egypt or Syria were forced to anchor in the open sea, leaving them vulnerable to onshore winds. Many ships were dashed to pieces on an unhospitable shoreline.

Herod conceived the idea of an artificial harbor at an ancient though run-down settlement called Strato's Tower. This he renamed Caesarea after his patron Caesar Augustus.[52] It is referred to as Caesarea Maritima to distinguish it from other cities named after the emperor. In c. 23 B.C. Herod's builders began to rebuild the city with magnificent public buildings constructed of white marble. Water was brought for the large population of the new city by aqueducts, whose remains are still intact today. Most significant of all, however, was Herod's great harbor, which exceeded the Piraeus, the port of Athens.

Herod's motives in the building of Caesarea were twofold. A great port for his kingdom was fundamental to the expansion of trade into, as well as out of, Israel. But Caesarea was also Herod's bridge to the world's stage on which, it appears, he desired to be a significant player. Herod was no passive client king, content in the obscurity of remote Israel. Caesarea was Herod's statement to the world outside, perhaps his most important symbol. Caesarea provided a magnificent entry to his kingdom, as well as a majestic stepping stone to the western world. Again Josephus is our witness.

> Notwithstanding the totally recalcitrant nature of the site, [Herod] grappled with the difficulties so successfully, that the solidity of the masonry defied the sea, while its beauty was such as if no obstacle had existed. Having determined upon the comparative size of the harbour as we have stated, he had blocks of stone let down into twenty fathoms of water, most of them measuring fifty feet in length, some even larger. Upon the submarine foundation thus laid he constructed above the surface a mole two hundred feet broad; of which one hundred were built out to break the surge, whence this portion was called the breakwater, while the remainder supported a stone wall encircling the harbour. From this wall arose, at intervals, massive towers, the loftiest and most magnificent of which was called Drusion after the step-son of Caesar.
>
> Numerous inlets in the wall provided landing places for mariners putting in to harbour, while the whole circular terrace fronting these channels served as a broad promenade for disembarking passengers.[53]

In A.D. 6 Herod's patron Augustus took the momentous step of annexing Judea as a Roman province. Archelaus, Herod's son, had proved to be an inadequate ruler; disgruntled Jewish aristocrats who had eartlier lobbied for autonomy under the Romans were now successful in their requests.[54] Caesarea came into its own as the capital of the new province. Successive Roman prefects and procurators made their home in Herod's new city, from which they administered the province, making periodic visits to Jerusalem, the previous capital.

While there is no evidence that Jesus visited Caesarea, the great seaport was to become important in the history of early Chistianity. In c. 34 Caesarea became the home and center of operations of Philip "the evangelist" (Acts 8:40; 21:8). Soon afterward Peter was drawn to the city where he preached the gospel to those assembled in the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:23-48). It is probable that Christianity spread from Caesarea to the cities of Phoenicia—Tyre, Sidon and Ptolemais (Acts 21:3, 7; 27:3; cf. Acts 15:3)—through the ministry of Philip the evangelist.

In 41 Judea reverted back to its former status as a kingdom ruled by a Jewish king. Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod, upon his accession had attempted to destroy the leadership of the church in Jerusalem. Agrippa had James Zebedee killed and imprisoned Peter with the same intention (Acts 12:1-4). However, Peter escaped. After Agrippa took up residence in Caesarea he met his death following a ceremony in the amphitheater when the people venerated him as a "god" (Acts 12:19-23; Josephus *Ant.* 19.343-52).

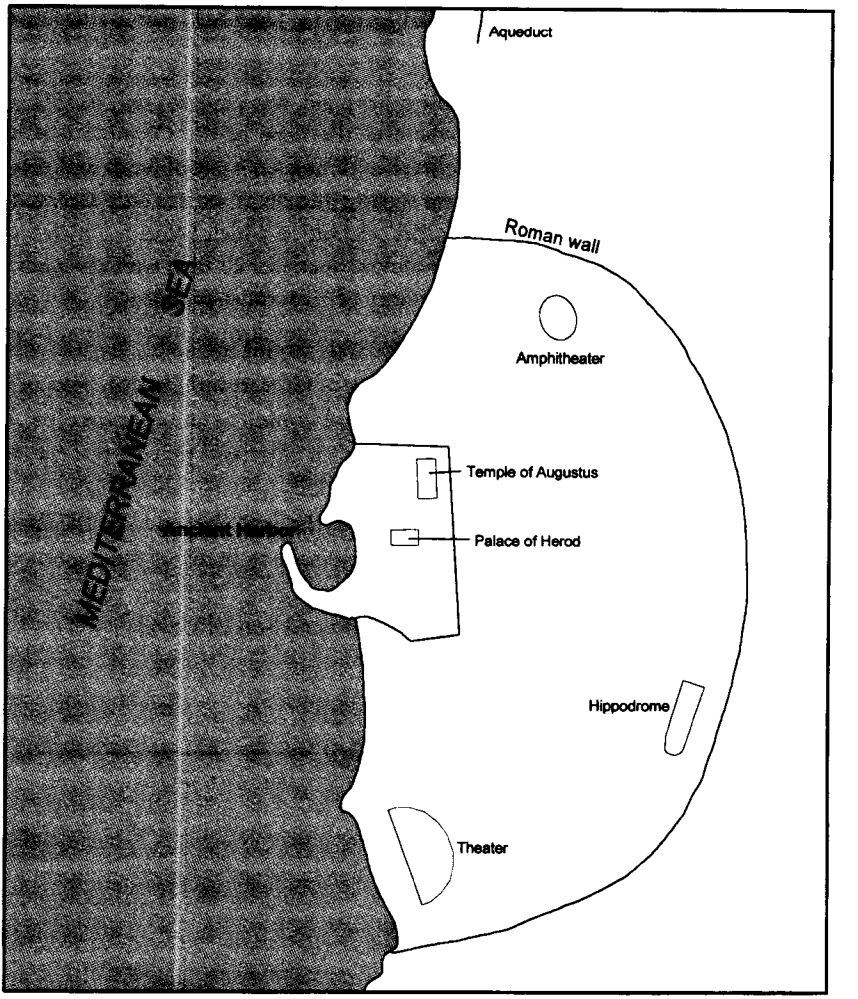
Caesarea was a city of mixed population. In all probability Gentiles predominated over Jews. Racial conflict between Jews and Gentiles in 66 was to be the spark that lit the great war between Jews and Romans that blazed from 66 to 74.

The apostle Paul was no stranger to Caesarea. A recent convert but now in danger in Judea, he embarked from Caesarea to Tarsus in c. A.D. 36 (Acts 9:30; cf. Gal 1:21). After his missionary tour through Greece A.D. 49-51, Paul disembarked in Caesarea for Jerusalem, re-embarking for his journey north to Antioch (Acts 18:22). In c. 56 Paul returned briefly to Caesarea as the house guest of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8). Some weeks later Paul was brought back under guard to the capital, where he remained the prisoner of successive procurators Felix and Festus for more than two years (Acts 24:27). Finally Paul sailed from Caesarea under escort for trial before the emperor in Rome (Acts 27:1-2). In the centuries to come Caesarea was to become a great world center of Christian scholarship, in particular through the work of Origen.

4.7. Herod, benefactor of foreign cities

Herod, king of the Jews, in addition to having a formidable program of building within Israel, was also a generous benefactor of Hellenistic cities and institutions.[55] By his patronage to the cities and states of the eastern Mediterranean, Herod brought himself and his kingdom into international prominence, but as a hellenophile, a lover of things Greek. No longer could Herod's nation be regarded as a narrow theocratic Jewish enclave.

Many cities benefited from the king's largesse, whether Ascalon in the south, Tripolis, Ptolemais, Berytus, Tyre, Sidon in Phoenicia, Laodicea and Antioch in Syria or the the inland cities of Panias or Damascus.[56] Here the king donated



Map 7. Caesarea Maritima

a colonnade, there a temple, here an aqueduct, there a gymnasium. During the thirties and forties these Hellenized cities were visited by Christian preachers, some known, like Philip the evangelist (Acts 8:4-40; 21:8), and others whose names have not survived (Acts 9:1-2, 10, 19; 11:19-20; 15:3; 21:3-4, 7; 27:3).

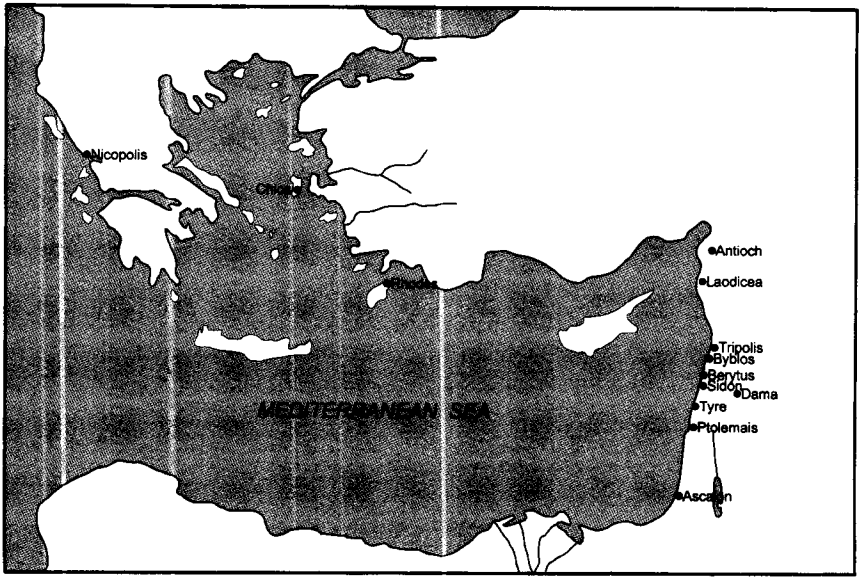
The benefactions of Herod, lover of things Greek, extended even to the Greek world proper, to cities of Achaea (Athens, Sparta, Elis), Epirus (Nicopolis), to the Greek islands of the Aegean (Cos, Rhodes, Samos), and to Lycia and Pergamum on the western coast of the Aegean. Herod's thorough love of Hellenism is seen in his endowment of the Olympic games, which he revived after years of neglect and over which he served as president *(agōnothetēs)*.

From Nicolaus of Antioch, Herod's court historian, Josephus, paints this impressive picture.

> His bounty to the people of Elis, on the other hand, was a gift not only to Hellas at large but to the whole world, wherever the fame of the Olympic games penetrates. For observing that these were declining for want of funds and that this solitary relic of ancient Greece was sinking into decay, he not only accepted the post of president for the quadrenniel celebration which coincided with his visit on his voyage to Rome, but he endowed them for all time with revenues, which should preserve an unfading memory of his term as president.[57]

Herod's gifts to Hellenistic cities and festivals would inevitably have involved him in the worship and sacrifices of the deities of Greece and possibly also of the mystery cults. Among the Jews, Herod presented himself as an observant Jew, but his real sympathies lay with the Gentiles. Josephus observed that Herod "was on more friendly terms with Greeks than with Jews."[58]

During the next century beyond Herod, Paul, the Jew, chosen to be the apostle to the Gentiles, was to bring a quite different message to many of the regions that benefited from the patronage of Herod, the benefactor. Paul was to proclaim a new world ruler, Jesus, the crucified and resurrected Son of David.



Map 8. Herod, benefactor of foreign cities

4.8. Herod's repressive regime

Herod financed his massive building program and the maintenance of an expensive court by repressive taxation of the people at large and more particularly by pillaging the property of the wealthy aristocrats who stood outside the circle of his supporters.[59] At his death there were public protests seeking a reduction in taxation.[60] A delegation of nobles went to Rome seeking local "autonomy" under direct Roman rule. Even that was preferable to further oppression from a son of Herod.[61] Nonetheless, it must be noted that those who complained loudest were the wealthy; the king had acted generously toward the poor in the famine of 25 B.C. and had relieved their taxes in the famines 20 B.C. (by a third) and 14 B.C. (by a quarter).[62]

Aware that he was hated by the Jews, Herod imported many foreign mercenaries to bolster local security. Having secured Jerusalem for himself by the construction of the Antonia and his own fortified palace, Herod then created a number of fortresses throughout his kingdom. The nine fortresses[63] that he established—among them Masada, Herodium and Machaerus, which were also royal palaces—served as a counterbalance against possible Jewish opposition and also provided dungeons for any who dared express a criticism that might be overheard by Herod's extensive network of spies. Knowing that the people feared he was seeking to dissolve their religion, the king forbade any public assembly or meeting.[64] He himself would mingle with the crowds in disguise to spy on the people.[65]

Some decades later an apocalyptist commented negatively about Herod.

> And an insolent king shall succeed [the Hasmonaeans], who shall not be of the race of the priests, a man bold and shameless, and he shall judge them as they shall deserve. And he shall cut off their chief men with the sword, and shall destroy them in secret places, so that no one may know where their bodies are. He shall slay the old and the young, and he shall not spare. Then the fear of him will be bitter unto them in their land. And he shall execute judgements on them as the Egyptians executed upon them, during thirty and four years, and he shall punish them.[66]

4.9. Herod and Augustus: The golden-eagle incident

The latter part of Herod's reign witnessed a souring of relationships between himself and his imperial patron. Herod's pursuit of military action in 12 B.C. against his eastern neighbors, the Nabataeans, is known to have displeased Augustus, who reduced Herod's status from "friend" to "subject."[67] In 7 B.C., in what appears to have been an attempt to shore up his position with Augustus, the king decreed that his subjects swear an oath of allegiance to himself and to the Roman Princeps.[68] In 20 B.C. Herod had secured an oath of loyalty from the people, but it was directed only to him.[69] The stringent terms of such oaths in other places are known through surviving records,[70] though no details of Herod's oath formula have come down to us.

The entire nation acceded to Herod's double-oath requirement in 7 B.C. The

Pharisees, however, refused to comply and were punished by a fine.[71] At the beginning of his reign Herod had enjoyed a measure of support from the leading Pharisees Samaias and Pollion.[72] From 7 B.C. until his death in 4 B.C., however, relations between the king and the Pharisees deteriorated significantly. Herod's pro-Greek, pro-Roman policies led to a conservative backlash.

In a rash, final attempt to regain the support and confidence of Augustus, the king, now seventy years old, had a large effigy of a gold-colored eagle attached to the exterior of the great door of the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem.[73] Most probably Herod was acknowledging the power of Rome by this action; the eagle, a symbol for Rome, sat atop Roman military standards. This was in contempt of the Law of God, which forbade the creation of any representation of any living creature. The two leading Pharisees, Judas and Matthias, inflamed their young disciples, who lowered themselves from ropes to hack down the golden eagle. The idolatrous symbol of Gentile power had no place on the temple of Yahweh!

> This it was which these doctors now exhorted their disciples to cut down, telling that, even if the action proved hazardous, it was a noble deed to die for the law of one's country; for the souls of those who came to an end attained immortality and an eternally abiding sense of felicity; it was only the ignoble, uninitiated in their philosophy, who clung in their ignorance to life and preferred death on a sick-bed to that of a hero.[74]

Though Josephus doesn't apply the specific vocabulary of *zeal* to these rabbis and their disciples, their life-or-death commitment to the laws of God closely resembles that of Mattathias and his sons at the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt a century and a half earlier.[75] For their part Judas and Matthias and their fellow martyrs anticipated by a decade the zealous rabbi Saddok, who joined Judas the Galilean in leading the uprising over the Roman census, which prepared the way for the imposition of the Roman direct tax on individuals in A.D. 6, 7.[76] Their battle cry was, "No master, except God." Only Yahweh was fit to number his people (Num 1:1-4). To allow the Gentile to do so was as much a sellout to Gentile power over Yahweh as the golden eagle on the temple had been. A rising tide of *zeal* for the honor of Yahweh, therefore, marks the latter days of Herod the king, during which Jesus of Nazareth was born.

4.10. A paranoid king

Near death, racked with disease and plagued with anxiety, Herod devised a scheme to ensure an appropriate level of grief at his passing, which he discerned was imminent.[77] Knowing of the universal hatred toward him, he ordered that respected citizens from every village should be rounded up and held in the hippodrome in Jerusalem. He commanded that at his death these eminent persons be executed. There would be mourning throughout the land, if not for him then for these men. They were duly arrested and imprisoned in the hippodrome. Herod's

death followed quickly, but his orders were overruled by his sister Salome. The notables were released.

> "I know that the Jews will celebrate my death by a festival; yet I can obtain a vicarious mourning and a magnificent funeral, if you consent to follow my instructions. You know these men here in custody; the moment I expire have them surrounded by the soldiers and massacred; so that all Judaea and every household weep for me, whether they will or no."[78]

The killing of the baby boys of Bethlehem at Herod's order as described in Matthew 2:16 is questioned by many scholars since it is uncorroborated by Josephus. However, such a massacre may have only involved a relatively small number of children in a village as small as Bethlehem. In any case it is consistent with the character of Herod as revealed in Josephus's description of his plan to kill the notables. Macrobius, a fourth-century author, refers to Herod's slaughter of all the boys under two years of age in Syria.[79] While there is no evidence of a Syria-wide assault on baby boys, Macrobius's words may echo an earlier, now lost, source corroborating Matthew's account of the king's evil designs on the boys from the village of Bethlehem.

4.11. Herod's reign and the birth of Jesus

In all probability Joseph and Mary were quite young when they were married, as was customary. At the time of the king's death in 4 B.C. Jesus was a child (Mt 3:15, 20). Thus we assume that Joseph and Mary were born in and lived through the latter half of Herod's reign, that is, during the era of Augustus's patronage, which began in 30 B.C.

Joseph was a descendant of the royal house of David, from whose line God's anointed king *(Messiah)* was expected (Mt 1:17-18; Lk 1:27-33; 3:23, 31; Jn 7:42; cf. 2 Sam 7:12; Ps 89:4; Is 11:1-10; Jer 23:5; 33:15-16; Mic 5:2; *Psalm of Solomon* 17:2). It has been suggested that Joseph's Davidic forebears had been exiled in Babylon but upon their return had settled in obscurity and relative poverty in Nazareth in Galilee.[80] Joseph may have been secure from the danger represented by Herod in the isolation of Nazareth.

Mary, too, was from Nazareth (Lk 1:26-27, 39-40; 2:39). She was related to Elizabeth, who with her husband Zechariah was of priestly descent and who lived in the hill country of Judea (Lk 1:5); Zechariah and Elizabeth were the parents of John the Baptist. It is not known whether Mary had been brought up in Judea, near Elizabeth, or in Nazareth.

The early chapters of the Gospel of Luke suggest that Joseph and Mary belonged to a devout but poor sector of Jewish society that was relatively untouched by the wealth and corruption of the cities that were centers of power in Herodian Israel. Each had lived through the middle and later years of Herod's reign but, whether

by choice or accident, had been isolated from it. Pious folk, these, whose life centered on the Torah in the home, the synagogue and the temple. While probably aware to some degree of spoken Greek, their native speech would have been the indigenous Aramaic. Jesus' parents belonged to a devout, conservative culture of the covenant of Yahweh in which the Pharisees, the men of zeal, and a prophet like John the Baptist found support. They were remote in every sense from the Hellenistic world of Herod, king of the Jews, in Jerusalem.

The reign of Herod was the immediate background to the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, descendant of David, Messiah of Israel.

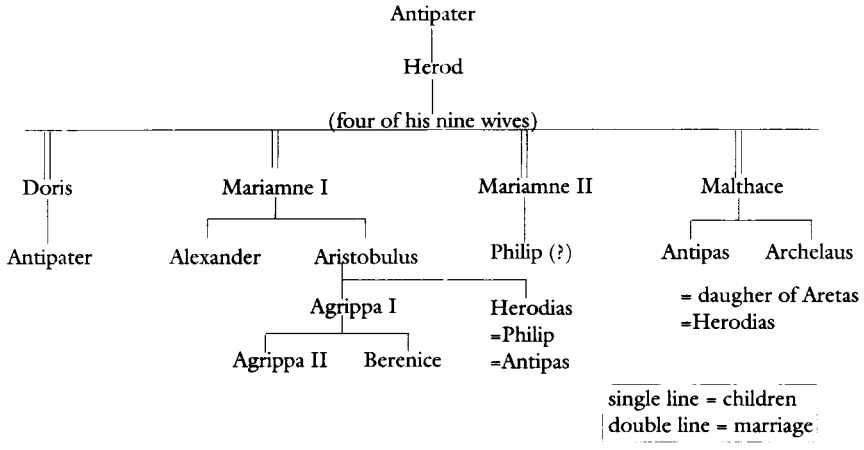


Table 5. An abbreviated Herodian genealogy

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Notes

[1]The names of the kings of Edom are given in Genesis 36:31-39; they are believed to have descended from Esau (Gen 36:40; cf. Gen 25:30).

[2]See A. Kloner, "Underground Metropolis: The Subterranean World of Maresha," *BARev* 23 (1997): 24ff.

[3]Josephus *Ant.* 13.257-58.

[4]Peter Richardson, *Herod King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1997), pp. 52-62, questions the usual view that the Idumaeans were forced to adopt Judaism.

[5]Josephus *Ant.* 15.182.

[6]Josephus calls Herod "the great" (*Ant.* 18.130) to differentiate him from others of that name. Although critical of the king at many points, Josephus describes Herod's achievements at length.

[7]See above, §3.9.

[8]See ibid.

[9]Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* rev. and ed. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973), 1:294, n. 20.

[10]For a detailed chronology of Herod, see Schürer, *History,* 1:287-94.

[11]Some scholars believe Herod had ten wives. Of only a few is anything known; most are names mentioned in passing in Josephus.

[12]See §12.5.3.

[13]The pig of the outwardly observant Jew was safe, but the son of a paranoid king was not. The full text from Macrobius is:

> When [Augustus] heard that Herod king of the Jews had ordered all the boys of Syria under the age of two years to be put to death and that the king's son was among those killed, he said, "I'd rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son."

This passage, though widely disputed by scholars, may corroborate Matthew's account of the slaughter of the innocents. The pagan author Macrobius, writing in the late fourth century, does not appear to be depending on either Matthew 2:16 or Josephus for this information. The references to Syria, the killing of a baby son of Herod and Augustus's grim jest are not derived from either Matthew or Josephus.

More probably Macrobius has quoted an independent tradition that is itself an erroneous conflation of two parallel traditions: one relating Herod's killing of boys under two in Syria (to which Judea belonged geographically and politically), the other relating to Herod's killing of his adult son (Antipater in 4 B.C.?), prompting Augustus's witticism. If this is correct, the tradition about the the killing of the boys embedded in Macrobius independently confirms Matthew 2:16.

Augustus's proverb is enhanced if originally spoken in Greek: "I'd rather be Herod's pig *(hus)* than Herod's son *(huios).*"

[14]Josephus *Ant.* 17.191.

[15]Josephus *J.W.* 5.224.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Although the Antonia is not mentioned, there can be no doubt that it was this fortress to which Paul was taken.

[18]Josephus *Ant.* 15.194-201.
[19]Ibid., 17.246.
[20]Schürer, *History,* 1:317.
[21]Josephus's adulation of Herod reflects the opinion of Nicolas of Damascus, Herod's court historian, whose fulsome rhetoric Josephus at some point merely repeats. Nicolas's original works are lost to us. In another place, however, Josephus writes scathingly of Herod having "an evil nature, relentless in punishment and unsparing in action against the objects of his hatred" (*Ant.* 19.328).
[22]See §3.7-9.
[23]E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), p. 82.
[24]Richardson, *Herod,* p. 186, takes a different view, that Herod was a supporter of Judaism among his people, a major evidence of which is his construction of the temple.
[25]See Josephus *J.W.* 2.21, where Nicholas and Irenaeus are mentioned and where Irenaeus is called *rhētōr,* "rhetorician." (Cf. *Ant.* 16.183, where Nicholas is called *historiographos,* "historian.")
[26]See generally Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), pp. 187-200.
[27]Josephus *Ant.* 14.174.
[28]Josephus *J.W.* 1.671.
[29]Josephus *Ant.* 15.319-22. This was a second wife named Mariamne.
[30]Ibid., 15.267-80.
[31]See §3.7-9.
[32]Josephus, *Ant.* 15.257.
[33]Lk 22:25; Greek *euergetēs.*
[34]For Herod's relief within Israel, see §4.8; cf. Richardson, *Herod,* pp. 222-24. Herod provided for relief in the famine in Tralles in 26 B.C.; see D. M. Jacobson, "Herod's 'Heroic' Public Image," *RB* 3 (1988): 390-91.
[35]Josephus *Ant.* 16.60. Nonetheless, there is no evidence of Herod building or endowing synagogues in the diaspora; see Richardson, *Herod,* p. 272.
[36]Josephus *Ant.* xvii.42.
[37]See Martin Hengel, *The Zealots* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), pp. 257-59.
[38]Contra Richardson, *Herod,* who argues throughout for a more pro-Jewish attitude by Herod.
[39]See the discussion and cataloging of his building programs in Richardson, *Herod,* pp. 174-202. There is also extensive treatment in John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1991), pp. 91-149.
[40]Josephus's reckoning of the fifteenth year of [Herod's] reign (cf. *Ant.* 15.380: the eighteenth year) for the commencement of the temple could be 25 or 23 B.C. depending on whether 40 B.C. or 37 B.C. is taken as the beginning of his reign. It is not easy to reconcile these options with the "forty-six year" construction period mentioned in John 2:20. Moreover, it is not clear whether this commencement refers to the temple proper or the platform on which it was erected.
[41]See K. Ritmeyer and L. Ritmeyer, "Reconstructing Herod's Temple Mount in Jerusalem," *BARev* 15 (1989): 23-42.
[42]Josephus *Ant.* 15.411.
[43]Babylonian Talmud *Baba Batra* 41.
[44]Philo *Special Laws* 1.73.
[45]In fact, the temple was still under construction in Jesus' day (John 2:20).
[46]Josephus *Ant.* 15.425.
[47]Josephus *J.W.* 6.250ff.
[48]Ibid., 1.400-402.
[49]Under Roman rule Caesarea Maritima was made the seat of the prefect's administration; he visited Jerusalem periodically, especially for the great Jewish feasts like the Passover. His residence in Caesarea was called "Herod's Praetorium," which evidently had also been Herod's palace in Caesarea. See Acts 23:35.

[50]Josephus *J.W.* 2.301.
[51]Greek *bema,* as in Matthew 27:19; John 19:13.
[52]"Each of the allied kings who enjoyed Augustus's friendship founded a city called 'Caesarea' in his own dominions" (Suetonius *Augustus* 60).
[53]Josephus *J.W.* 1.408-13.
[54]Ibid., 2.80; *Ant.* 17.342.
[55]Josephus *J.W.* 1.404, 422-27.
[56]Ibid., 1.422-27.
[57]Ibid., 1.427.
[58]Josephus *Ant.* 19.328.
[59]Ibid., 14.174; 15.5. Nonetheless, Herod was the owner of substantial estates and mines, with lucrative incomes. At his death his own fortune was immense, as witnessed by the generous provision in his will for his friend, Augustus. See Momigliano, *CAH,* 10:331.
[60]Josephus *J.W.* 2.4.
[61]Ibid., 2.80-90.
[62]Josephus *Ant.* 15.299-316, 365; 16.64.
[63]Cf. Ibid., 15.292, 323-25.
[64]Josephus *Ant.* 15.366.
[65]Ibid., 15.367.
[66]*Assumption of Moses* 6. This brief passage, written in apocalyptic style, surveys recent Jewish history beginning with the Hasmonaeans through the Herodian dynasty to the the coming of the Romans under Varus in 4 B.C. The Hasmonaeans—kings who call themselves priests—work iniquity in the temple. They are succeeded by an insolent king, Herod, who is not a priest. He imprisons and kills chief men in secret places (fortresses?) and spares neither old nor young (the "innocents"?). Bitter fear of him will be the mark of his thirty-four-year reign. His children who succeed him will rule for shorter periods. The Roman cohorts and powerful king (Varus?) will conquer and capture them, burn part of their temple and crucify some.

It is certain that this passage was written after the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. The style reflects a passive acceptance of these rulers as the just deserts of the people. It contrasts sharply with the zealot-mind that takes violent action against evil, as reflected in the rise of the "Fourth Philosophy."
[67]Josephus *Ant.* 16.286-93.
[68]Ibid., 17.42.
[69]Ibid., 15.369. Although Pollion and Samaias, the leading Pharisees, with their disciples did not take the oath, they were not punished, as were others who refused.
[70]Dittenberger, *OGIS,* 532; Naphtali Lewis and Meyer Reinhold, eds. *Roman Civilization* 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1966), 2:34-35.
[71]Josephus *Ant.* 17.42.
[72]Ibid., 14.172-76; 15.3.
[73]Josephus *J.W.* 1.648-50.
[74]Ibid., 1.650.
[75]See §3.5.
[76]See §7.3.2.
[77]Josephus *J.W.* 1.659-60.
[78]Ibid.
[79]Macrobius *Saturnalia* 2.4.11. See note 13.
[80]See Bargil Pixner, *With Jesus Through Galilee According to the Fifth Gospel* (Israel: Corazin, 1992), pp. 14-19. Pixner conjectures that Nazareth took its name from *netzer,* the Hebrew for "branch," thus alluding to Isaiah 11:1 ("from [Jesse's] roots a Branch [*netzer*] will bear fruit," NIV). Pixner cites other examples of resettled groups after the exile giving their tribal name to their adopted domicile. See later, §5.3.

5

Jesus' Birth & Boyhood

5.1. Joseph of Nazareth

Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, he was reared in Nazareth of Galilee (Lk 2:39-40). He is consistently associated with Nazareth, being described as "a Nazarene" or "the Nazarene"[1] or "*from*[2] Nazareth" (Mt 21:11; Acts 10:38). In one place Jesus is identified with his home and his father as "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (Jn 1:45; cf. Jn 6:42).

Nazareth may have been the home of Joseph and his forebears for some time. This village was also home to Jesus' extended family; his siblings and other relatives also lived here (Mk 6:3; cf. Lk 2:44). Moreover, Luke pointedly refers to Nazareth as Joseph and Mary's "own city." According to Luke they come from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and they return from Bethlehem to Nazareth (Lk 2:4, 39).

To be sure, Matthew leaves the reader with the impression that Joseph and Mary were from Bethlehem and that only after their return from Egypt did they settle in Nazareth. Matthew, however, is at pains to establish for Jewish readers that Jesus is descended from David, and for that reason he begins Jesus' story at Bethlehem, David's birthplace. Jesus' Davidic lineage fills Matthew's horizons. Luke, by contrast, is more interested in a complete historical picture than Matthew. We may take it that Joseph was from Nazareth. It was the ancestral home of Joseph and his kinship group.

Joseph was a *tektōn,* "carpenter," an artisan who worked in hard material, whether stone, timber, or metal.[3] We assume that he worked in and around Nazareth, building and repairing houses and furniture. It has been plausibly suggested that Joseph worked at Sepphoris, a mere hour's walk from Nazareth. Sepphoris had been destroyed in 4 B.C. by Judas, who led an uprising in the power vacuum following the death of Herod. On his appointment as tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea in 4 or 3 B.C., Herod Antipas set about rebuilding Sepphoris as his

capital, a task that would have required numerous skilled workers.

According to custom Jesus was initiated into his father's trade (Mk 6:3). Jesus' teaching that "all things have been delivered to me by my Father" (Mt 11:27), while referring to his heavenly father, may also describe Joseph, the craftsman father handing on the secrets of his trade to his apprentice son. Jesus' words, "the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing" (Jn 5:19-20), may be in the same vein. Jesus' favorable comments about a father giving good gifts to his son who asks him (Mt 7:9-11 = Lk 11:11-13) may reflect well on Joseph in his upbringing of Jesus.

By the time Jesus begins his Galilean ministry, however, Joseph is no longer mentioned. It is widely held that he was deceased by this time.

5.2. Joseph, son of David

The credo of the primitive church in Jerusalem held Jesus to be the Christ/Messiah, that is, a descendant from the royal line of David (Jn 7:42; Rom 1:3; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Tim 2:8). Paul, having "received" this "faith" (cf. Gal 1:12, 23) at his baptism proceeded to convey it to the churches of the Gentiles, the fruit of his preaching (1 Cor 15:3; Rom 1:1-7). Given the earliness of this creed, we must logically conclude that it originated with Jesus himself, who passed it on to the disciples. Paul must have received it sometime soon after the first Easter in terms formulated by the disciples. From whom, then, did Jesus learn of his Davidic descent, except from Joseph and Mary, his parents?

In their genealogies Matthew and Luke indicate that Joseph was descended from David. This is likely to be historically correct and not merely a theological gloss for two reasons. First, Matthew and Luke diverge so completely in their genealogies[4] in most other elements that their common assertion of Joseph as a Davidide is enhanced; collusion would have issued in detailed agreement, not detailed disagreement. In the genealogies of Matthew and Luke we have two discrete sources, not one derived from the other nor two dependent upon an earlier common source.

Second, there is evidence that Jude the brother of Jesus belonged to David's royal line.[5] The emperor Domitian (81-96) ordered the execution of all who were descended from David. His father, Vespasian, had also sought to eliminate surviving members of the house of David.[6] The Messiah of the Jews was seen as a political threat to the new Roman imperial house, the Flavians. The apostolic preaching of the Messiah and the rise of a messianic movement appears to have caused political alarm among the Romans whenever it came to their notice.[7] Upon local accusation—by heretics, according to Eusebius—the grandsons of Jude were brought (from Galilee?) to Rome to stand before Domitian. When the emperor saw the calluses on the hands of these peasants and learned of their meager land

holding, he sent them home; they were not potential messiahs posing a threat to his empire. The grandsons of Jude, the brother of Jesus, did not dispute their Davidic origin. Clearly their great-grandfather Joseph was a Davidide.

5.3. Nazareth

Nazareth finds no reference in the Old Testament, in the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus or in the Talmud. Mentioned only in the Gospels and the book of Acts, the genuine existence of Nazareth had been doubted by some. However, in 1962 the place name *Nazareth* was discovered on an inscription in a synagogue in Caesarea Maritima.[8] The priestly Elkalir family had migrated to this place after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 135. Nazareth's genuineness in New Testament times has been put beyond doubt.

Archaeological investigation of Nazareth suggests that it was uninhabited from the eighth to the second centuries B.C. since no ceramic remains have been found from the Assyrian, Persian and early Hellenistic periods.[9] This is consistent with two known events. One is the invasion by the Assyrian Tiglath-Pileser III in 733 B.C., when the people of Galilee were taken in captivity to Assyria (2 Kings 15:29). Galilee became a Gentile region. Isaiah the prophet refers to this crisis: "In the past [God] humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali." Yet, Isaiah promises, "[God] will honor Galilee of the Gentiles. . . . The people walking in darkness / have seen a great light" (Is 9:1-2 NIV).

Nazareth was resettled at the time of a second known event. During the rule of the Hasmonaean John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.), Galilee was reconquered by the Jews. In the years following, many Jews settled in Galilee, including, I suggest, the Davidic forebears of Joseph. We do not know where they lived before migrating to Nazareth. Perhaps they came from the Jewish dispersion in Mesopotamia, descendants of exiles from earlier deportations. Whatever the case, by Jesus' time the small village of Nazareth was to a significant degree composed of a Davidic clan. Jesus, along with most of the inhabitants of Nazareth, belonged to the same extended family, descended from David the king of Israel.

This may explain the much discussed statement of Matthew: "[Jesus] went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He shall be called a Nazarene *[Nazōraios]*' " (Mt 2:23). There is no such oracle to be found in the writings of the prophets. However, attention has been drawn to Isaiah 11:1 (NIV):

> A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse [the father of David],
> from his roots a Branch [Heb *netzer*] will bear fruit.

Is Matthew's appeal to "the prophets" a broad reference to the many Old Testament promises of a messiah descended from David, but with a particular play on the word *netzer*,[10] "branch," from Isaiah 11:1? Though the royal line was hacked

down to a stump, from that stump a shoot or branch would one day spring up. Matthew may be saying of Jesus, "He shall be called that 'branch' of David," that is, his long awaited son, the Messiah of Israel.

This understanding is entirely in line with Matthew's opening words, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David," and with the entire Davidic tenor of the genealogy (see Mt 1:5-6, 17). The genealogy is followed by the words of an angel addressed to "Joseph, son of David" (Mt 1:20). Matthew's account, which immediately moves to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, David's birthplace, could not be more pointed. In Matthew's mind Jesus was the royal son of David, born in Bethlehem, David's ancestral home.

The writer of the Apocalypse, too, is aware of Jesus as the "branch" of David in the words, "I am the root and the offspring of David" (Rev 22:16; cf. Rev 5:5). The believers in Jerusalem led by James, the brother of Jesus, were later derisively spoken of as "the sect of the Nazarenes *[Natzōraeans]*" (Acts 24:5). They took their name from Nazareth, the village so named as an enclave of Davidic descendants. James's people were followers of a *netzer,* a "branch" of David, that had its origin in Nazareth.

We may surmise that the long uninhabited village, which found no mention in the Old Testament, came to take its name from the Davidides who settled there during the Maccabean era. The similarity between *netzer* and *Nazareth* is apparent.[11] It was quite common for places to take their names from the tribe or clan who settled there, for example, Danites from Dan to the north of the Sea of Galilee. An association between Nazareth, the home of a *natzōraios,* a descendant of David, may be discerned in the words of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar from Jericho. When he heard that Jesus the *Natzōraios* was passing by, he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mk 10:47; Lk 18:37-38).

Notwithstanding its distant links with the royal line of David, Nazareth was at that time a tiny village, remote from Bethlehem, David's birthplace, and Jerusalem, David's city. Moreover, Joseph, followed by Jesus, were humble artisans; Jude's grandsons were peasants with rough hands and tiny rural holdings. The contrast between David and his descendants in this small unprepossessing village could not be more striking. Perhaps this explains the mocking proverb expressed by a man from Cana, a village nearby, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46). Nazareth may have taken its name from a prophesied "branch" of great king David, but its smallness and unremarkable inhabitants made for easy mockery of that name.

As noted above, the grandsons of Jude were brought before Domitian. According to Eusebius, who quotes Hegesippus, an earlier authority, these men affirmed Jesus as the Messiah/Christ (whose kingdom was heavenly not political). Since Nazareth was a Davidide village where Jesus' extended family lived, it is likely that Jude's grandsons came from that same place. The book of Acts speaks of the rise

of Christianity in Galilee (Acts 9:31). It is probable that the relatives of Jesus, though dismissive of his messianic claims during his ministry (Jn 7:5), became leaders in the nascent church of Galilee.

5.4. Mary

Little is known of the background of Mary/Miriam. None of the biblical sources supply the names of her parents or the name of the tribe to which she belonged.[12] Her kinswoman Elizabeth was descended from Aaron (Lk 1:5, 36). Was Mary also of priestly descent? This is unlikely since Jesus was not from the priestly tribe of Aaron but from the tribe of Judah (Heb 7:14). This may have been as true of Mary as it was of Joseph. Further, Mary may have been promised in marriage to Joseph because she belonged to the same tribe as he. Mary, like Joseph, lived in Nazareth in Galilee (Lk 1:26-27), which, as we have noted, was a Davidic settlement.[13]

According to custom Mary's father had betrothed her for marriage (Mt 1:18; Lk 1:27), which probably was to occur in her middle or late teens. The Gospels describe her as a young woman (*parthenos* [Mt 1:18; Lk 1:27]), which in that society meant a virgin (cf. Lk 1:34). The view that Mary was a virgin because she was an Essene ("marriage they disdain")[14] is conjectural.[15] On the contrary, Mary was pledged to marry a man, which, in Jewish society, meant she would bear children.

The few references to Mary during Jesus' public ministry suggest that she was a woman of some standing and prominence within her own small world. At the marriage at Cana, a neighboring village to the north of Nazareth, Mary "was there" whereas Jesus "also was invited." Mary took charge when the wine failed (Jn 2:1-3). Her day's journey from Nazareth to lakeside Capernaum to retrieve Jesus from the house of Peter when Jesus was said to be "beside himself" is further indication of her determination (Mk 3:21-31).

5.5. Born of a virgin

According to Matthew and Luke, Mary conceived her son Jesus independently of a man; Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus. This virginal conception is without precedent in the Old Testament and without real parallel in Greco-Roman literature.

To be sure, there are some parallels in, for example, the birth of Samson, but this occurred by natural procreative process (Judg 13:2-5; cf. Lk 1:5-13). In the Gentile world notable men like Plato, Pythagoras, Alexander the Great and the emperor Augustus were said to have been born of the union of their respective mothers and various gods. However, these stories are told in improbable ways. Snakes were involved in the impregnation of the mothers of Alexander and Augustus. It is doubtful that the writers intended their accounts to be taken literally; they were myths to convey the special qualities of the people in question.

A Gentile convert of the late first century like Ignatius, who would have been well versed in mythological writings, is in no doubt about the birth. Writing to the Christians in Smyrna early in the second century Ignatius observed "you are established in immoveable faith . . . being fully persuaded as touching our Lord that he is in truth of the family of David according to the flesh, God's son by the will and power of God, truly born of a virgin."[16]

The narratives of both Matthew and Luke, though told from quite different perspectives, make a point of establishing that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit independently of the biological procreative process (Mt 1:18; Lk 1:27, 34-35).[17] Each genealogy also establishes in its own way that Joseph is not the biological father. In Matthew's genealogy each man listed was the "father of x" who was to be the "father of y" and so on. But with Joseph the pattern is broken. Joseph is not the father of Jesus but rather, Matthew pointedly writes, Joseph is "the ***husband*** of Mary, of whom Jesus was born" (Mt 1:16; cf. Mk 6:4). In Luke's genealogy each man listed is the "son of a" who is the "son of b" and so on, in reverse order back to Adam. But in the case of Jesus, the first name listed, Luke writes, "Jesus . . . , being the son (as was ***supposed***) of Joseph" (Lk 3:23).

It is often observed that the rest of the New Testament is silent about the virgin conception. It is true that, with one exception, the Epistles do not mention the circumstances of Jesus' birth. But then they say little about his historical life or ministry. These letters make no mention of Mary or Joseph, nor for that matter do they speak of Jesus as a teacher or worker of miracles.

This should not surprise us, because the Epistles were not the initial communication to the churches, which was by word of mouth. The letters are written not for evangelistic but for pastoral purposes, for the benefit of those who had already become Christians. Those who first heard about Jesus would have wanted to know who he was and the circumstances of his birth and upbringing. In response, those who first brought the message would have told their hearers various biographical details about Jesus. It is difficult to believe that they would not have told the hearers about his parents, his early life and his ministry.

Such initial oral data was later supplemented by written sources recounting phases of Jesus' ministry and his teachings. These were committed early to written form and circulated to many of the churches (see Lk 1:1-2). It is entirely reasonable to suppose that accounts of Jesus' birth were among these and that Matthew's and Luke's versions grew out of such sources.[18]

The one exception noted above is found in Paul's letter to the Galatian churches:

> When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law. (Gal 4:4)

The solemn cadence of these words suggests that they were a creed or

confession, not merely written *de novo* by Paul nor heard for the first time by the Galatians. Indeed, they appear to summarize sections of Luke's narrative.

- Luke's words "God has visited and redeemed his people . . . as he spoke by the mouths of his holy prophets" (Lk 1:68-70) are summed up in Paul's declaration that "the time had fully come . . . to redeem."
- Luke's "He . . . will be called Son of the Most High" (Lk 1:32) is closely related to Paul's "God sent forth his Son."
- Luke's account of the angel's announcement to Mary of the supernatural conception of a son (Lk 1:26-38) and his comment in the genealogy ("Jesus . . . the son [as was supposed] of Joseph" [Lk 3:23]) are neatly captured by Paul's statement that Jesus was "born of a woman."
- Luke describes the parents' presentation of the child in the temple and of their annual visit to Jerusalem, where the youthful Jesus experienced his first Passover, as "according to the custom of the law" (Lk 2:27, 41-42). These accounts are encapsulated in Paul's observation that Jesus was "born under the law."

In the light of these striking similarities of concept, though not of exact wording, it seems likely that Paul knew of the underlying tradition about Jesus' birth, which would find completed form in the early chapters of the Gospel of Luke. Historically, Paul's brief summary in Galatians, written—in all probability—before 50, is an early witness to the circumstances of the birth of Jesus.

5.6. The virgin birth and Davidic descent

The genealogies of Matthew and Luke both establish Jesus' descent from David, through Joseph. But the virginal conception of the child through Mary indicates that Joseph was not the biological father. Does this break the physical connection between David and Jesus and call into question his eligibility to be known as the messiah of Israel?

Two factors bear on this. One is that Mary may have been, like Joseph, of the line of David. As noted above, she was from Nazareth, which was, so far as we can tell, a Davidic settlement. Probaby all the inhabitants were of the same tribe, in which case she too was of Davidic descent, betrothed to a man from her own tribe. This may be supported by the statement in Hebrews 7:14 that "it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah." Jewish ethnicity and tribal descent were frequently reckoned through the mother.

The second factor is that, in any case, Joseph acted as the legal father in the naming and the registering of his son (Mt 1:20-21; Lk 2:1-5). According to the rule of Levirate marriage, when a man died without a son to carry forward his name, the brother of the deceased was to sire a son to the widow. The son was legally regarded as the son of the deceased man. Since biological and legal paternity were not identical, it was possible for Joseph to be regarded as the legal father

although he was not the biological father. Certainly Jesus was known as the "son of Joseph" (Jn 1:45; cf. Jn 6:42).

5.7. Bethlehem and the census

> In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. (Lk 2:1-3)

Two problems have been noted with Luke's stated reason for Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem, where Mary's child was born. One is an absence of corroborative evidence of any decree from Augustus for a universal census. The other more serious difficulty is that Josephus gives very clear evidence that Quirinius came to Judea in A.D. 6/7 to conduct a census among the Jews in preparation for Judea becoming a Roman province.[19] However, the evidence from Luke locates the birth of Jesus more than a decade earlier, in c. 5 B.C.20 According to Luke both John the Baptist and Jesus were conceived "in the days of Herod, king of Judea" (Lk 1:5), who died in 4 B.C. On the face of it Luke has made a serious chronological error.[21]

Various attempts have been made to resolve the second problem. One proposal is that Quirinius had also been appointed to Syria around the time of the nativity of Jesus, whether as outright governor or as some kind of military governor working alongside a civil governor. True, Quirinius campaigned against the wild Homanadenses tribe in Galatia from c. 12 B.C. to A.D. 2.[22] But there is no clear evidence that he governed the province of Syria at that time. The governors were known to be Titius (before 10 B.C.), Saturninus (10-6 B.C.) and Varus (6-4 B.C.). As a frontier province, Syria had a governor who was a *legatus pro praetore*, a military commander, rather than a civil proconsul. It is difficult to see how Quirinius would have fit into this existing military structure where one province was led by one governor.

Quirinius's visit to Judea in A.D. 6 to register people and property for purposes of direct taxation was a major historical landmark. Augustus, having dismissed the *ethnarch* Archelaus, made Judea a Roman province under a military governor *(praefectus)*. Because the people now had to pay their taxes to Rome rather than to Archelaus, it was necessary to conduct an *apographē*, "registration," of the people in order to make an *apotimēsis*, "assessment," of their property for taxation. Josephus describes in some detail this registration as well as the uprising against it led by Judas the Galilean. In Judas's mind, it was not merely a matter of the money involved; God's rule over his people was now being handed over to the despised Gentile.

> Judas the Galilean, that redoubtable rabbi *[sophistēs]* who in the old days under Quirinius, had upraided the Jews for recognising the Romans as masters when they already had God.[23]

Submission to Quirinius's assessment was, in effect, recognition of Augustus rather than God as master.[24]

Despite the serious historical problems raised regarding the integrity of Luke 2:1-3, for several reasons the possibility of Luke's historical accuracy should be kept open.

First, the Romans employed the census formerly under the Republic, among other reasons, to assess property for taxation. Augustus revived the practice in Rome, where it had fallen into disuse. He was also the first to introduce the census to the provinces, which he did progressively and piecemeal, as he did with a census in Egypt in 10/9 B.C., which was to be repeated at fourteen-year intervals. Thus the census in Judea as described in Luke 2:1-3 fits with Augustus's known practice, even though there is no evidence of a precise decree *(dogma)* issued by the emperor calling for a universal registration.

Second, Luke also refers (in Acts 5:37) to Quirinius's registration in A.D. 6: "Judas the Galilean arose in the days of *the* census." By these words Luke recognizes the significance of the notorious census undertaken by Quirinius that provoked Judas' uprising. Yet Luke 2:2 introduces the word *prōtē*, "first," which suggests that Quirinius's registration was not the only census in Judea. Luke wants us to understand that there was another census or censuses, whether before or after Quirinius's census.

It should be noted that, although the word *prōtē* means "first," in certain contexts it carries the comparative nuance "former." Luke himself provides an example of this in the opening words of his second volume, the book of Acts: "in the first [*prōtos* = "former"] book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1).[25]

In Luke 2:2 *prōtē* might qualify either the noun ("this first *registration* occurred") or the verb ("this registration *occurred* first"). If Luke intended the former, that this census was the first of others that would follow in Judea, it would mean that he located the nativity of Jesus at the time of the infamous census by Quirinius in A.D. 6, a significant error. If, however, *prōtē* qualified the verb, it would carry the comparative inference, "former," and point to a less well-known census in Judea conducted by Quirinius or someone else "prior to"[26] the census of A.D. 6 that stirred up a local rebellion.

Can we envisage such a Roman census earlier, during Herod's reign (37-4 B.C.)? There is no other evidence (beyond Lk 2:2; cf. Lk 1:5) of such a census. Herod was, after all, a client king, levying his own taxes. Surely a client king instituting a Roman census is unimaginable. In point of fact, however, a client ruler introducing a Roman-style census independently of Rome is known. Archelaus the Younger of Cappadocia did this in A.D. 36.[27] Significantly, there had been extensive connections between Archelaus's father, also named Archelaus, and Herod. Herod arranged an interdynastic marriage between his son Alexander and Archelaus the Elder's

daughter Glaphyra.[28] Archelaus the Elder also visited Judea in the latter years of Herod.[29] If Herod had conducted a census, Archelaus the Elder, and therefore also his son, would have known of it. Archelaus's known use of a census in a client kingdom, which had close ties with Herod, leaves open the possibility that Herod conducted a Roman-style census for his own tax-gathering purposes.[30]

Luke proves to be well informed about Herod at other points where we can evaluate his accuracy. As noted above he locates the birth of John the Baptist "in the days of Herod, king of Judea" (Lk 1:5). Despite the complexity of the division of Herod's kingdom at his death, Luke understands exactly how this worked at the time John the Baptist began to prophesy in c. 28 (Lk 3:1-2). Moreover, throughout his writings Luke refers to "Herod the tetrarch," ruler of Galilee (Lk 3:19; 9:7; Acts 13:1). Since Luke knows about Herod "king of Judaea" and the intricacies of the division of his former realm, we may ask if he is likely to have made his supposed mistake in locating the nativity in A.D. 6/7, especially since he knows well the significance of Judas's uprising at that time. Having located Jesus' birth in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, in one place (Lk 1), would he also locate it at the time of the controversial census (Lk 2) a decade later?

There are grounds for seeking another explanation for the apparent discrepancy in Luke 2:1-3, in particular that an otherwise unknown census occurred in the latter days of Herod, providing an occasion for Joseph and Mary to journey to Bethlehem.

5.8. The name *Jesus*

Jesus is a Greek word *(Iēsous)* that translates a shortened Hebrew version of Joshua *(Yeshua)*. This is perfectly clear from the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, where the name *Iēsous,* "Jesus," appears frequently. It is possible that Joseph and Mary named their first child *Iēsous,* the Greek form of the word, since Greek was so widely spoken in Galilee. Whatever the case, whether *Yeshua* or *Iēsous,* the parents chose the name of a great national hero, which was very popular among Jews at the time. It meant "Yahweh helps salvation" (or "Yahweh is salvation").

The name *Jesus* was very common at the time of Jesus. The index to Josephus's works, which were written in the latter part of the New Testament era, has no fewer than twenty-one entries under the Greek word *Iēsous.* Most probably for this reason the New Testament rarely uses the name *Jesus* without a qualifier, either the place of origin, "Jesus of Nazareth," or a title, "Jesus [the] Christ."

In the second century the longer version *Yehoshua* replaces the shorter *Yeshua* of the previous centuries. *Yeshua* now disappears from Jewish writings as a proper name. It is likely that because of the rise of Christianity and its separation from Judaism Jewish writings sought to be dissociated from *Yeshua,* "Jesus."

5.9. Joseph and Mary in Egypt

Herod's realm was not safe for the descendant of David born in Bethlehem. Herod would not tolerate messianic rivals, including children who had the right credentials to ascend the throne of Israel. He had decreed the killing of the boys two years old and younger in that village. Nowhere in Israel would this child be secure; his spies were everywhere. Joseph and Mary, with their baby, fled from Israel to Egypt, where they remained until news came of the death of the king. In all likelihood they journeyed along the great coast road, the Via Maris, arriving some weeks later at their destination. Presumably they fled to Alexandria, the Ptolemaic capital, located on the Mediterranean coast, where there was a large Jewish community and where there may have been relatives to provide shelter and nurture for this displaced family.

After a respite of perhaps two years they returned to Israel. Although Herod was now dead, Joseph and Mary bypassed Judea (Mt 2:22). The new ruler, Archelaus, was as much to be feared as his father Herod. But his brother Antipas, the new ruler of Galilee, was perhaps less to be feared. So Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth and resettled there.

5.10. Born under the law

Joseph and Mary were devout people of the covenant who fulfilled every requirement marking the birth of a son in Jerusalem. They did "everything according to the law of the Lord" (Lk 2:39). Their son was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth and then brought to the temple to be dedicated to the Lord (Lk 2:21-22). Jesus' upbringing continued along these strict and observant lines.

Various references establish that Jesus was quite literate, notwithstanding his nurture in remote Nazareth in a home where the father was an manual worker. His words scribbled in the dust show that he could write (Jn 8:6). His extensive knowledge of the Law and the Prophets, including his capacity to read publicly from them, indicate an ability to read Hebrew (Lk 4:16-19).

As a twelve year old in Jerusalem, Jesus amazed the scholars with his understanding of the sacred law. Later the Pharisees expressed astonishment, "How is it that this man has learning *[grammata]*, when he has never studied?" (Jn 7:15). He had not attended the rabbinic academies in Jerusalem, yet he could debate as an equal with the scholars.[31]

How, then, did Jesus come to read and write and to develop his knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures? Jesus' boyhood and youth are aptly called "the hidden years"; details of Jesus' early years are not to be found in the canonical literature of the New Testament. We cannot answer this question in precise terms.

However, we have some understanding of the educational ideals current among Jews at the time.

> The law . . . enjoins sobriety in the upbringing [of children] from the very first. It orders that they shall be taught to read, and shall learn both the laws and the deeds of their forefathers, in order that they may imitate the latter, and, being grounded in the former, may neither transgress nor have any excuse for being ignorant of them.[32]

Jesus was thoroughly grounded in the law of God, as were most Jews of the time. This is clear from the comments of Josephus, even allowing for some apologetic overstatement:

> But, should anyone of our nation be questioned about the laws, he would repeat them all more readily than his own name. The result, then, of our thorough grounding in the laws from the first dawn of intelligence is that we have them, as it were, engraven on our souls. A transgressor is a rarity; evasion of punishment an impossibility.[33]

The role of Joseph, the father, was probably significant. As a descendant of the royal line of David, Joseph would have impressed upon Jesus at an early age the importance of his heritage. Assuming that Jesus' years of nurture were typical, Jesus would have received his education in the Scriptures from two main sources, his father[34]—as we have noted—and the synagogue attendant.

> Before any instruction in the holy laws and unwritten customs are taught . . . from their swaddling clothes by parents and teachers and educators to believe in God, the one Father and Creator of the world.[35]

The more formal instruction mentioned by Philo was begun, according to the Mishnah, at five years of age: "At five years old one is fit for the scripture . . . at thirteen for the commandments."[36]

At five, then, Jesus would have begun his education at the synagogue, where an attendant (*hypēretēs;* see Lk 4:20) who looked after the scrolls also taught boys to write and to learn the Torah. Before reaching thirteen years of age, Jesus would have been prepared by the attendant until he formally became "a son of the commandment" *(bar mitzvah)*. This he did in Jerusalem, as recorded by Luke (Lk 2:42).

Throughout his childhood in Nazareth, Jesus, with Joseph and Mary and other members of the family, would have attended the synagogue: "He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day" (Lk 4:16).

The synagogue had a strong educational function. According to Josephus,

> He ["our law-giver" = God] made the law an excellent and necessary subject of instruction in that it is heard not only once for all or twice or on several occasions, but that every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble and listen to the Law and obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it.[37]

Apart from the Shema ("Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" [Deut 6:4-9]), the prayer that followed and the blessing at the end, the synagogue service consisted chiefly of readings in Hebrew from the Law and the Prophets, according to a lectionary. After the readings a teacher would translate the text into the vernacular Aramaic, offering a commentary and interpretation (called a *midrash*).[38] When Jesus taught in the synagogue, he would read from the Law and the Prophets in Hebrew, offering a midrash explaining how the Scriptures were being fulfilled in his own ministry (Lk 4:17-21). The synagogue service was powerfully educational in character, doubtless contributing to the development of Jesus' understanding of the Scriptures and of his own ministry.

At about thirty years of age Jesus began to teach publicly (Mk 1:21, 39; Lk 3:23; 4:16ff.). He displayed a noticeable expertise as a teacher; he is referred to as "rabbi" (e.g., Jn 6:25). He expounded the Law and the Prophets in Jerusalem as well as in Galilee: "I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together" (Jn 18:20).

Beyond the influence of home and synagogue, to a significant degree Jesus' understanding came from his own reflection and prayer. When questioned about the source of his considerable knowledge, he replied, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me" (Jn 7:16). His hearers were astonished that he taught with the authority of God and not like the scribes, who derived their understanding from the judgments of those who had preceded them (Mk 1:22, 27).

5.11. Nazareth in Galilee

According to the Mishnah, Galilee was divided into three regions: "upper Galilee, lower Galilee and the valley."[39] Upper Galilee is the mountainous region northwest of the Lake of Galilee. "The valley" is the lake and the Jordan River, which flows into and out of it. Lower Galilee is the plateau between the lake and the Mediterranean Sea.

Nazareth was located at the extreme southerly part of lower Galilee, approximately midway between the lake and the Mediterranean. It was a small village, sited on a range of hills 1,150 feet above sea level, quite close to Gath-hepher, birthplace of the prophet Jonah (2 Kings 14:25; note that Jonah was a prophet sent to the Gentiles). Nazareth has commanding views of the plain of Jezreel to the south and Mount Carmel to the west, both made famous in the Old Testament by Elijah's conflict with King Ahab.

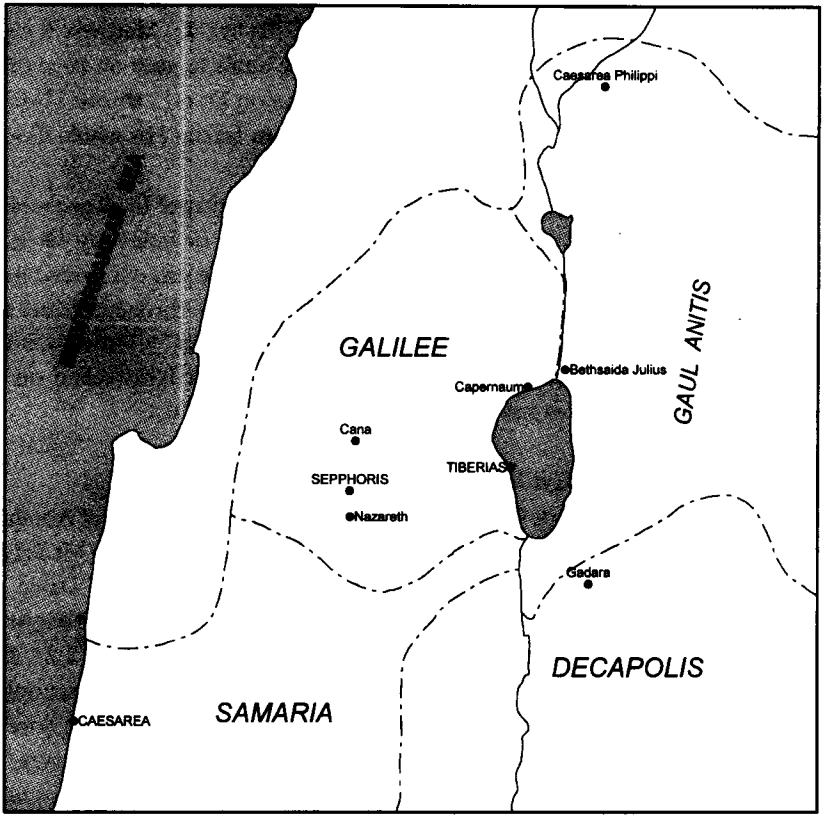
Josephus, who had been appointed in 66 as the military commander of Galilee against the Romans, knew well the difficulties facing the invaders.

> The two Galilees [upper and lower] have always resisted any hostile invasion, for the inhabitants are from infancy inured to war, and have at all times been numerous: never did the the men lack courage nor the country men. For the

> land is everywhere so rich in soil and pasturage and produces such a variety of trees that even the most indolent are tempted by these facilities to devote themselves to agriculture. . . . The towns, too, are thickly distributed and even the villages are . . . densely populated.[40]

Josephus also gives the number of towns in this fertile area as two hundred and four.[41] These were grouped into five districts known as *toparchies,* each administered on behalf of the tetrarch by an official known as a *toparch,* "ruler of a place."[42]

In Jesus' day Galilee was ringed by Greek principalities (Gaulanitis and Samaria) and Greek city-states (Tyre, Sidon and Scythopolis). Its capital, Sepphoris, rebuilt by Herod Antipas in 4 B.C. as a Gentile city ("the ornament of all Galilee"),[43] was only four miles from Nazareth. High on a hill overlooking the Via Maris, the great highway joining Mesopotamia to Egypt, the residents of Sepphoris (after the Hebrew word meaning "bird" because of its elevated position)[44] watched the Gentile world of the eastern Mediterranean—Greeks and Barbarians—pass by in



Map 9. Jesus' context: Galilee

constant procession. Jerusalem was off the beaten track, an inaccessible holy city; but not Sepphoris, nor its tiny neighbor Nazareth.

Jesus the Jew, who spoke Aramaic and read Hebrew, must have often heard Greek spoken in "Galilee of the Gentiles." A decade or so after Jesus, the emperor Claudius had an inscription erected in Nazareth warning of capital punishment for tomb spoliation. Apart from the inexplicable location of an imperial decree in tiny, out-of-the-way Nazareth (unless it was necessitated because people ransacked local tombs searching for Jesus' remains after the claims that he had been resurrected), the decree is noteworthy because it is written in Greek. Some people, at least, in Nazareth were presumed able to read it.

As his ministry unfolded, Jesus met and ministered to Gentiles; he did not turn them away (e.g., Mt 8:5-13; Mk 7:24-30, 31-37).

5.12. Galilee of the Gentiles

Matthew refers to Jesus' ministry preaching the kingdom of heaven and healing in Galilee as the fulfillment of Isaiah's oracle that the people of "Galilee of the Gentiles" will "have seen a great light" (Mt 4:12-17; Is 9:1-2). Matthew is clear: that "great light" was Jesus. Very significantly, Isaiah's oracle goes on to say that this "great light" was located in one who was to reign on David's throne (Is 9:7). It is no accident that Matthew quotes this passage from Isaiah. His whole Gospel is preoccupied with Jesus as the Davidic Messiah.

Why did Matthew think this and where did this idea originate? In all probability Matthew learned this from Jesus himself, whether directly or indirectly. Coming from Nazareth, a clan home of Davidides, Jesus knew that he was descended from the royal line and therefore that he was a potential heir to the throne of Israel and the fulfiller of the promises of Isaiah to the nations (= "Gentiles"). Fittingly, it was in "Galilee of the Gentiles," at the end to his ministry, that Jesus called on his followers to "make disciples among the nations" (Mt 28:16-20).

5.13. Jesus the Jew in "Galilee of the Gentiles"

Jesus was a Jew, a member of God's covenantal people, a descendant of Abraham and—significantly for the later claims that he was the Messiah/Christ (Mt 2:1, 6, 17, 18; Lk 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4, 26)—a member of the royal house of David. In obedience to the Torah, Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day and brought by his parents to the temple in Jerusalem to be dedicated to the Lord (Lk 2:21-22). As a young child Jesus would have begun to attend the synagogue school in Nazareth to learn the Hebrew Torah, and at the edge of puberty his parents brought him to Jerusalem where he formally embraced the faith of his fathers (Lk 2:41-47). Descended from Abraham and David, Jesus was a son of the synagogue and the temple. Truly Jesus was "born under the law" (Gal 4:4; cf. Lk 2:21, 22, 27, 39).

Yet his home was not the sacred temple-city, Jerusalem, the world center for the rabbinic academies, but Nazareth in Galilee, a region surrounded by Greek states and permeated by Hellenism. It is appropriate that a message that was to be taken to the Gentile world should be centered on one who was nurtured and raised in Galilee of the Gentiles.

Further reading

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Levine, Lee I. *The Galilee in Late Antiquity.* New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.

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Notes

[1]In Greek either *Nazarēnos* (e.g., Mk 1:24) or *Nazōraios* (e.g., Mt 2:23).

[2]Greek *apo,* "from."

[3]There is an interesting Aramaic inscription from the early centuries found in nearby Cana that mentions a Joseph who made a table, "To the memory of the pious Joseph, son of Tanbum, son of Bota and his children, who made this table. May it be to them a blessing." See B. Bagatti, "Le Antichita di Kh. di Kefer Kanna in Galilea," *Liber Annus Studii Franciscani, Jerusalem* 15 (1969); 251-92.

[4]For discussion, see B. Witherington, "Birth of Jesus," *DJG,* pp. 65-66. The divergences presented an apologetic problem as early as the second century when Julius Africanus (A.D. 160-240) felt compelled to provide an explanation for the differences between the lists in Matthew and Luke (quoted in Eusebius *HE* 1.7-8). Julius Africanus notes that Herod had registers of Jewish families destroyed to avoid revealing his lack of Jewish descent ("Herod . . . had no drop of Israelitish blood"). However, the relatives of Jesus in Nazareth were among those who managed to preserve the private records of their genealogies, which in their case showed Jesus' descent from David. According to Africanus, these records showed that the differences between the genealogies of Matthew and Luke resulted from several childless widows who married brothers of former husbands in accordance with the levirate marriage provision. Thus some children were registered in the name of the "legal" father while others were registered in the name of an uncle who was the biological father. "Thus neither gospel is in error. . . . Thus both accounts are perfectly true, bringing the line down to Joseph in a manner complex perhaps but certainly accurate." Africanus gives a detailed harmonization of the two lists, based on the preserved traditions of the Nazareth relatives of Jesus.

See Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1967), pp. 284-90, for argument for the existence and (broad) reliability of genealogies current among Jewish lay-people (i.e., nonpriests) at the time of Jesus. In his discussion of the genealogies of Matthew and Luke (pp. 290-97), Jeremias favors the accuracy of Luke over Matthew, though he is dismissive of the pre-exilic information in Luke. Nonetheless, Jeremias places considerable confidence in the oral tradition within the respective tribes.

[5]Eusebius *HE* 3.19-21.

[6]Ibid., *HE* 3.12. See §2.2.7-8.

[7]Acts 11:26; 17:6-7; Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4; Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.2-5.

[8]Jack Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 29.

[9]See Bargil Pixner, *With Jesus Through Galilee* (Rosh Pina, Israel: Corazin, 1992), p. 17, referring to the archaeological work of B. Bagatti.

[10]The Hebrew consonants of *nzr,* "branch," correspond to the Greek *nzr* in the word *Nazōraios.* Hebrew *z* would become *z* in Greek. Matthew was bilingual and not ignorant of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus' place of residence, *Nazaret,* made him a *Nazōraios.* The consonants of *Nazōraios, nzr,* are to Matthew's ear the same as those of Hebrew *nzr,* "branch," which is in effect a messianic title in Isaiah 11:1. Thus Matthew sees a subtle but significant link between

Isaiah's prophecy and the details of Jesus' earthly existence. Matthew's rabbi Jesus taught that not one jot or tittle of the law (that is, the whole Old Testament) would pass away before it had all come to pass. If Matthew appears to us to take linguistic liberty, it is because he is, compared to us, (1) better in Hebrew and Greek, and (2) part of a culture that understood prophetic Scriptures in terms of these linguistic connections. Furthermore, Matthew is writing for an audience who would find this interpretation useful.

[11]Contra J. J. Rousseau and R. Arav, *Jesus and His World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), p. 214, who think Nazareth may have taken its name from the Hebrew root *nrs,* "watch" or "guard." Nazareth is in an elevated location.

[12]According to *The Protevangelium of James,* Mary's parents were Joachim and Anna.

[13]It is possible to read Matthew's account as suggesting that Joseph and Mary lived in Judea prior to the birth of Jesus and that they only settled in Nazareth after their return from Egypt (Mt 2:1, 13, 22-23).

[14]Josephus *J.W.* 2.120.

[15]So contra Bargil Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem* (Rosh Pina, Israel: Corazin, 1996), pp. 15-20.

[16]Ignatius *Smyraeans* 1.

[17]See further D. S. Huffman, "Genealogy," *DJG,* pp. 253-58. From Jesus' own day there was a polemical tradition that implied that he was the fruit of an illegitimate union. His opponents said, "We were not born of fornication," implying that Jesus was (Jn 8:41). The anti-Christian Celsus and various later Jewish sources claim that Mary became pregnant by a Roman soldier, Pandera/Panthera. In 1859 was found a tombstone in Bingersbrück, Germany, of a Roman archer Pantera who had been posted at Sidon at some stage in his military career. See further Rousseau and Arav, *Jesus and His World,* pp. 223-25.

[18]According to C. E. B. Cranfield, "Up to the present no tolerably credible explanation of how belief in the Virgin Birth arose, if the Virgin Birth is not tolerable, has been forthcoming" (*On Romans* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998], p. 162).

[19]Josephus *Ant.* 18.1-2, 26.

[20]The pregnancies of the mothers of John and Jesus more or less overlapped (Lk 1:26, 39-41, 57; 2:1-5).

[21]See, among numerous discussions, Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* rev. and ed. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973), 1:399-427; A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), pp. 162-71.

[22]Tacitus *Annals* 3.48.

[23]Josephus *J.W.* 2.433.

[24]Ibid., 2.118, 433; 7.253; *Ant.* 18.23.

[25]Compare Josephus's opening words to book two of *Against Apion:* "In the first volume *[proterou]* of this work."

[26]See John 1:15, 30; 15:18, where *prōtos* means "before" = "prior to."

[27]Tacitus *Annals* 6.41. The Romans opposed this independent action.

[28]Josephus *Ant.* 16.11.

[29]Ibid., 16.261-69.

[30]It is noted that Herod's relations with Augustus were seriously strained in his latter years. Evidence of Herod's desperate attempts to regain Augustus's confidence can be seen at several points. For example, in 7 B.C. Herod imposed on all Jews an oath of loyalty to Augustus and himself, despite strong opposition from the Pharisees (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.42). Such oath taking may have depended upon a registration of his subjects in their ancestral cities. For the suggestion that Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem to be registered for this oath taking, see see Paul W. Barnett, "*Apographē* and *Apographesthai* in Luke 2:1-5," *ExpTim* 85 (1974): 377-80.

[31]By contrast, the disciples Peter and John were later dismissed by the chief priests as "unlettered" and "uninformed" (*agrammatoi* and *idiōtai* [Acts 4:13]).

[32]Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.204.

[33]Ibid., 2.178.

[34]But possibly also from his mother if Timothy's case is in any way comparable (2 Tim 3:15; 1:5).
[35]Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* 115.
[36]*m. Abot* 5.21.
[37]Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.175.
[38]From a Hebrew root meaning "to investigate," hence "to expound." These expositions were originally spoken but were also written; cf. 2 Chron 24:27; Neh 8:8.
[39]*m. Shebiit* 9.2.
[40]Josephus *J.W.* 3.40-43.
[41]Josephus *Life* 235.
[42]See Harold Hoehner, *Herod Antipas,* SNTSMS 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 45-46.
[43]Josephus *Ant.* 18.27.
[44]According to the Talmud, Sepphoris was so called "because it is perched on the top of a mountain like a bird *[zippor]*" (*b. Megillah* 2a).

6

Jesus' Context

Galilee & Peraea

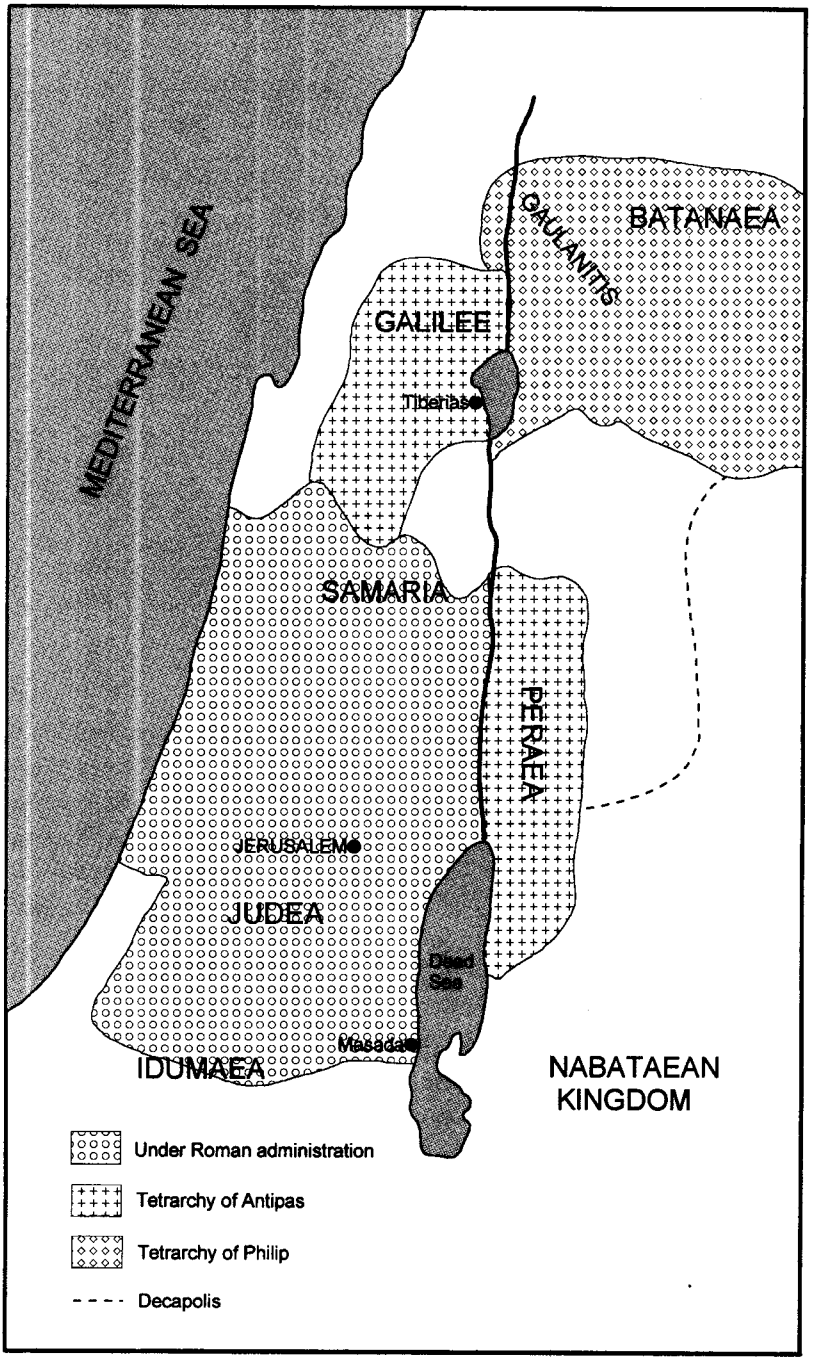
6.1. The importance of context

Historical figures, as well as texts, are to be understood in their context. Is there a setting for Jesus that will contribute significantly to our comprehension of him as a figure of history? According to the Gospels, Jesus divided his time unequally among Galilee, the regions to the north and east of Galilee (Gaulanitis-Trachonitis) and Judea. These regions, their politics and sociology in particular insofar as they are recoverable from this distance, are the appropriate starting point in establishing a context or, rather, contexts for Jesus.

6.2. After the death of Herod

Great political changes followed the death of Herod in 4 B.C. His kingdom was subdivided three ways. Approximately half—Judea, Idumaea and Samaria—was handed to Archelaus with the title *ethnarch* (= "ruler of a nation"). The remainder was further split in half. The regions of Gaulanitis and Trachonitis, northeast of the Sea of Galilee, were given to Herod Philip. The divided territories of Galilee and Peraea were allocated to Herod Antipas. Antipas and Philip were each called tetrarch (= "ruler of a fourth").

Throughout Herod's rule there were, in effect, two discrete communities. Surrounding Herod was a circle of courtiers, supporters, officials, military chiefs and large landholders among whom Hellenistic culture and values flourished. Outside this circle, however, was the great mass of mostly poorer Jews, the majority



Map 10. Division of Herod's kingdom

of whom were faithful to the covenant of Yahweh, at least in principle.[1] Although the death of Herod brought geographical reorganization of his kingdom, his sons Archelaus and Antipas perpetuated the fundamental religious and cultural divisions, both in Judea and in Galilee-Peraea.

In this chapter we will concentrate on Galilee-Peraea, deferring consideration of Judea until the next chapter. The two regions are inseparable, but for the sake of convenience we will reflect upon them in this way.

6.3. Sources of information

Galilee, its geography, politics and history, is the dominant context for Jesus.[2] The land itself, its dominant lake, the houses and streetscape of Capernaum and the general surrounding topography of Galilee establish a readily imaginable setting for the ministry of Jesus.

Literary sources also contribute to our understanding. Josephus, who gives a firsthand account of his military leadership in Galilee in the early years of the war against the invading Romans, is full of information about Galilee. His narratives of his military campaigns in Galilee relate to a period only thirty or so years later than Jesus.

The Gospel of Mark also gives extensive information about Gaulanitis-Trachonitis, the Gentile territories adjoining Galilee to the northeast.[3] Mark's account of Jesus' ease of movement between these Gentile territories fits well with the known circumstances of his era, but not of later times. In the years leading up to the outbreak of war in 66, Jewish-Gentile relationships were to deteriorate dramatically, for example in Caesarea Maritima, where the war began. Mark's account of Jesus' travels to Gentile territories is informed by the prewar situation in Galilee.

The rural and lakeside world of Galilee, the high country of Gaulanitis-Trachonitis and the temple-city Jerusalem of Jesus' time are regions and places more recoverable through the eyes of Josephus and the Gospel writers than through the Mishnah, targumim and Talmudim. Arising as they do in later centuries from the changed religious culture of rabbinic Judaism, their vision of Galilee and Judea prior to A.D. 70 is rather more remote.

Nonetheless, more should not be claimed for the reconstructed world of Galilee or, if we may anticipate, of Jerusalem, in discovering the historical Jesus than is warranted. It is helpful to know about the Herodian power structures, the economic dynamism through markets now open to neighboring city-states, the impact of the relocation of the Galilean capital from Sepphoris to Tiberias and the grandeur of mansions in Jerusalem. But the geographical, architectural, political and socio-economic elements of themselves and by themselves do not inform us about Jesus. To be sure, these provide a series of backgrounds against which we may better understand Jesus as we encounter him in the Gospels. Yet real

methodological problems arise when a cultural background, which is silent about Jesus, is taken as the dominant determinant and the Gospel information, which has Jesus as its focus, is relegated.[4]

6.4. Markers for the ministry of Jesus

Near the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, in a statement of remarkable precision, the writer states that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of the emperor Tiberius. In that year, that is, in A.D. 28, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Gaulanitis-Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness (Lk 3:1-2). Luke had earlier indicated that both John and Jesus were born during the reign of Herod king of Judea and that Jesus' birth occurred at the time of a Roman census (Lk 1:5; 2:1-2).

Five of these persons play an active part in relationship with Jesus: John the Baptist, Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, Annas and Caiaphas the high priests and Pontius Pilate the governor of Judea. As they intersect with Jesus, these prominent men form "markers" in his story. They establish the historical context that circumscribes Jesus' public ministry.

With only one of these markers, however, is there an affinity with Jesus. Only John the Baptist and Jesus stood in the clear tradition of Israel and the covenant of Yahweh. The tetrarchs, sons of Herod the king, represented the local face of the world of Hellenism. Pontius Pilate, the Gentile, was the Roman emperor's man in the province of Judea. The high priest also owed to the emperor his appointment, which was made through the Roman governor.

In this chapter we will consider Herod the tetrarch and John the Baptist, and in the next the high priests Caiaphas and Annas and the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Since almost nothing is known of Philip the tetrarch, we must pass over him in silence.

6.5. Galilee: Herod the tetrarch

We cannot overemphasize the importance, historically, of Herod the tetrarch of Galilee-Peraea. During his lengthy incumbency Hellenistic influences intensified in Galilee-Peraea. His cities Sepphoris and Tiberias were built along Hellenistic lines. So, too, his court and bureaucracy would have been modeled on his father's patterns.

Herod Antipas is of particular importance for any inquiry into Jesus. He became tetrarch of Galilee-Peraea in 4 B.C., shortly after Jesus' birth (in 5 B.C.?), and he continued to rule that region until his exile in 39, about six years after the crucifixion of Jesus. His period of rule 4 B.C.-A.D. 39 forms a backdrop to the entire span of Jesus' life c. 5 B.C.-A.D. 33. Moreover, since Herod Antipas[5] was the ruler

of Galilee, where the greater part of Jesus' ministry was exercised (28-33), he is of special interest for Jesus studies.

The socio-economic circumstances that held true in Jesus' day and that provide much of the background for Jesus' ethical and parabolic teaching were created by the policies and practices of this ruler. As we shall note later, Jesus refers to Herod the tetrarch on a number of occasions. Moreover, John the Baptist preached against this man's remarriage to the wife of a brother who was still alive. For his troubles John was imprisoned and finally executed in the dungeon at Machaerus in Peraea overlooking the Dead Sea.

We have extensive information about the man whom Jesus called "that fox" (Lk 13:32).[6]

6.5.1. Herod the tetrarch and the succession to Herod the king. The fourth woman Herod the king married was Malthace, a Samaritan. From that union issued Archelaus and Antipas, who were born in 22 B.C. and 20 B.C., respectively. Antipas's first years of education would have been devoted to learning to write Hebrew and read the Torah.[7] At the age of ten, that is, in c. 10 B.C., Antipas was sent to Rome, where he would have been educated in Greek and Latin. He returned to Palestine in the last year or so of his father's life, which would have been soon after the birth of Jesus.

Who was to succeed that remarkable soldier, builder, administrator and promoter of Hellenism, whose family affairs in his declining years were so chaotic? Josephus refers to a succession of changed wills. The penultimate will named Antipas sole heir to the throne, mere teenager though he was. However, five days before his death in March 4 B.C. Herod changed the will for the last time. Archelaus was to be king over Judea (including Idumaea and Samaria), Antipas was to be tetrarch over Galilee and Peraea, and Philip (son of another wife, Cleopatra) was to be tetrarch of the mainly Gentile territory of Gaulanitis-Trachonitis northeast of Galilee. After reviewing the will, the emperor Augustus reduced Archelaus's status to that of ethnarch. Apart from this demotion, Herod's final will was essentially unchanged, in all probability a bitter blow to young Antipas. He traveled to Rome to press his claims to kingship, but to no avail.[8]

Of the three heirs, Antipas was by far the most able. Archelaus was dismissed from his ethnarchy after only nine years, and Judea was placed under direct Roman provincial rule. Philip passed his thirty-eight years in almost complete obscurity, his rule noted only by the building of the cities of Bethsaida on the northeast shore of the Lake of Galilee and Caesarea Philippi in the far north under Mount Hermon, at the source of the Jordan. Antipas served his Roman masters well, ruling his split territories without major political disturbance for forty-three years, until his exile in 39. However, Antipas's Roman masters never appointed him king, in all probability a sore point as he remembered the terms of his father's penultimate will.

6.5.2. Herod tetrarch of Galilee/Peraea.[9] After the death of Herod in 4 B.C. there were serious uprisings throughout the realm, including in the territories of Galilee and Peraea where Antipas was to rule. Only the intervention of the Roman legions from Syria restored peace and order to the territories. On assuming his tetrarchy, Antipas set about rebuilding and refortifying the cities the insurgents had recently destroyed, Sepphoris in Galilee and Betharamphtha in Peraea. Like his father, Antipas knew well the strategic importance of fortification. However, Antipas did not consider either city suitable for his seat of government.

In A.D. 17 he set about planning and building an entirely new city on the western side of the Lake of Galilee, where there were hot springs,[10] naming it Tiberias after the emperor who had succeeded Augustus three years earlier. Planned along Hellenistic lines and with Hellenistic political and educational institutions, Antipas's new city gravely offended Jewish scruples, erected as it was on a burial ground. Antipas's palace was decorated with idolatrous effigies and opulently furnished. The majority of the citizens of the new capital were Gentiles. A few years later, when war with Rome broke out (in 66), Josephus arrived with instructions from the Jerusalem leadership to demolish Antipas's palace because of its blasphemous decorations.[11] Local Galileans managed to demolish the palace before Josephus arrived, looting its treasures and gilded roof.[12]

Jesus once asked the crowds concerning John the desert prophet, "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? . . . To see a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, those who wear soft raiment are in kings' houses" (Mt 11:7-9). He was probably referring to the tetrarch Antipas domiciled at Tiberias in luxurious quarters beside a lake where reeds grew.[13]

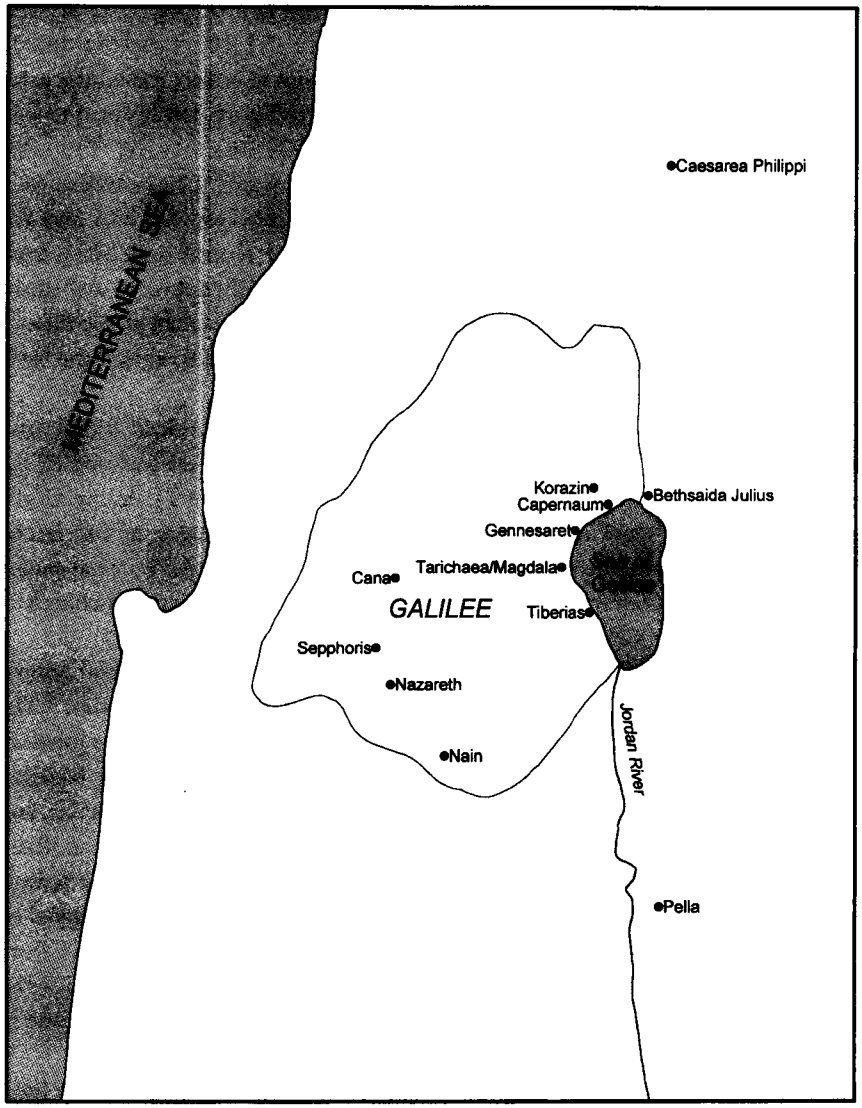
There is no record in the Gospels that Jesus visited Tiberias during the course of his public ministry. Presumably it would have been dangerous to do so. More significantly, Jesus probably sought to identify with the common people who were loyal to the covenant, against the corruption of Antipas's Hellenistic court. Perhaps Jesus made Capernaum the center of his ministry because he could easily slip across the border into Gaulanitis out of reach of the tetrarch. But there can be little doubt that Jesus knew about life in the Galilean capital. It was, after all, a mere ten miles down the lake from Capernaum, a large city and in full view, a constant visual reminder of the Herodian ruler and his menacing power.

The Gospels give some hints of the inner workings of Antipas's tetrarchy. Present at his birthday banquet where John would be beheaded were the three elite groups of his establishment: (1) administrators (*megistanēs,* "great ones"), (2) army commanders (*chiliarchoi,* "colonels") and (3) estate owners who were civic leaders (*prōtoi,* "chief men").[14]

In regard to "chief men," Josephus mentions a faction in Tiberias composed of "respectable citizens"; included among them were several named "Herod," who were evidently members of the royal house.[15] Josephus also refers to the ten "chief

men" (*prō toi,* the same term used in Mark 6:21) who were the executive committee of the city council *(boulē)* of Tiberias.[16] Evidently the "chief men" were the wealthy landowners who dominated the civic and political life in Tiberias and other large towns and who formed Antipas's court.

The group Mark calls "Herodians" appears to have been associated with the elite members of the tetrarch's circle who were identified at Herod's birthday



Map 11. Jesus in Galilee

banquet.[17] Their intention appears to have been to restore Herodian rule, that is, in the person of Herod Antipas, in place of Roman rule.

The Gospels and the book of Acts give hints that various people connected with the tetrarch were touched by Jesus' ministry in Galilee. The "royal official"[18] who approached Jesus in Cana about his sick son was probably a military or civil administrator of the tetrarch in Capernaum, a significant border town (Jn 4:46-54). Also from Capernaum was the centurion, a Gentile military officer serving there in Antipas's military forces, possibly transferred from Roman legionary service, who sought healing for his attendant (Mt 8:5-13; Lk 7:1-10). Levi/Matthew, a customs official employed by the tetrarch in Capernaum to collect toll on the great trunk road that passed nearby joining Mesopotamia to Egypt, left his post to join Jesus' group of followers (Mt 9:9; Mk 2:13-14; Lk 5:27-28).

A more significant official was Antipas's domestic steward[19] Chusa, whose wife, Joanna, accompanied Jesus and with other women provided for him and the disciples in their ministry in Galilee. Jesus had healed Joanna and Mary from Magdala—a town on the lakeside a few miles north of Tiberias—"of evil spirits and infirmities" (Lk 8:3). Joanna and Mary were also in Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion, among the women who came after the sabbath to anoint the body of Jesus but found the tomb empty (Lk 24:10).

Still more significant among Antipas's entourage was his close friend (and probable courtier)[20] Manaen (= Menachem), who in the forties was one of the prophets and teachers in the church in Syrian Antioch (Acts 13:1). As one of the tetrarch's *prōtoi,* "chief men," Manaen may have been present at the fateful banquet in Peraea when John was beheaded. We can only wonder by what means he became first a believer and then a leader in the Gentile-dominated church in Antioch.

6.5.3. Galilee under Herod the tetrarch. As a "client" of the Romans, Herod Antipas was allowed to raise an income of two hundred talents from his territories.[21] The tetrarch raised this (together with tribute payable to Rome)?[22] by various forms of taxation. These taxes included (1) land tax, (2) poll tax, (3) levies for building projects (such as for the rebuilding of Sepphoris and the building of Tiberias, and (4) customs tax on goods moved from one district to another. In addition, there was the half-shekel tax payable annually by all Jews for the upkeep of the temple (Mt 17:24-27). Taxes in Antipas's Galilee were collected by officials employed by the tetrarch; tax contracting by *publicani* or private agents appears to have been restricted to Judea, which was within the direct Roman jurisdiction.[23] Levi/Matthew the *telōnēs,* "customs official," was not a private tax contactor but one of Antipas's officials who belonged to his bureaucracy.

However, such taxes were unevenly levied. A remark made in passing by Jesus suggests that the Herodian privileged classes may have paid little or no tax. "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From

their sons or from others?" When he replied, "From others," Jesus said, "Then the sons are free" (Mt 17:25-26). The aristocrats who held large landholdings appeared to have been "free" from the burden of taxation. Jesus pointed to a present reality to establish a truth of the kingdom of God.

There is some evidence that peasant farmers typically had no reserves of produce for the payment of land and poll tax in the event of failed crops, drought or other misadventure.[24] It is known that debt records were held in Sepphoris; presumably mortgaging of landholdings was commonplace.[25] Many of the day laborers as described in Jesus' parable of the workers in the vineyard would have lost their lands through the combination of inexorable taxes and the hazards of an agricultural livelihood (Mt 20:1-16). Jesus' advice to settle before being taken to court rather than risk imprisonment may also be set against a background of debt litigation against peasant farmers who had struck hard times.

Based on the Gospels and Josephus, it appears that Galilee was a pyramidal socio-economic structure. The pinnacle was the tetrarch and the small Herodian elite, *megistanēs*, *chiliarchoi* and *prōtoi*. Beneath the pinnacle were bureaucrats, attendants, tax officials and lesser military personnel who held the structure in place. As noted already, some of these came into contact with Jesus. Beneath them were a relatively small class of those who managed to retain their property—self-employed farmers, artisans and fishermen—represented by Joseph the *tektōn*, "builder," from Nazareth, the father of the prodigal in the parable and the fishing partners in Capernaum. Several of these even had hired hands. Jesus and his group appear not to have been at the bottom of the social heap. At the base of the pyramid were numerous landless folk, driven from their holdings by unforgiving taxes and misfortune. Their properties had been absorbed into the burgeoning estates of the privileged elite.

Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee-Peraea for forty-three years (4 B.C.-A.D. 39). According to Josephus, the tetrarch "loved his tranquility."[26] During his era Galilee was subject to considerable economic change. The tetrarchy had been opened up to greater trading with Tyre and the other Hellenistic city-states. Moreover, Herod had financed considerable rebuilding of cities: Sepphoris and Betharamphtha in 3 B.C. and Tiberias in A.D.17. While this extensive building work and new trade movements must have had their impact on the economy of Galilee, the proposal that these forces destabilized Galilee and thus facilitated the rise of Jesus as a social reformer appears fanciful.[27] Tiberias had been built a decade before Jesus began his public ministry in Galilee. In any case, the covenant people, the poor people of the land, were not easily moved in their theology and practice by changing economic circumstances.

A more likely destabilizing factor was the cluster of events involving the tetrarch, his marital affairs and the execution of John the Baptist in the late twenties. These repudiations of righteousness and the Torah, more than socio-economic circum-

stances, created a climate of expectation in which Jesus was given a ready hearing by the people of Galilee, some of whom had already become disciples of John. Among these were some who would become followers of Jesus.

6.5.4. The fall of Herod the tetrarch. Antipas's eastern frontier, Peraea, faced the formidable inland kingdom of the Nabataeans. The fortress Machaerus in the mountains east of the Dead Sea was critical to Antipas's defenses against this desert people. So, too, was his interdynastic marriage to the daughter of their king, Aretas IV.

However, after some twenty years of marriage, Antipas's Nabataean wife fled back to her father, having heard of her husband's plan to put her away in favor of another woman. The other woman, Herodias, now taken as wife, was herself also married at the time—to a brother of Antipas.[28] After this foolishness, Antipas's fortunes entered a period of decline from which he never recovered.

In c. A.D. 36 Aretas revenged himself for the insult to his royal house by invading Peraea and subjecting Antipas's forces to a humiliating defeat. Devout Jews saw this as divine retribution for Antipas's treatment of John the Baptist eight years earlier.[29]

Antipas's ultimate act of folly occurred after the death of his long-time patron, Tiberius, in A.D. 37. The new emperor Gaius/Caligula had appointed his boyhood friend Agrippa as king of Gaulanitis-Trachonitis. Agrippa, a nephew of Antipas, was a profligate, and there was bad blood between them; Agrippa had been in his employ in Tiberias some years earlier, but had performed unsatisfactorily. Gaius's appointment of Agrippa must have been a bitter disappointment. Herod Antipas, demonstrably the most capable son of Herod the king, had served his Roman masters for more than forty years, effectively keeping the peace and guarding the eastern frontiers. But he had not been rewarded with royal preferment. Now a scoundrel and a commoner had been made king. Goaded by Herodias, the tetrarch set off with her for Rome to wait on Gaius.

They arrived to find the emperor reading a letter from none other than Agrippa, setting out a litany of Antipas's crimes, including his creation of an enlarged military arsenal. The tetrarch could make no answer. The ultimate humiliation followed; Gaius banished them both forthwith to Gaul. Stripped of his position, Antipas never again saw his tetrarchy, which was now given to Agrippa. In Antipas's place, Agrippa ruled as ***king!***

Much more could be said about Herod Antipas, for, indeed, the sources of information are considerable. But enough has been written to convey something of the man who throughout his life sought without success to be a king. His incumbency in Galilee and Peraea straddled the lifespan of Jesus, and his political regime formed the immediate context for the ministries of both John the Baptist in Peraea and Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee.

6.5.5. Herod the tetrarch and Jesus. There are five passages in the Gospels/Acts that point to the interlocking historical connections between Jesus and this ruler.[30]

a. Mark 3:6; cf. Mark 12:13. Chronologically speaking, the first such reference is the compact entered into by the Herodians and the Galilean Pharisees seeking Jesus' death. Jesus had provocatively healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue in Capernaum on the sabbath. To the local Pharisees, Jesus was in breach of various codes that they held to be fundamental to Judaism (Mk 2:6-10, 16-17, 24-27).

The Pharisees of Galilee, knowing the tetrarch's concern about a populist troublemaker like John the Baptist, had a ready-made point of appeal to the Herodians. Fundamental to a tetrarch's role as a "client" of the Romans was the keeping of the peace. A charismatic leader like Jesus could also easily be portrayed as a threat to local stability and therefore a challenge to Antipas's claims to be an effective ruler. Here the local Pharisees present a political face. Though they doubtless despised the ungodly Hellenistic court of the tetrarch in Tiberias, they were prepared to enter into a pact with his supporters to bring down the rabbi from Nazareth.

Later Jesus will warn his disciples against "the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod," a probable reference to their unholy alliance in conspiring to kill him (Mk 8:15; Lk 12:1).

b. Mark 6:14 and parallels. Next in sequence came the mission of the twelve disciples to the towns of Galilee. The charismatic preacher had multiplied his labors twelvefold! Even if they did not actually preach in each of the 204 towns of Galilee,[31] the activities of the twelve certainly came to the attention of the tetrarch (Mt 14:1; Mk 6:14; Lk 9:9). He concluded that they were an extension of Jesus, who, he surmised, was John the Baptist now somehow alive again and active within his jurisdiction. The tetrarch was agitated, having beheaded John, that his works were being replicated manyfold in his territory. Evidently Jesus discerned great danger to himself in the tetrarch's agitation because he withdrew from public (Mt 14:13).

c. John 6:1-15; Mark 6:30-46.[32] The third situation—the Galilean attempt to make Jesus king—is closely connected with the second. The mission of the Twelve having ended, a great crowd of men from the towns where the Twelve preached now converged on Jesus. Whether unintentionally or deliberately, the Twelve had aroused powerful eschatological expectations among the people of Galilee. Assembled, expectant before him, and hungry, they are fed by Jesus.

John's account reaches its climax with the Galilean men seeking to make Jesus their king, a conclusion entirely consistent with Mark's version of the frenetic running together of the men from "all the towns" to meet Jesus.[33] This "messianic uprising," as H. W. Montefiore called it,[34] can hardly have escaped the attention of the tetrarch of Galilee sitting in his palace in Tiberias across the placid waters of the Galilean lake! The immense popularity of John the Baptist had been revisited upon him in the persona of another prophet. Perhaps the tetrarch brooded that

Augustus had not seen fit to make him a king, whereas the people were ready to bestow that honor first on John and now on Jesus.

Be that as it may, according to what we can infer from Mark, Jesus did not again appear publicly in Galilee after this incident.[35] Rather, Jesus now traveled extensively in neighboring Gentile territories to the north, northeast, northwest and east of Galilee. It may be no coincidence that the disciples declare Jesus to be "the Christ" at Caesarea Philippi, *outside* Antipas's jurisdiction (Mk 8:29). The historicity of these journeys away from danger at the hands of the tetrarch can scarcely be doubted. The politics and the geography dovetail exactly.

d. Mark 10:2; Luke 13:31-35. In his final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus is forced to travel though Peraea, Antipas's other territory, where he faces two menacing situations (Lk 9:51-56).

In Mark 10:1 it appears that Jesus finds his pathway to Jerusalem by way of Samaria blocked. Consequently, he travels across the Jordan into Peraea. The Pharisees' test question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" was full of danger. The tetrarch had done precisely that despite the warnings of the prophet of Peraea, John the Baptist. The Nabataean princess had passed through that territory in her clandestine flight back to her father to his desert kingdom beyond the mountains. John had been beheaded for his troubles nearby at Machaerus. But Jesus' reply was as unequivocal as John the Baptist's repeated rebuke had been.

In a second probable Peraean incident, related in Luke 13:31-35, Jesus is again approached by Pharisees, on this occasion by Pharisees sympathetic to him. "Get away from here," they warn, "for Herod wants to kill you." Jesus replies, "Go tell that fox . . ." These words reveal Jesus' assessment of the ruler in whose territory he had labored. To Jesus Herod was a mere "reed shaken by the wind . . . a man clothed in soft clothing" living in a palace (Mt 11:7-8) and a "fox," an animal characterized by cunning but inferior to the noble animals.[36] By contrast, Jesus will not be deterred from finishing his course. He will go on to Jerusalem although he knows certain death awaits him there.

e. Luke 23:6-12. In Jerusalem at Jesus' final Passover the two men eventually meet.[37] The temple authorities bring Jesus to the Roman governor, accusing him of treason and political agitation "from Galilee even to this place." Hearing that his prisoner belongs to Herod's jurisdiction Pilate sends Jesus to the tetrarch, hoping, perhaps, to be relieved of a difficult decision. According to Luke the tetrarch had "long desired to see [Jesus]," having heard about him, in particular in regard to his miracles. Doubtless such information in regard to the miracles of Jesus and the Twelve had been brought to the tetrarch by the Herodians and their spies, and perhaps, too, by his steward Chusa, whose wife Jesus had healed (Lk 8:3).

Jesus is silent before the tetrarch's interrogation so he is sent back to Pilate. Antipas may have been as unwilling as Pilate to take responsibility for disposing of Jesus. Having borne the approbrium of the people for his treatment of John, the

"fox"-like tetrarch was probably glad that Jesus had been arrested in Jerusalem, where the Romans had jurisdiction.

6.5.6. Conclusion. The Gospels and Acts and Josephus (with some data from Philo)[38] provide extensive information about the ruler in whose tetrarchy Jesus was raised, where John baptized, preached and was beheaded and in which the greater part of Jesus' public ministry was conducted. The dramatic narratives about Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels are, for the most part, set in Galilee, where Herod Antipas was the tetrarch.

Antipas's Hellenizing policies and practices are the background against which we may best understand the rise of John the Baptist but also the ministry of Jesus. Antipas was a true son of Herod the Hellenizer. Both John and Jesus, however, were sons of Israel, committed to Israel's covenant God, Yahweh. So too were the Pharisees, both the local Galileans and the scribes from Jerusalem. John, Jesus and the Pharisees sought and received support from the common people, outraged as they must have been by the impiety and ungodliness of the tetrarch and his supporters at their seat of power in Tiberias.

6.6. Galilee: John the Baptist

John the Baptist was a prophet of Yahweh and son of a priest, Zechariah.[39] John combined in himself the prophetic and priestly traditions of the covenant of Yahweh. From the wilderness, the symbolic place of Israel's purity, he called the people of Israel to return in repentance to Yahweh their God.

John's ministry ran counter to powerful forces in both the religious leadership and the government. His summons to the covenant nation to come to the Jordan for baptism as a sign of the forgiveness of sins was heeded by vast numbers of the people. This represented a sharp challenge to the high priest, who administered an elaborate system of temple sacrifice for atonement of sins. John's call to turn to Yahweh in repentance via the symbolically cleansing waters of the Jordan was a powerful alternative to the sacrifices administered by a corrupt high priest. Likewise, John challenged the authority of the political leadership. His sustained rebuke of the tetrarch for a marriage forbidden under the Torah brought him imprisonment and death. John's fierce loyalty to his faith pitted him against a temporizing high priest and a Hellenizing tetrarch.

6.6.1. John the Baptist in the Gospels. The four Gospels give considerable prominence to John the Baptist, referring to him almost ninety times. Aside from the references to John's role in relationship with Jesus—that is, as forerunner and baptizer—the following details emerge: (1) John baptized large numbers of Israelites in the Jordan River, so far as we can tell on the eastern or Peraean side (Jn 1:28; 10:40). He may have chosen this location within Antipas's jurisdiction to avoid trouble with the Romans, who now controlled Judea.[40] (2) John was held to be a prophet (Mk 11:32). He baptized in the context of his preaching to those

who sought him in the wilderness (Mt 3:1-10; Lk 3:7-14). It is specifically noted that John "did no sign" (Jn 10:41).[41] (3) John was imprisoned by the tetrarch of Galilee-Peraea and was beheaded at the request of the tetrach's wife, Herodias.[42]

6.6.2. John in Josephus. Josephus is the other source of information about John. He devotes a paragraph to "John surnamed the Baptist."[43] Unlike the Gospels, Josephus makes no connection between John and Jesus. Generally speaking, the three details about John in the Synoptic Gospels noted above are also to be found in Josephus.[44] There are differences, however: (1) Josephus does not specify the Jordan River as the location for John's baptizing. (2) Josephus supplies the name of the prison as Machaerus. This fortress was built by Herod the king on a high plateau in Peraea overlooking the Dead Sea. (3) Whereas the Gospels attribute John's arrest and execution to his rebuke of the tetrarch for his marriage to the wife of a brother still alive,[45] Josephus states that Antipas feared John's popularity and the possibility that the common people might follow John in the event of an an uprising. Nonetheless, Josephus knows of and refers to Antipas's divorce of the Nabataean and his marriage to Herodias.[46] (4) Most significant of all, however, is the Synoptic Gospels' portrayal of John as an apocalyptic preacher in contrast to Josephus's emphasis on John's role as a teacher of morality.[47] This is typical of Josephus, who regularly translates apocalytic elements in Judaism into political or philosophical terms, as he does in classifying the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Revolutionaries as four "*philosophies.*"

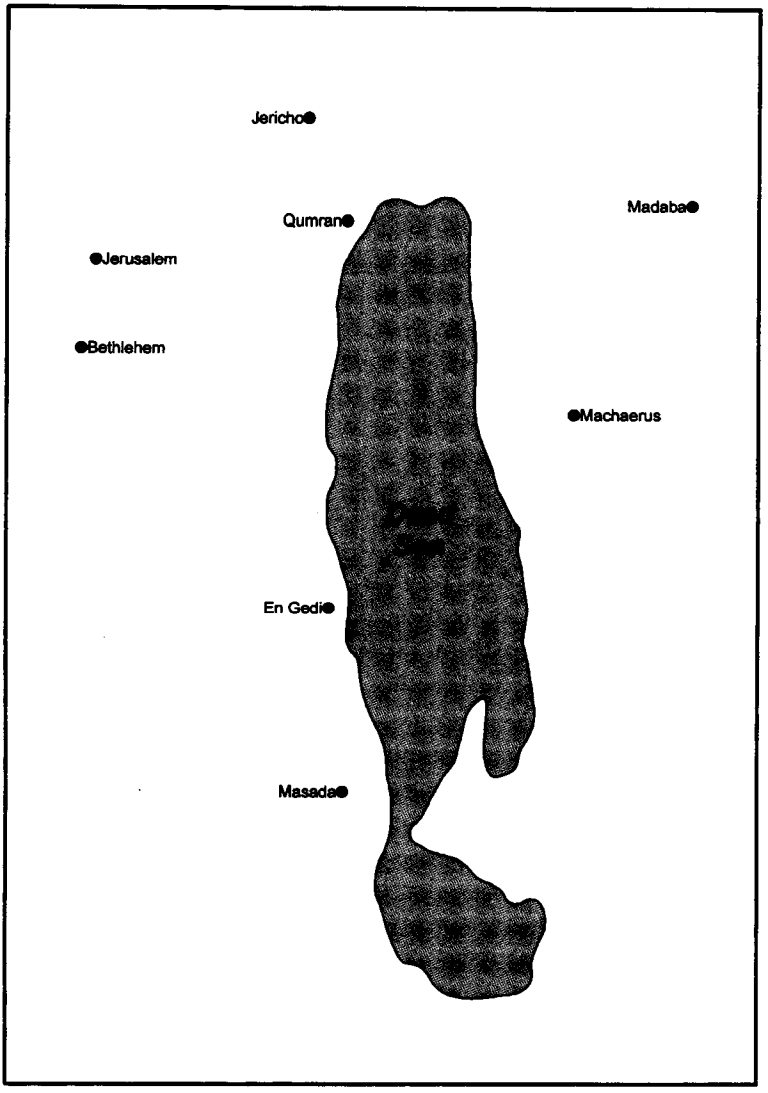
Thus, while in Matthew John preached "repentance" in face of the approaching "kingdom of God," in Josephus John exhorted the people "to live righteous lives, to practice justice towards their fellows and piety towards God." There can be no question, however, that the Gospels have the correct emphasis, historically speaking. Josephus's preacher of morality must be made to fit the Gospels' truer picture of the apocalyptic prophet of Yahweh's impending kingdom and judgment. These four differences are not contradictions but variations of emphasis and detail arising from the writers' own viewpoints and interests. When the Synoptic Gospels and Josephus are looked at side by side, they provide a coherent account of the public ministry of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was a prophet of Yahweh, who consciously fulfilled the oracles of the classic prophets like Isaiah and Malachi.[48] In doing so, he opposed both the Hellenistic tetrarch, Antipas, and the worldly and compromised high priest. John spoke for and represented the (generally) poorer segments of the community who were conservatively committed to the covenant of Yahweh, their God. Many of these same people were followers of the Pharisees and the men of zeal. Jesus belonged to the same stream of thought as John and those who supported him, but with significant differences.

6.6.3. Questions of timing.[49] When did John begin to baptize and prophesy? Luke displays his typical interest in historical detail, informing us that "in the

fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius," that is, in 28, "the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah" (Lk 3:1-2).[50]

What was the length of John's ministry? Two factors bear on our calculations. According to Luke 3:1-2 John began to prophesy in Tiberius's fifteenth year, that is, in 28. On the other hand, Jesus' crucifixion in 33 after a ministry of three to four years locates John's imprisonment some time after Jesus' first Passover in Jerusalem, that is, somtime in 30 (Jn 3:23-24; 4:43; cf Mk 1:14).[51] By our estimates



Map 12. Machaerus

John's ministry lasted approximately two years.[52] Eight years later (in c. 37) when Aretas defeated Antipas in battle, some of the people declared this to be God's vengeance on the tetrarch for his treatment of John.[53] John's ministry could not have been too brief if he created such an impression.

John the Baptist was a significant historical figure, one who forms a clear marker for the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Josephus locates John within the jurisdiction of Herod the tetrarch and Jesus within the jurisdiction of Pilate. Since Herod the tetrarch and Pilate the governor were historical contemporaries in their respective jurisdictions, the Gospels' account of the historical congruence of Jesus with John must be regarded as historically secure. Both men met violent ends at the hands of those who were identified with the Hellenistically oriented ruling classes. Neither John nor Jesus was put to death by the covenant people of Yahweh. John's nemesis was Herod the tetrarch, and Jesus was opposed by the Saduccean high priest, Caiaphas, and the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate.

Note, however, that the traditions of the Synoptics and John vary. The Synoptics suggest that Jesus' ministry began only when John was imprisoned; that is, their ministries were "back to back." John—with greater probability—suggests that the ministries of the two men overlapped for a period (Mt 4:12-13; Mk 1:14; Lk 3:18-23; cf. Jn 3:22-24; 4:1-3). There is no reason to doubt, however, the Gospels' account that John the Baptist provided the immediate historical context for the public ministry of Jesus.

6.6.4. John's message. As noted above, John's message was powerfully eschatological (see Mt 3:10-12). John prophesied that Yahweh was soon to intervene decisively in history. As God's prophets to Israel had done before, John called upon the people to "repent," that is, to "turn back" to Yahweh their covenant God. The people were far from God; despite their confidence in it, their biological descent from Abraham would not save them. Yahweh's axe was raised against them. If the fruits of repentance were not forthcoming, all would be lost in the imminent fiery judgment.

John's demand that the penitents enter the waters of baptism, as a sign of their return to Yahweh, was radical, an assault on their sense of holy nationhood. Baptism was an initiatory rite of passage to Judaism for *Gentiles.*[54]

Unlike Jesus, who promised a place for the Gentiles in God's kingdom (Mt 8:5-13), John focused exclusively upon Israel and her dire plight before Yahweh. Only by returning to Yahweh and being baptized could the people again be considered the children of Abraham (Mt 3:7-10).[55] By contrast, Jesus' invitation was both to Israel as a whole and to "lost" individuals (Mt 10:6; Lk 19:9-10), whether harlots, tax collectors, diseased or disabled. Whereas John summoned Israel the nation to come to the Jordan,[56] Jesus also invited individuals to come to him (Mt 11:28-30). The gathering of "sinners" around Jesus was a sign that the blessings of the kingdom of God were to be extended beyond Israel to the

nations/Gentiles (Lk 8:1-3; 15:1-3). So far as we know, John did not directly address individuals "lost" within Israel.[57] Rather, John addressed Israel as a people "lost" from Yahweh.

The Gospels, unlike Josephus, connect John's message of repentance with the covenantal "turning" of the people expressed by baptism in the Jordan. The Gospel writers recall Malachi (Mal 3:1) and Isaiah (Is 40:3), who prophesied that a "messenger" of Yahweh would "prepare the way" for Yahweh. They see Malachi's oracle fulfilled in a *people* made ready by John for Yahweh's intervention in the coming "mightier" One, Jesus.

The Gospel writers' perceptions of John as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy arose ultimately from John himself. In other words, John had a prophet's consciousness of what he was doing. He knew he was preparing a remnant people for Yahweh's intervention in One who was to come after him.

But John also appears to have been conscious of his critical role as an elect individual from among the people who was given the responsibility of introducing the mightier One. "For this I came baptizing," the fourth Evangelist records him as saying, "that *he* might be revealed to Israel" (Jn 1:31, emphasis added). He pointed to that One as the "Lamb of God" who would bear away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29).

In prophesying the coming One as the agent of Yahweh's kingdom and salvation, John may have created the impression that he was that One. But John insisted that he was not. Across the Gospels there is impressive agreement that John spoke of a "mightier" One who was to come after him, whose sandals he was not worthy to untie (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:7-8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:27; cf. Acts 13:25). In strongly eschatological terms John specifically contrasted his own baptism with water with the baptism with the Holy Spirit by the coming "mightier" One.

It is likely that the high priest and Sanhedrin opposed John. His credentials with the ordinary people were excellent since he was both a prophet and of priestly descent. But his promise of Yahweh's forgiveness upon "turning" back to him expressed by baptism was a clearly unacceptable alternative to the temple and its sacrifices for atonement for sins.[58] Moreover, John foretold the coming of God's true sacrificial lamb, who would bear away sins without the help of temple sacrifices. Jesus' cursing of the fig tree, his clearing of the temple and his predictions of its destruction probably followed the antitemple attitude of John, which in turn followed the polemical teaching of Jeremiah against the temple of the Lord (Jer 7:1-11, 14).

On historical grounds it is concluded that John was the immediate precursor of Jesus. More fundamentally, however, by his prophesying and baptizing John saw himself as preparing the "way for the Lord." Further, it seems likely that by these activities John recognized Jesus as that Israelite who was the Spirit-anointed One who would fulfill the end-time purposes of Yahweh. We can only speculate as

to the place John's ministry had in Jesus' own sense of God's calling and commissioning of him. It may have been significantly greater than we have customarily thought.

6.6.5. Jesus' view of John the Baptist. How did Jesus view John the Baptist? The Gospels record Jesus' opinion of John, which he gave (1) during the John's imprisonment and (2) subsequent to his death.

In Matthew 11:7-19 (= Lk 7:24-35), Jesus is recorded as having sent an answer back to John in prison by several of the baptizer's disciples. John had sent them to Jesus to inquire whether he was the "One who was to come," or was John to look for another.

Jesus reminds the listening crowds why they had gone out to John in the wilderness. It was to see a great prophet, indeed, the one Malachi foretold as preparing "the way of Yahweh." In a none-too-subtle tilt at the tetrarch who has imprisoned John, Jesus said that the people had not gone to the wilderness to see a mere "reed shaken by the wind" or "a courtier wearing soft clothes" in a king's palace. Clearly Jesus saw John as the prophetic forerunner of his own messianic coming and ministry. Great prophet though he was, however, John belonged to the former dispensation, the "not yet" era that anticipated the kingdom of God inaugurated by Jesus' ministry.

Matthew then records a rather puzzling statement, saying that in the time since John began to prophesy—that is, for about two years—"the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force" (Mt 11:12). Clearly this is historical statement describing historical events.[59] But to what is Jesus referring? Was it to the tetrarch's violent seizure of John, prophet and baptizer? Or more probably, was Jesus alluding to the rise of religious-nationalistic zeal, which John's eschatological prophesyings had stirred up, even among Jesus' own followers?

This saying suggests that first John, but then Jesus also, had proclaimed the message of the kingdom of God to Israel (see Mt 3:2). The negative note sounded suggests that some of those who have heard this eschatological message have been stirred to nationalistic zeal rather than to a genuine "return" to their God. Indeed, the miracle signs that Jesus had performed in Bethsaida, Korazin and Capernaum had not provoked repentance. The day would come when, following the twelve disciples' mission to the towns of Galilee, a great crowd of men would converge on Jesus in the wilderness and attempt to force him to become "king" in Galilee (Jn 6:15). But this was not the outcome intended by either John or Jesus. Instead they both sought repentance of the people, including their "lost" ones, a "turning back" to Yahweh their God, in line with the message of Israel's prophets.[60]

According to Jesus, there was a deep perversity among the people made evident by the ministries of John and Jesus. In a parable, he likened them to petulant children who are never happy with whatever game is being played. First they had

dismissed the abstemious John as having a demon. Then they rejected Jesus, who befriended the "sinners," signifying the grace of God's kingdom to "lost" Israelites, as licentious. John and Jesus each had his emphasis to make in the divine sequence, but many missed what they were saying. One spoke with the stern voice of prophecy, calling for repentance at the eleventh hour; the other also called for repentance, but with the gracious voice of salvation, calling the nation but also summoning weary and burdened individuals (Mt 11:28-30; cf. 2 Cor 10:1).

In Mark 9:9-13 (= Mt 17:9-13), Jesus states an opinion of John in the light of his death. Jesus identifies John as a second Elijah, one who, according to the prophet Malachi, was sent by God to "turn the hearts" of fathers and of children (Mal 4:5-6). Malachi's words had created an expectation of this sort of restorer who would precede the Messiah.

True, John did not see himself in that role (Jn 1:21). But Jesus, reflecting upon John's powerful influence, which had led many to repent, saw John the prophet and baptizer as the expected Elijah-restorer. According to popular belief the second Elijah would be a fiery figure; the original Elijah had been taken to heaven in a flaming chariot (2 Kings 1:11-12). But Jesus knew that, as the Son of man would *suffer* at the hands of the people, so too would "Elijah." Neither man would enjoy glory now; they would experience only rejection and suffering. But Jesus' verdict on John, given posthumously, establishes that in Jesus' mind John was indeed the divinely sent forerunner who would restore a people to God and make them ready for the "mightier" One who was to come.

6.6.6. Summary. John the Baptist is well attested in the Gospels and in an interesting parallel statement in Josephus. John is of great importance in establishing a precise historical context for the beginnings of the ministry of Jesus. Moreover, the Gospel writers—following the perceptions of both John and Jesus—saw John as sent by God to prepare the people of God for the coming of the One God had promised to send to Israel. Further, Jesus' identity and role were revealed to Israel—and perhaps to Jesus himself—through John's ministry. John's ministry provided a definition for Jesus' ministry. Jesus' words about John indicate that Jesus saw himself as a coprophet with John in announcing the kingdom of God, though Jesus emphasized the mercy of the kingdom to the lost sheep among the people of Israel. Beyond that, Jesus' comments show that he saw himself as that heaven-sent mightier One, the Lord's anointed, the Son of Man who would suffer for the deliverance of the covenant nation and the peoples of the world. John the Baptist is of singular importance in relation to the ministry of Jesus.

6.7. Conclusion

Jesus of Nazareth was born a few years before the death of Herod the king and the subsequent division of his realm. Thus Jesus spent his childhood, youth, adult life and ministry in the jurisdiction of Galilee and Peraea, which Herod Antipas

ruled from about 4 B.C. until his exile in A.D. 39. John the Baptist, who "prepared the way" for Jesus also lived within the tenure of this ruler. The great prophet appears to have preached and baptized from the Peraean side of the Jordan, that is, within Antipas's region. He was imprisoned and executed at Machaerus in Peraea in that tetrarch's territory. Clearly this region, its ruler, religion and culture were highly significant since Jesus spent the greater part of his life there and both John and Jesus exercised their ministries there. The quest for the historical John and the historical Jesus cannot be divorced from the quest for the historical Galilee and Peraea.

Further reading

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Notes

[1]Scrupulous Pharisees from Jerusalem took a rather more critical view of the *am ha 'aretz*, the "people of the land" (Jn 7:49).

[2]See Sean Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1980). In his article "The Geography, Politics and Economics of Galilee," in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p. 76, Freyne warned that "the quest for Jesus is rapidly in danger of becoming the quest for the historical Galilee."

[3]The Gospel of Mark, for example, refers accurately to the region *(chōra)* of the Gerasenes (Mk 5:1), the border *(ta horia)* of Tyre (Mk 7:24) and the villages (*kōmai*) of Bethsaida and Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8:22, 26-27). Mark's narrative and the parables of Jesus that appear in the Synoptic Gospels, with their references to villages, fields, marketplaces, fishing, casual laborers, absentee landlords and wealthy estate owners, are consistent with our growing understanding of Galilee of the period. See A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 120-43.

[4]For the limitation of social studies for understanding the historical Jesus, see Paul W. Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 19-22.

[5]Herod became a dynastic title, which Antipas appears to have used after Archelaus's exile in A.D. 6.

[6]On Herod Antipas, with literature, see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. and ed. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973), 1: 340-53; Harold Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1980), and *DJG*, pp. 322-24.

[7]See further Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, p. 14.

[8]Josephus *J.W.* 2.22.

[9]The Synoptic Gospels provide two kinds of information about Herod Antipas, the official and the personal. First, these sources provide information about his *official* position. According to Mark, he is "King Herod," whereas both Matthew and Luke, with greater precision, call him "Herod the tetrarch" (Mk 6:14; Mt 14:1; Lk 3:1; 9:7; Acts 13:1; cf. Mt 14:9). Luke knows that Galilee is "Herod's jurisdiction" (Lk 23:6-7). Matthew and Mark are aware that Herod Antipas seized and imprisoned John over the prophet's admonitions regarding marriage to Herodias (Mt 14:3-4; Mk 6:17-18). All three Synoptics understand that Antipas had John beheaded in prison.

Second, the Gospels give us some understanding of Antipas's *character* and of the nature of his administration. What is the source of this information? The Gospels depend, directly or indirectly, on the original disciples of Jesus, who were Galileans and therefore aware of life in the tetrarchy. Inside information about the tetrarch was also available to these disciples through Joanna, wife of Antipas's steward, Chusa. Moreover, Manaen, the former courtier of Herod the tetrarch, came to be a prophet in the church in Syrian Antioch (cf. Acts 13:1), the likely home of Luke the historian, author of the two-volume work covering the life and ministry of Jesus and the progress of the witness to Christ from Jerusalem to Rome.

[10]Cf. Josephus *Life* 85-86.
[11]Ibid., 65.
[12]Ibid., 66-67.
[13]For the view that the reeds on Antipas's coinage struck at Tiberias relate to the reeds of the Lake of Galilee at Tiberias, which Jesus' dismissive remark in Matthew 11:11 associates with the tetrarch, see Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), pp. 25-42.
[14]Greek *tois megistasin autou kai tois chiliarchois kai tois prōtois* (Mk 6:21).
[15]Josephus *Life* 33.
[16]Ibid., 67, 296, 313, 381.
[17]See Peter Richardson, *Herod King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 259-60, for the view that the "Herodians" arose during the era of Herod the king and that he was the object of their loyalty. While this may have been the origin of the group, our only evidence comes from the period of Herod the tetrarch.
[18]Greek *basilikos;* John 4:46.
[19]Greek *epitropos.* Alternatively, he may have been foreman of an estate or estates (cf. Josephus *Ant.* 18.194).
[20]Greek *syntrophos* is literally "nourished with," but the word can also mean "boyhood friend" or "intimate friend," that is, "courtier."
[21]Josephus *J.W.* 2.95; *Ant.* 17.318.
[22]It appears that Herod the Great did not pay tribute to Rome. See earlier §4.3.
[23]Freyne, "Geography," pp. 101-4, argues that Jesus' endorsement of tax collectors was offensive, not because they were social outcasts but because they were associated with prostitutes, as part of the promiscuous inner workings of the tetrarchy.
[24]The Galilean leaders (*prōtoi*) anticipated that the agricultural strike over Caligula's threat to desecrate the temple would lead to banditry since the striking peasants would not have the wherewithal to pay their taxes. See Josephus *J.W.* 2.184-203; *Ant.* 18.261-309.
[25]Josephus *Life* 38; *J.W.* 2.247; 6.354.
[26]Josephus *Ant.* 18.245.
[27]Cf. Freyne, "Geography," pp. 116-21.
[28]According to Mark 6:17 and Matthew 14:3, Herodias was the wife of "his brother, Philip," whereas Josephus states that she was the wife of "Herod" (*Ant.* 18.9). For discussion, see Hoehner, *Herod Antipas,* pp. 131-136, who concludes that both sources are referring to the same person.
[29]Josephus *Ant.* 18.113-16.
[30]This is not to suggest that such references are to be accepted naively, at face value. One must recognize that the biblical writers, like others in that era, have their own points to make. Part of the historian's craft is to assess their overall redactional interests.
[31]Josephus *Life* 235.
[32]Mark and John give the most extensive accounts, each telling his story with his own emphasis. For Mark, Jesus is the compassionate shepherd-king feeding the people with an abundance of peasant fare in contrast with the orgy of a cruel and drunken king in which the righteous prophet John is beheaded. The fourth Evangelist, on the other hand, relates his narrative to underscore Jesus as all-knowing and all-powerful in contrast with the disciples in their helpless unbelief.
[33]Remarkably, however, Mark omits altogether the climactic king-making attempt of the Galileans. Does Mark pass over this treasonable detail out of consideration for a Roman readership who might be alarmed to think that the founder of this new movement could incite such political disruption in his homeland?
[34]H. W. Montefiore, "Revolt in the Desert?" *NTS* 8 (1962): 135-41. Montefiore calls this incident "the real watershed in gospel history" (p. 141).
[35]This was the most significant of a number of withdrawals by Jesus from Antipas's jurisdiction; see Hoehner, *Herod Antipas,* pp. 199-202. Cf. Joseph B. Tyson, "Jesus and Herod Antipas," *JBL* 79 (1960): 230-46, who qualifies any theory that Jesus loomed large in the tetrarch's thinking.

[36]See Hoehner, *Herod Antipas,* pp. 343-47, who points out that the fox as inferior was sometimes contrasted with the lion, which symbolized greatness. If Jesus was the Davidic "lion of Judah," Antipas was a mere "fox".

[37]See Marion L. Soards, "Tradition, Composition and Theology in Luke's Account of Jesus," *Biblica* 66 (1985): 344-63. Philo, in *Legatio ad Gaium* 299-305, notes that Antipas was present in Jerusalem for Passover on another occasion, the incident of the gilded shields.

[38]Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* 299-305.

[39]For discussion on the various aspects of John the Baptist, with literature, see Ben Witherington III, *DJG,* pp. 383-91, and Robert L. Webb, "John the Baptist and His Relationship with Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus,* ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 179-229. Richard T. France, "Jesus the Baptist?" in *Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ,* ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 94-111, argues not only for the continuity between John and Jesus, but—less convincingly—that Jesus pointedly continued to baptize throughout his ministry.

[40]There is ample evidence from Josephus that the Roman authorities were concerned about charismatic prophetic figures. See further, Paul W. Barnett, "The Jewish Sign Prophets," *NTS* 27 (1981): 679-97.

[41]Moreover, Josephus does not mention any signs associated with John the Baptist.

[42]John is silent about John's death; Luke does not attribute it to Herodias's influence.

[43]Josephus *Ant.* 18.116-19.

[44]Lamar Cope, "The Death of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Mt; or, the Case of the Confusing Conjunction," *CBQ* 38 (1976): 515-19, finds Josephus's account to be without bias and probably wholly correct as opposed to the lurid account of John's death in the Gospels.

[45]While the Gospel of John gives no reason for John's arrest, a degree of hostility toward him from the religious establishment in Jerusalem is suggested by their interrogation of him (Jn 1:19-29; 4:1).

[46]Josephus *Ant.* 18.103, 113.

[47]Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins* (London: SPCK, 1985), p. 132, sees Josephus supporting the eschatological style of John.

[48]For a sociological analysis of various kinds of prophets of this era, see Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985).

[49]See excursus 1A, 19-22.

[50]Significantly, too, it is Luke who gives the information that (1) John's father Zechariah was a priest (of the division of Abijah), (2) his mother Elizabeth was also of the priestly line of Aaron, (3) Mary and Elizabeth were related (Lk 1:36), and (4) John was conceived in the days of Herod, king of Judea (Lk 1:5).

[51]See later, excursus 8A, pp. 171-72.

[52]Paul L. Maier, "The Date of the Nativity and the Chronology of Jesus' Life," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos,* ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), p. 120, estimates that the duration of John's public activities was six to nine months.

[53]Josephus *Ant.* 18.116.

[54]Epictetus (cited in Arrianus *Dissertiones* 2.19.19-20) refers to God-fearers' baptism. For discussion, see Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 5. Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 119-20; see also T. W. Manson, *The Servant Messiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 43-45.

[55]Manson, *The Servant Messiah,* pp. 43-45, argues that John was saying that the people were no better than Gentiles in the eyes of God.

[56]To be sure, John addressed *groups,* like tax collectors and soldiers (Lk 3:10-14). Nonetheless, his words to them were expansions upon his more general summons to repentance.

[57]Although tax collectors and prostitutes repented at John's preaching (Mt 21:32), it is not evident that John directed his ministry to them in the way Jesus did.

[58]Webb, "John the Baptist," p. 197.

[59]See Paul W. Barnett, "Who Were the BIASTAI?" *RTR* 36 (1977): 65-70.

[60]There were revolutionaries among the Pharisees; not all were pious quietists. For example, in A.D. 6 the Pharisee Saddok formed an alliance with Judas the Gaulanite/Galilean to overthrow the Roman rule that had come to Judea. In response to the imposition of personal tax payable to the Roman emperor after the annexation of Judea as a Roman province, Judas and Saddok preached against payment of the tax on the grounds that the people of God should submit to no master except the Lord. (See Josephus *J.W.* 2.118; *Ant.* 18.4, 23; Acts 5:37.) Theirs was one version of the kingdom of God, but Jesus' was another. He said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Mk 12:17). And in relationship to the kingdom of God that he preached, he declared that he was "gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt 11:29), that is, no revolutionary.

7

Jesus' Context

Judea

7.1. Introduction

The major setting for John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth is Galilee-Peraea. Yet because of profound historical and religious attachment, Galilee and Peraea cannot be separated from Judea and its temple city, Jerusalem. Officials from Jerusalem were sent to Peraea to speak to John about his identity and mission (Jn 1:19-24). Pharisaic scholars came from Jerusalem to Galilee to look into the activities of Jesus in Galilee (Mk 3:22; 7:1). Jesus visited Jerusalem regularly for the great religious festivals and, according to the Gospel of John, spent his final six months in and around the Holy City (Jn 7:10; 10:22-23, 40; 11:17-19, 54; 12:1). Jerusalem in Judea must be regarded as a critical setting for the ministry of Jesus.

7.2. Sources of information

It is helpful to know the topography in and around Jerusalem in reconstructing Jesus' world. However, the extensive overlay of buildings in Jerusalem from the time of the Roman destruction of the city in 70 through the Byzantine, Crusader and Ottoman eras until today makes that reconstruction difficult. Nonetheless, the Mount of Olives, the Kidron Valley, Gethsemane and Siloam outside the present Ottoman walls can be visited and Jesus' activities in them readily imagined. Inside the walls the steady work of archaeologists has made possible a recovery of a number of large mansions that may have been typical of the domiciles of high priests. Significant expanses of the walls of the Temple Mount are now exposed, as well as the street level of Herodian Jerusalem at a number of points.

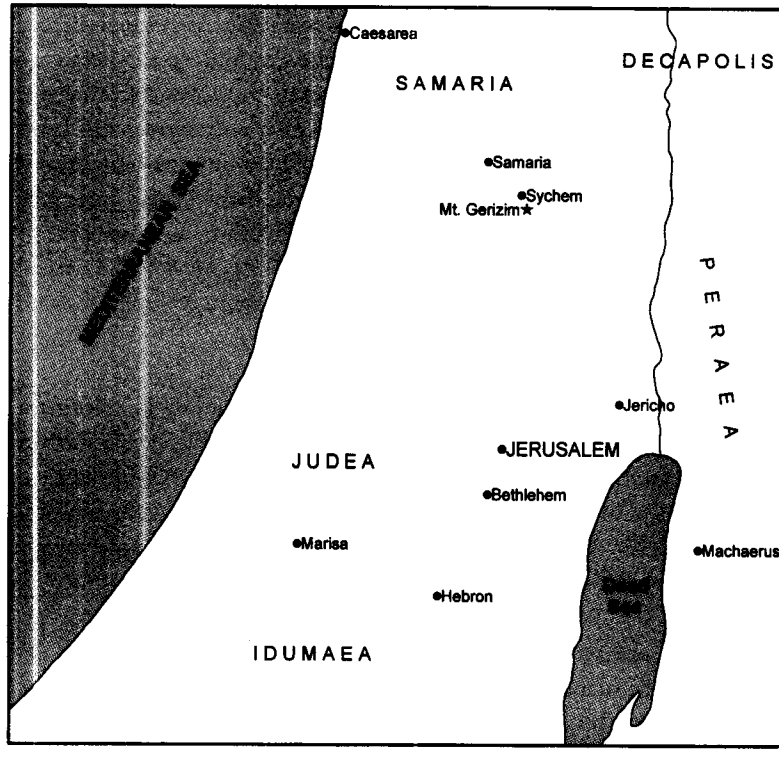
As with Galilee Josephus provides extensive eyewitness descriptions of a location important to Jesus' ministry. A Jerusalemite, Josephus was present with the Roman

general Titus at the final stages of the siege, capture and destruction of the city, providing lengthy accounts of the disposition of the city and its temple. Much of the Gospel of John, in particular, is set in and around pre-war Jerusalem. Also helpful are John's references to Hebrew/Aramaic place names, Bethzatha, Gabbatha and Golgotha (Jn 5:2; 19:13, 17), and to "the portico of Solomon" in the temple, where Jesus took shelter at the time of the feast of Dedication *(Hanukkah)*, which falls in midwinter (Jn 10:22-23).

7.3. Judea after the death of Herod

As noted in the previous chapter, the Gospel of Luke states that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of the emperor Tiberius, that is, in A.D. 28. Of the officials in office at that moment, Pontius Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas were associated with Judea (Lk 3:1-2). Jesus became involved with each of these men. To understand Judea in the time of Jesus' ministry we need to retrace our steps to the death of Herod the king.

7.3.1. Archelaus. At Herod's death in 4 B.C., approximately half of his former



Map 13. Samaria, Judea, Idumaea

realm—Judea, Idumaea and Samaria—was handed to his son Archelaus with the title *ethnarch* (= "ruler of a nation").

Few details of Archelaus's ethnarchy have survived.[1] According to Josephus, "Archelaus, on taking possession of his ethnarchy, did not forget old feuds, but treated not only Jews but even Samaritans with great brutality."[2] This is confirmed by Matthew, who noted that Joseph and Mary were afraid to go to Judea when they heard that Archelaus was now the ruler (Mt 2:22).[3]

In Archelaus's ninth year, the Jews and the Samaritans both sent delegates to Augustus, complaining of the ethnarch's treatment. The emperor banished him to Gaul, confiscating his property for his own treasury.[4] Most probably those who denounced Archelaus in A.D. 6 were drawn from the same disaffected aristocracy who sent a fifty-strong embassy to Augustus in 4 B.C. to seek Jewish autonomy under Roman rule rather than submit to further Herodian rule.[5]

The emperor then took a step every Jew must have dreaded. Judea was annexed as a province of Rome, under the control of a military governor (called a *prefect).* Meanwhile, the two other principalities continued to be ruled by the Herodian princes, Philip and Antipas.

7.3.2. Judea under Roman rule. Augustus would have been glad to accede to this request for autonomy under Roman rule. Client rulers were only a temporary arrangement, preparing the way to full Romanization. So now Judea was to become a Roman province, subject to a military governor. The prefect, however, would operate through an indigenous intermediary, the Sanhedrin based in Jerusalem, which was to be responsible for civil administration and tax collection.[6] The prefect, who resided at Caesarea, was responsible for internal and external security and for deciding capital cases. For these purposes he would travel throughout the province to conduct hearings.

In regional terms Judea could be considered in several ways. On one hand, it consisted of eleven toparchies[7] centered on eleven cities, each looking to Jerusalem as the capital.[8] On the other hand, Judea could be thought of as three ethnic-religious regions, Samaria, Idumaea and Judea proper.[9] While the Sanhedrin had a special overarching place in the whole of Judea, it appears that Samaria and Idumaea also had *(ad hoc?)* collectives of local leaders who could exert pressure on the Roman authorities. A council of Samaria complained to the legate of Syria about Pontius Pilate who, in consequence, was sent to Rome for trial before the emperor.[10] Perhaps a similar body existed in Idumaea.[11]

Despite the apparent dissimilarity of this new arrangement, the real divisions evident in Herod's era were, if anything, intensified. The cultural chasm between Judaism and Hellenism so evident then was now even more apparent. Power and wealth remained concentrated in the hands of those who were overtly or secretly admirers of Hellenism and who were now dependent upon the Roman administration. The greater part of the community, who sought to remain true to the

historic faith of Israel, were relatively poor and powerless.

Judea's beginnings as a Roman province were turbulent. There were a number of Roman prefects from A.D. 6 to A.D. 26. The first governor, Coponius, arrived accompanied by his superior, Quirinius, the legate of Syria. As the Roman supremo in Antioch, Quirinius, a noted military leader, was the most powerful Roman in the eastern part of the empire.

The immediate task of Coponius and Quirinius was to establish arrangements for the taxation of the people of Judea, payable to Rome; formerly, taxes had been paid to the ethnarch, Archelaus. To that end, the value of the property of the people of Judea must first be assessed as a basis for the payment of personal tax.[12] The collection of the tax was supervised by the Sanhedrin by means of contracted tax collectors, known as ***publicani***. To assist in this painful process Quirinius and Coponius appointed Joazar, a high priest known to be sympathetic to the Roman cause. Joazar was successful in persuading a majority of Judeans to submit to the new arrangements.

These Jewish leaders were willing to cooperate with the Gentiles, but many of the people were opposed to taxes being paid directly to Rome. A Galilean named Judas,[13] supported by a Pharisee named Saddok, led an uprising against the Romans over the registration of property and the imposition of a tax payable to Gentile Rome. According to the Scriptures, God alone had the authority to number his people (Num 1:1-2); the hated Roman oppressor was usurping the place of Israel's covenant God. The message of Judas and Saddok was that God, not the Roman emperor, was their Lord.[14] To submit to the registration was to hand themselves over to the Gentiles in slavery and to lose their identity as the covenant people of Yahweh.

The insurrection led by Judas and Saddok was in the tradition of "zeal" for Yahweh expressed earlier, first by the house of Hasmon against the Hellenizing Antiochus IV in 167 B.C. Then Pharisees had forced the removal of idolatrous trophies for athletic competitions in Jerusalem, which Herod had introduced near the beginning of his reign. More recently, at the end of Herod's reign, the Pharisees had opposed the erection of a golden eagle on the temple gate.[15]

According to Josephus, this Judas established a "Fourth Philosophy."[16] (Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes were the other three "philosophies.")[17] It was a "philosophy" that followed Pharisaic beliefs; that is, it was committed to the mainstream Jewish theology of the times. What made the "philosophy" different from other Pharisees and Pharisee-influenced Jews was that its members were radically committed to direct action, killing and being killed for the name of Yahweh. Other Pharisees took a passive view of Gentile evils in their midst, seeing them as the judgment of the Lord upon the people, evils that were to be patiently borne until the Last Day, when *God* would avenge his people.[18]

It must not be thought, however, that Judas founded the Zealot faction.[19]

Rather, the Fourth Philosophy was a shared viewpoint that led individuals and groups to take direct and violent action on an *ad hoc* basis. The Zealot faction, as a political structure, was not established until after the outbreak of the war, in c. A.D. 67.[20]

The Roman forces put down the insurrection led by Judas and Saddok. Judas was killed and his supporters scattered (Acts 5:37); we do not know the fate of Saddok.[21] The issue of payment of taxes to Rome, however, was far from dead. According to Tacitus, "problems had arisen in Syria and Judaea" in 17, early in Tiberius's principate, over the oppressive burdens of taxation. We do not know what those "problems" were, but we do know that the peoples of the provinces petitioned the emperor for a reduction of the tribute.[22] Elsewhere Tacitus wrote that "under Tiberius all was quiet,"[23] but the payment of tribute remained a sore point. In 33 the Pharisees and Herodians posed an exquisitely awkward question to Jesus, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Mk 12:14). If he replied "yes" he was damned with those like Joazar as a pro-Roman quisling, but if he replied "no" he was damned in the eyes of the Gentile Romans as a latter-day Judas the Galilean. By his deft answer Jesus distanced himself from cause of violent revolution. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's [taxes], and to God the things that are God's [worship]," he said. Religious nationalism and violence were not to be the way of the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus.

The accession of Tiberius in A.D. 14 was marked by a change of policy regarding the length of a prefect's appointment. Augustus had recalled his governors after three years, but Tiberius kept them in place for a decade or so. Cynically, if realistically, he reasoned that because prefects would plunder their people anyway, it was less disruptive for them to be subject to infrequent changeover. He likened the provincials to a bleeding man and the incoming governors to hungry flies; if the flies were sated by a long spell of blood sucking, the bleeding man would be less likely to die from the frenzied attacks of hungry flies![24]

Apart from the turbulent beginning of Roman rule in A.D. 6 and possible troubles over tribute in 17, we have no evidence of troubles in Judea until 26. In that year L. Aelius Sejanus became Praetorian prefect in Rome, and Pontius Pilate was sent as prefect to the province of Judea.

7.4. The Pharisees

Josephus speaks of three valid "philosophies" or religious factions among the Jews[25]—Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes[26]—and the "Fourth Philosophy,"[27] which he rejects. The Pharisees and Essenes were strong adherents to the covenant of Yahweh and powerfully opposed to Hellenism.

The Pharisees were the theological and moral watchdogs of the covenant people. They exercised their influence through the synagogues, working against the corrupting Hellenizing leaven of the Herods and their circle of wealthy supporters.

The Pharisees appear to have evolved from the Hasidaeans, those pious scholars who emerged during the latter part of the Persian epoch to uphold the fundamentals of the covenant of Yahweh.[28] Their offshoot, the Pharisees, are first referred to in the mid-second century B.C.29

The origin of their name remains unclear.[30] Was *pharisee* derived from *perushim,* "separatists," because they had "separated" from the Hasidaeans during the days of John Hyrcanus? Or was their name somehow derived from *Persianizer* because of their apocalyptic beliefs in resurrection, angels, demons and Satan, which in some ways resembled elements of Persian Zoroastrian theology? Or did their name derive from the word *paroshim,* "specifiers," because of their exactness in defining the requirements of God? The derivation of the name *pharisee* is as yet undetermined.

According to the Mishnah, *Abot* (c. A.D. 200), the Pharisees saw themselves as maintaining a living tradition that went back to Moses. Moses "received the law" from Mount Sinai (i.e., from God) and "committed" it to Joshua. The prophets "committed" the law to the Great Synagogue.[31] From that body, generation by generation, the law was "committed" to faithful disciples who "received" it. In c. 40 B.C. Shemaiah and Abtalion "received the law" and in c. 20 B.C. they "committed" it to Hillel and Shammai. Next in succession was Gamaliel,[32] who was either the son or grandson of Hillel.[33] Gamaliel the elder, the teacher of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:3),[34] was the most eminent Pharisee during the time of Jesus' adult life and ministry.

Although they lacked the financial influence of the aristocratic Sadducees, the Pharisees wielded great power with the people at large, as attested by Josephus and Philo:

> The Pharisees are considered the most accurate interpreters of the laws, and hold the position of the leading sect.
>
> There are thousands who have their eyes on [God], full of zeal for the laws of the ancestral institutions, merciless to any who subvert them.[35]

The Gospel accounts of Jesus' relationship with the Pharisees tend to be rather unshaded. In reality, however, they were by no means a monolithic group. For example, the disciples of Hillel and Shammai differed sharply on many issues. Most probably there were numbers of Pharisees who were not opposed to Jesus (cf. Mk 12:28-34; Lk 7:36-49; 13:31; Jn 3:1-15; 7:50-51; 19:39), especially (it would appear) those who followed the more liberal judgments of Hillel. Nonetheless, even when allowances are made for the Gospels' rather generalized account, there is strong evidence for conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees.

First, Jesus differed with them over the identification and interpretation of the law. Jesus recognized the law as given in its brevity to Moses. But according to the

Pharisees' tradition, they were expected to "make a fence around the Law."[36] This meant that each of the commandments was to be protected by numerous ancillary regulations, as demanded by cultural circumstances. By the time the Mishnah was compiled, to take one example, thirty-nine examples of work forbidden on the sabbath were listed, including minor acts such as separating two threads.[37] Jesus argued, in response to the Pharisees, that the original intention of the law was being lost ("the sabbath is made for man, not man for the sabbath"; see Mk 2:23—3:6) and was even being corrupted by the traditions of men (see Mk 7:9-13).

The Pharisees' "fence" around the law also effectively fenced off many people from the life of the synagogue, where the law was publicly read. The "sinners"—those who could not remember or forgot to keep or refused to keep this plethora of rules—were excluded from the Pharisaic community. These wayward ones were believed to be preventing God's redemption of his covenant people. The Talmud records a teaching that was probably current in the time of Jesus: "If Israel were to keep two Sabbaths according to the rules, they would immediately be redeemed."[38] Jesus not only ate with these lawbreakers, but he also emboldened others to break the sabbath and other rules by his example, although he was himself a synagogue teacher. Many Pharisees must have believed that Jesus brought a curse upon the people by his law breaking.

A second critical difference lay in the area of ritual defilement and purification. Under Pharisaic teaching from Leviticus, Jews were accustomed to the ritual washing of their hands prior to eating (Mk 7:2; Jn 2:6).[39] Jesus, however, argued that people are morally tainted from within; ritual washing does not cleanse this immorality. The historicity of his exchange with the Pharisees is secured by Mark's appeal to the new freedom in eating within the early church; relief from the necessity for ritual washing meant relief from restrictions in eating. Jesus proposed a new vision of the human condition before God, which allowed practical domestic freedom, making "all foods clean" (Mk 7:19).

A third probable source of conflict with some of the Pharisees was Jesus' rejection of the use of violence to free Israel from her bondage to Gentile powers. Some Pharisees (the followers of Hillel?) passively accepted as divine punishment Rome's occupation of the land belonging to God's covenant people.[40] Others (followers of Shammai?), however, advocated the way of righteous zeal and the use of the sword to bring redemption. In A.D. 6 Judas the Galilean was supported by Saddok, a Pharisee, in the Jewish uprising against the Roman census that was to lead to direct personal taxation.[41] Jesus, however, repudiated the way of zealous violence against Gentiles as a means of securing Israel's freedom (cf. Mt 5:43-48; 6:12).

Despite these and other differences, Jesus and the Pharisees had much in common. Both he and they pointed to the sacred writings as their guide in all

things. Both he and they held to the same overarching eschatological framework, upholding the beginning of history at the creation, but also its end at the universal resurrection. The conflict arose because in seeking to defend the covenant of Yahweh, they had, he asserted, obscured its basic message and meaning from the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." More fundamentally, however, whereas he saw himself as the messianic fulfillment of the hopes of that covenant and the bringer of the kingdom of God, they saw him as its destroyer, in league with and empowered by Satan (Mk 3:22).

The ministry of Jesus in Galilee attracted the attention of Pharisaic leaders from Jerusalem who visited the tetrarchy to confront the controversial rabbi (Mk 3:22; 7:1). After all, Galilee had only been brought back again under the covenant in Hasmonaean times. It lay to the north of apostate Samaria and was quite vulnerable to syncretism. Moreover, it was "Galilee of the Gentiles," surrounded to the east, north and west by Gentile city-states and bisected by the great Via Maris with its multitudes of Gentile travelers. Galilee was subject to influences not experienced in Judea. The scribes of the Jerusalem academies needed to apply the strictures of Pharisaic orthodoxy in Galilee; otherwise this region would easily slip back into the darkness of paganism and once again be lost from the covenant people. Jesus was of particular concern to these covenant guardians based at Mount Zion.

7.5. Sadducees

Another "philosophy," the Sadducees, was a small sect associated with a few wealthy families from whom the high priests were drawn. The Sadducees tended to look both ways at once. On one hand, their high priests desired support from the covenant people on whose behalf they scrupulously observed the Levitical requirements in the ritual and ceremony of the temple. On the other hand, they depended upon the Romans to preserve and protect their power and wealth. In any uprising against Rome, they stood to lose everything, as indeed they did in the war from 66 to 70.[42] The other "philosophies," with varying emphases, sought passionately to preserve Israel's religious heritage.

Drawn from a small number of wealthy families, these men were closely connected with the ruling Roman power. Moreover, their Sadducean theology was about the "here and now" with a this-worldly eschatology of the first five books of the Bible. They did not espouse the Pharisaic and apocalyptic doctrine of the resurrection of the body and universal judgment at the end of history.[43] Although they carefully observed the rituals set out in the Pentateuch in the temple, the people at large knew that they did not stand in the mainstream of Jewish orthodoxy. Jesus' "cleansing" of the temple gave some idea of his attitude toward them. Moreover, he predicted that they would participate in his death, in collaboration with the Romans (Mk 8:31; 10:33).

7.6. High priests from Joazar to Caiaphas

Jerusalem was the domain of the high priest of the temple, who was also the president of the council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin. Following annexation of Judea as a Roman province in 6, the high priest and the Sanhedrin assumed new significance.[44] In the complex religious society of Judea, Gentile Romans would be unwise to attempt to rule directly. The high priest along with senior associates called "chief priests," who appear to have been close family members,[45] formed a sacral oligarchy within the Sanhedrin. All power in Judea, and particularly in Jerusalem, was concentrated in their hands. The high priest and the chief priests acted as surrogate to the Roman governor, answerable to him, governing the people in his place.

Beginning with the annexation of Judea in 6 and throughout Augustus's remaining years until his death in 14, the high priesthood had been dominated by one man, Annas. At the critical time of annexation, Quirinius and Coponius used Joazar as high priest to push through the explosive task of instituting direct taxation to the Romans.[46] But once the registration of property was achieved, the Romans dispensed with Joazar, perhaps because he was too closely associated with the Romans and their unpopular taxation. Whatever the reason, the Roman administration appointed a less unpopular figure, Annas, to the post.[47] Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas were to control Judean affairs throughout the greater part of the first period of Roman rule in Judea (6-41). Between them, they held the office of high priest for almost the entire period (see table 6).

Tiberius's first prefect, Gratus, experimented briefly with other high priests but soon returned to the Annas dynasty, appointing Caiaphas high priest in 18, a position he held until 37. Although Caiaphas fulfilled the office of high priest, it appears that he did so under the shadow of his father-in-law, Annas. Annas's name

Roman Prefects	High Priests
Coponius (6-9)	Joazar* (6)
	Annas** (6)
Ambibulus (9-11)	
Rufus (12-14)	
Gratus (15-26)	Ishmael (15)
	Eleazar** (son of Annas) (16)
	Simon (17)
	Caiaphas** (son-in-law of Annas) (18)
Pontius Pilate (26-37)	
Marcellus (37)	Jonathan** (son of Annas) (37)
Marullus (37-41)	Theophilus** (son of Annas) (37)

(* = family of Boethus; ** = family of Annas)

Table 6. High priests in Palestine A.D. 6-41

continues to appear as high priest in the Gospels and the book of Acts even though he had technically relinquished that office nearly twenty years earlier (see Lk 3:2;

Jn 18:13, 24; Acts 4:6). Both men are mentioned in the writings of Josephus, though it is from the New Testament we discover that Caiaphas was son-in-law to Annas (Jn 18:13). This detail explains how he came to be appointed in the first place and why Annas continued to be named as high priest alongside Caiaphas.

In 1992 an ossuary (burial bone chest) was discovered in Jerusalem bearing the words, "Joseph son of Caiaphas"; Josephus refers to him as "Joseph who is called Caiaphas" and "Joseph surnamed Caiaphas."[48] This chance discovery has confirmed the integrity of the ancient texts of the Gospels and Acts and Josephus.

Clearly, successive Roman emperors and their governors felt that the Annas family served them well as surrogates. The ordinary members of the covenant people, however, saw a different side of this family. This viewpoint survives in the *Lament of Abba Saul:*

> Woe is me for the house of Hanin [Annas].
> Woe is me because of their whisperings.[49]

According to this lament, the house of Annas was adept at political intrigue, at "whisperings." Moreover, it is almost certain that the high priests bribed Roman governors to appoint them to their lucrative and powerful position. Close members of the family were appointed to senior positions in the administration. The *Lament of Abba Saul* concludes:

> For they are the high priests
> Their sons are the treasurers;
> Their sons-in-law are Temple officers.
> And their servants beat the people with sticks.[50]

The ordinary members of the covenant—as, indeed Jesus was—suffered at the hands of the members of this corrupt hierarchy who were compromised by their relationship with the occupying Gentile power. Jesus of Nazareth was to suffer at their hands.

The Synoptic Gospels—Mark in particular—portray Jesus as aware that he would face rejection from the chief priests during his forthcoming visit to Jerusalem (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34). Jesus knew that Jerusalem was their domain, at least in terms of worldly power and politics. His mounted entry into Jerusalem in a manner prophesied for Israel's messianic king (Zech 9:9),[51] his ejection of the merchants from the temple and his public teaching in the temple precincts deliberately challenged the authority of the temple hierarchy. The son of David prophesied by Nathan would build a house for the name of Yahweh, but this corrupt house must first be overturned.

Inevitably the incumbents confronted him with the question, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" (Mk 11:28). Their authority came from the Roman emperor, mediated through his

prefect. But who gave Jesus the right to act like this within *their* jurisdiction? Jesus had given his answer in advance by his provocative actions in riding up to the temple as the son of David and in clearing the house of God of traders, an action belonging to the day of the Lord (Zech 14:21). He completed his reply in the parable of the heir of the vineyard (Mk 11:27—12:11). Jesus was the last servant God would send to a people in rebellion. He was the son of David, God's "beloved Son," whom the "tenants" would reject and kill.

Even before his dramatic entry into Jerusalem in the week before Passover, the chief priests knew of Jesus. According to John's account, the Sanhedrin had already decided that Jesus must be arrested and put to death.[52] Their meeting with him in the temple precincts during the week prior to Passover would have convinced them that he was a messianic claimant capable of securing a significant following, especially among the Galilean contingent now arriving for the Passover. Public order, for which they were responsible, was seriously jeopardized by this man. An outbreak of disorder would call into question the capacity of their faction to hold their high and lucrative office. Jesus must be removed, and by stealth, before the crowds knew of it. So Jesus was arrested at night, interrogated throughout the night by the hierarchy in a series of meetings and brought to the prefect while most people in Jerusalem were asleep. (A Roman governor's working day began before dawn.)

The prefect's trial of the accused was probably not the public affair it is commonly believed to have been, but a private interrogation conducted within the precincts of the military barracks at the prefect's praetorium. The "crowd" who demanded that Pilate should crucify Jesus probably consisted of supporters specially gathered by the chief priests, rather than the general populace of Jerusalem. As will be noted in the section following, Pilate was at that time significantly vulnerable to political blackmail. Despite a lack of conviction about Jesus' guilt for the crime of treason, Caiaphas the high priest and his associates had the upper hand. The governor bowed to their demands, and so Jesus was led out to Golgotha for crucifixion as "king of the Jews." The crucifixion process was underway at 9 a.m.,[53] that is, before most people in Jerusalem could have been made aware of it.

Historically speaking, Jesus was killed because he was a threat to the high priest's authority in Jerusalem and because a compromised governor was at that time able to be intimidated.[54] Political expediency prompted both the high priest and the Roman prefect to seek the death of Jesus of Nazareth.

7.7. Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea

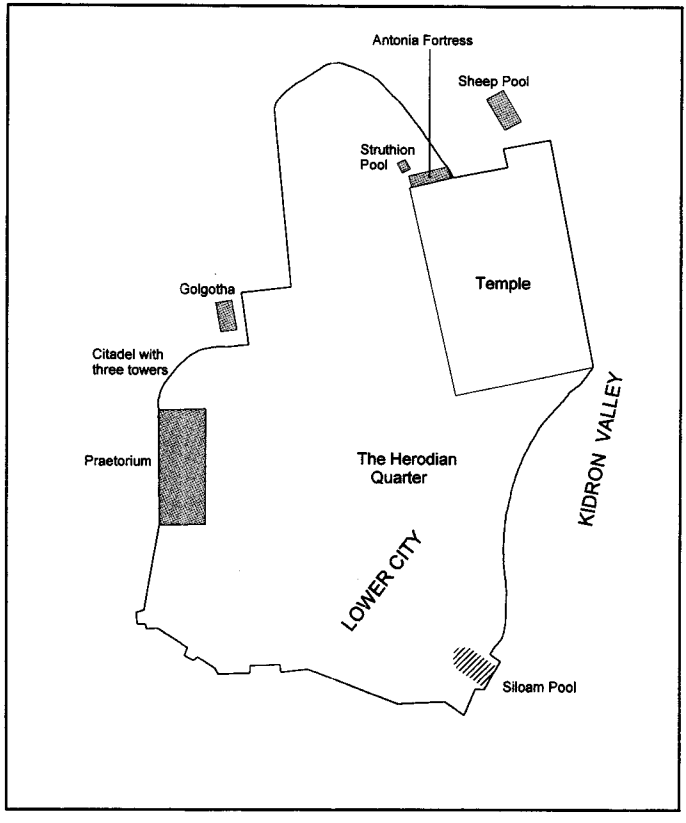
Pilate's involvement with Jesus was brief, occupying only a few hours one Friday morning on the day before a sabbath, which happened also to be the day of preparation for the Passover.

As prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate was based in Caesarea Maritima. His

encounter with Jesus of Nazareth occurred in Jerusalem, the religious center of Israel, on the eve of the great religious feast of Passover. Pilate had come up to Jerusalem at that time to superintend security at a notoriously turbulent time. While there, he would also hear capital cases and attend to administrative affairs, performing his duties as military prefect and judicial magistrate.[55]

Where did the Roman trial take place, in the Antonia fortress adjacent to the temple or in Herod's former palace near the western wall in the upper city? It is more likely that the encounter took place in the palace. Since Roman annexation, it had been taken over as the prefect's military residence in Jerusalem.[56] When the governor stayed and worked in Jerusalem, he resided in the palace rather than in Antonia. The Antonia was a fortress used for crowd control in the temple area. The praetorium, which had been built previously as Herod's palace, served both as the prefect's Jerusalem residence and as barracks for the troops who accompanied him.

7.7.1. Pontius Pilate, Sejanus and Tiberius. For an otherwise obscure governor



Map 14. Jerusalem at the time of the crucifixion

of a minor province with a small military command, Pontius Pilate is remarkably well attested in the ancient sources. In addition to the inscription bearing his name and title as "Prefect of Judea" discovered at Caesarea Maritima in 1961, he is referred to in the written sources by Tacitus, Philo, Josephus, the four Gospels and the book of Acts.

However, Pontius Pilate poses a major problem for the historian. The three main sources present him so differently. According to Philo,[57] Pilate was indescribably heartless and cruel. While not so extreme as Philo in his comments, Josephus's descriptions of the governor are quite negative. On the other hand, the Gospels give us the impression of a rather weak, easily swayed figure. How are we able to reconcile the ruthless ruler described by Philo (and by Josephus) with the vacillating administrator we encounter in the Gospels?

First, let us review the evidence for Pilate's ruthless behavior. So far as we know, it was Pilate's provocative action when he arrived in Judea in 26 that broke the relative calm that had prevailed since Judas's rebellion twenty years earlier. As we noted above,[58] Tacitus commented, *sub Tiberio quies,* "under Tiberius all was quiet."[59]

On his arrival as prefect, Pilate introduced to Jerusalem military standards bearing idolatrous symbols. This was without precedent; previous governors had used unornamented standards on their visits to the Holy City. Perhaps more offensive was Pilate's minting of coins from 29 to 31 bearing the *lituus* and *patera,*[60] which were instruments used by priests in Roman religion. Neither of these actions can be explained away on the grounds of cultural innocence. They were calculated and deliberate. Indeed, Josephus commented that regarding the iconic standards in Jerusalem, "Pilate . . . decided to overturn the laws of the Jews."[61]

Other actions by the governor are consistent with a strategy to subvert the covenant religion of Israel. Pilate seized money from the sacred treasury for the construction of an aqueduct in Jerusalem.[62] Moreover, he slaughtered a number of Galileans in the act of sacrificing the Passover lambs (Lk 13:1-2). Taken together these deeds appear to express deliberately provocative policies.

The two insurrectionists crucified with Jesus, along with Barabbas, had taken part in an otherwise unknown uprising against Roman rule (Mk 15:7). This insurrection may have been inspired by Pilate's actions noted above. The furor in the latter part of Pilate's incumbency over the gilded shields brought to Jerusalem, despite the absence of iconography, reflects the deep and justifiable suspicion of the people toward Pilate.[63] While these shields were without images, the inscriptions dedicated to Tiberius were almost certainly offensive to the Jews' religious conscience.[64]

Pilate's turbulent years as prefect of Judea came to an end in c. 37. In Samaria a prophet led a group to Mount Gerizim, promising to locate the long-lost vessels of the Jerusalem temple. The discovery of these sacred objects was believed to herald the last days.[65] Word reached the Roman military forces, who fell upon the Samaritans with great severity; they feared that deeper political intentions underlay the Samaritans' seemingly harmless religious gathering. As a result, however, Pilate

was dispatched to Rome to give an account of the heavy-handed treatment by his soldiers.[66] Tiberius died before Pilate's arrival in Rome; Pilate is not heard of again. It is significant that the Samaritans complained that their people had gathered at Mount Gerizim "not as rebels against the Romans" but as "refugees from the persecution of Pilate."[67] Josephus's presentation of Pilate is merely a milder and briefer version of that given by Philo, who portrayed Pilate as "naturally inflexible, a blend of self-will and relentlessness." According to Philo,

> [Pilate] feared exposure for his conduct as governor . . . [for] the briberies, the insults, the robberies, the outrages and wanton injuries; executions without trial constantly repeated, the ceaseless and supremely grievous cruelty . . . his vindictiveness and furious temper.[68]

Even allowing for some rhetorical excess by Philo, the violence of the episodes recorded by Josephus and Luke's brief but chilling reference to the slaughter of the Galileans (Lk 13:1-2) justify Philo's evaluation of Pontius Pilate.

How, then, are we to reconcile this Pilate with the tame figure depicted in the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion?

The most probable answer[69] is that by the time of Jesus' trial Pilate was quite vulnerable. During his first six years as governor, the Roman world was effectively ruled by L. Aelius Sejanus, the praetorian prefect. At the time, Tiberius was emperor in name only, living in semiretirement as a recluse on the Island of Capri in the Bay of Naples. Sejanus in Rome was *de facto* emperor.

Sejanus was known to have been anti-Semitic. Philo claimed that Sejanus, knowing that the Jewish people were loyal to Tiberius, "wished to make away with [our] nation."[70] There is evidence that Sejanus, ambitious to grasp imperial power in Rome, harbored the desire for a ruler cult in honor of his deity.[71] This, too, would have contributed to an enmity against the Jews and their monotheistic beliefs. It appears to be no coincidence that Pilate "decided to overturn the laws of the Jews" at the very time the anti-Semite Sejanus was at the height of his powers in Rome.

However, in 31 all this was to change. In that year Sejanus was excuted. Thereafter, Tiberius regained control of his empire. Tiberius, like Augustus his predecessor, had been well-disposed to the Jews. But now it had come to his attention that his Jewish subjects in Italy and the provinces had suffered oppression at the hands of the governors.

Tiberius wrote at once to his provincial governors insisting that they treat his Jewish subjects with the fairness they had come to expect. He demanded that they "speak comfortably to the members of our nation in the different cities . . . to disturb none of our established customs but even to regard them as a trust committed to their care."[72]

To no provincial governor would these words have been more appropriate than to the prefect of Judea, home of the Jewish people, even if we had no information

about that prefect's actions. But we do have such information. Josephus's descriptions of Pilate's behavior and Philo's verdict on Pilate, noted above, indicate the singular appropriateness of Tiberius's letter to his prefect in Judea, Pontius Pilate. In particular, Pilate must now be seen to be loyal to the newly ascendant Tiberius. The high priest would have been quick to exploit any perceived ambiguity on Pilate's part.

Thus Pilate's behavior in the trial of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels must be understood in the context of the post-Sejanus era, that is, *after* 31.[73] The incident of the gilded shields also occurred in the post-Sejanus situation.[74] Pilate was now accountable to a new master, the pro-Semitic emperor Tiberius, who had banned further harassment of Jews. This will explain Pilate's speedy removal of the shields upon the petition of the Herodian princes (including the tetrarch of Galilee-Peraea, Herod Antipas). This he would not have done during the years of Sejanus's tenure.

7.7.2. Pontius Pilate and the trial of Jesus of Nazareth. Once Tiberius was again undisputed ruler, the Jewish temple hierarchy had the upper hand in regard to Pilate, especially in light of his past behavior toward the Jewish people. It is this "new" situation that explains the "new" Pilate as we encounter him in the Gospels in his relationship to the Jewish leadership.

Under interrogation by the chief priests, Jesus did not deny that he was "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed" (Mk 14:61). This provoked the charge of blasphemy against Jesus. But when they brought him to Pilate, they converted the religious charge of blasphemy to one more recognizable and culpable to the Roman mind, the political charge of treason. Thus in each of the four Gospels Pilate asks the political question of the accused, "Are you the King of the Jews?" (Mk 15:2; cf. Mk 14:61; see Jn 18:33). Jesus' ambiguous "You have said so" in the face of this charge was potentially an admission of treason. Jesus could be seen as denying Tiberius's kingship in Judea. Upon further inquiry, however, Pilate decided that he must release Jesus. The charge of treason was not substantiated. But in the "new" situation after the fall of Sejanus, the chief priests were able to intimidate the governor: "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; every one who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar." They add, ominously, "We have no king but Caesar" (Jn 19:12-16).

The man who had ridden roughshod over the Jewish people was now at the mercy of their leaders. And he knew it. One false move and his appointment would be canceled and his career finished. And so Pilate acquiesced, handing Jesus over to the execution squad for crucifixion on the political charge of treason, that he was "the King of the Jews."

Excursus 7A: The search for the historical Pontius Pilate

The divergences between Philo or Josephus and the Gospels have attracted the attention of scholars, and several theories, apart from the one given above, have been proposed to account for them.

According to one reconstruction, the view of a tough governor as portrayed by Philo and Josephus is more or less correct, but the vacillating and ultimately accommodating Pilate of the

Gospels is a falsification. According to this reconstruction, which is chiefly associated with S. G. F. Brandon, Jesus was in fact an anti-Roman insurrectionist (or an advocate of insurrection).[75] Since the early church needed the good will of the Roman authorities, its founder's true sympathies must be masked. Hence, the Gospels present Jesus as innocent, a victim of Jewish machinations, with an indecisive Roman governor portrayed as coerced to execute Jesus against his better moral judgment.

In response to this theory, it must be asked, if Jesus had been a zealot, why were the disciples of Jesus not immediately rounded up and executed as their leader had been? Further, why was there no concerted action by the Romans against this new movement until the great fire of Rome in 64? Brandon's reconstruction fails to resolve these questions.

A second reconstruction argues that the major sources are in fact in fundamental agreement, despite apparent divergences.[76] According to this line of argument, Pilate was a governor loyal to his emperor Tiberius, and his actions toward Jews and Samaritans, when compared to other governors, were relatively unremarkable. Actions that some have seen as anti-Semitic can be accounted for as no more than culturally insensitive. In fact, his ten-year incumbency was one of relative calm. His behavior toward Jesus can be adequately accounted for by his Gentile ignorance of Jewish practices and politics along with a certain personal indecisiveness. There may have been just enough smoke, as it were, in the case of Jesus to justify extinguishing the fire. In any case, what importance attached to one Jew? And did not the accused's stubborn silence in the face of interrogation amount to contempt of court *(contumacia)*, something abhorrent to Romans?

While this reconstruction upholds the broad historicity of the Gospels in the face of the Brandon alternative, it scarcely does justice to Philo's and Josephus's extensive and negative accounts of Pontius Pilate. If Pilate was so unremarkable, why did Philo and Josephus devote so much space to him? Other governors are passed over in silence in the sources, without detailed comment.

The hypothesis stated above, that the fall of Sejanus the anti-Semite in 31 and the subsequent reappearance of Tiberius the pro-Semite explain the contrary presentations of Philo/Josephus and the Gospels, is the most probable. Specialist and non-specialist readers alike will continue to grapple with the rather different pictures of Pontius Pilate. Likewise, scholars will continue to debate the Gospel accounts of the Roman trial. Notwithstanding these areas of genuine inquiry and debate, no one should seriously dispute that this encounter did take place and that it issued in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, whom Pilate convicted for treason. That certainly is to be inferred from Tacitus's words, "Christus had been executed in Tiberius's reign by the governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilatus."[77] In all probability, Tacitus is here relying on the official provincial report from Judea, which would have been dispatched to Rome.

7.8. Jesus' contexts: Conclusion

Jesus had two contexts, Galilee and Judea. In Galilee Jesus lived under a Hellenizing tetrarch, Herod Antipas, who had flouted the law of Yahweh by divorcing his existing wife to marry the wife of a brother who was still alive. When John the Baptist, a faithful prophet of Yahweh, admonished the tetrarch, he was arrested and executed. Jesus' surviving remarks about Antipas are also highly critical. Nonetheless, while John's emergence as a prophet may have been conditioned to a degree by the activities of the tetrarch, there is no weighty reason to believe that Jesus began his ministry because of particular historical circumstances associated with Herod Antipas.

Jesus' other context was Judea. In the years immediately preceding the minis-

tries of John and Jesus, Judea had been governed by Pontius Pilate. There is evidence that Pilate embarked on a deliberate course of subverting the law of God. He may have done so in line with anti-Semitic policies of his patron L. Aelius Sejanus, the praetorian prefect. At the same time, the province was governed, in effect, by the high priest and a small number of close relatives. The members of this hierarchy were corrupt and violent in their dealings with the people, and they were compromised in their relationships with their Roman masters.

To be sure, John the Baptist's summons to Israel to come to the Jordan to obtain forgiveness through baptism could be seen as an assault on the high priest's sacrificial system. So, too, Jesus' expulsion of the merchants from the temple might be construed as the act of a *zealous* reformer.[78] Yet the actions of John and Jesus run deeper. John's burden was to point to the greater One who would come after him; Jesus' mounted entry into Jerusalem and his ejection of the merchants were Davidic and messianic signs. The house of God must first be destroyed before it can be rebuilt. In short, the actions of John and Jesus were not merely part of a sequence of reactions against particular people and circumstances in those times. Rather, John and Jesus were agents of Yahweh's eschatological intervention for the salvation of his people.

Was this a particularly bad period in Galilee and Judaea, a period so difficult that it would account for the rise of John and Jesus?[79] While it was an unstable time, it was not so critical, for example, as A.D. 6 had been, when Judas and Saddok led an uprising over registration for direct payment of taxes to Rome. Nor was it was as volatile as the fifties in Judea, under Felix as governor and Ananias as high priest, when bands of revolutionaries roamed the countryside in the aftermath of the great famine. In short, we should not explain the emergence of either John or Jesus as a response to evil times. In our view, what John and Jesus each had to say and do stood in its own right and should not be connected to any great degree with the local Herodian, high priestly or Roman leaders of that era. These latter were relatively unremarkable figures, part of the passing parade of history. That, at least, is how they were perceived by the writers of the Gospels and Acts. By contrast, John and Jesus fill the horizons of the Gospels. They were regarded as, and have proved to be, gigantic figures of history.

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Notes

[1]Josephus's main source of information regarding Herod's reign was Nicolaus of Damascus, who, however, did not remain in Judea. Josephus's account of Jewish history from the death of Herod for the next four decades or so is rather sketchy.

[2]Josephus *J.W.* 2.111.

[3]Apparently Antipas's reputation was less fearsome.

[4]Josephus *J.W.* 2.111.

[5]Ibid., 1.80. Jesus' parable in Lk 19:11-27 reflects this political event.

[6]Josephus *J.W.* 2.405; cf. Emil Schürer *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* rev. and ed. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973), 2:197.

[7]Derived from the Greek *topos,* "a place," and *archē,* "rule," hence a regional jurisdiction.

[8]Josephus *J.W.* 3.54; cf. Schürer, *History,* 2:190-98.

[9]Josephus *J.W.* 2.96.

[10]Josephus *Ant.* 18.88.

[11]Cf. Josephus *J.W.* 2.566; 4.516.

[12]According to Luke 2:2, the birth of Jesus occurred at the time of a registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria, that is, in A.D. 6. Many scholars think Luke has made an error of approximately ten years (see, e.g., Schürer, *History,* 1:399-427). However, since Luke 1:5, 26 locates Jesus' conception within Herod's reign (cf. Mt 2), his birth must also have occurred within or soon after that reign (Herod died in 4 B.C.). Moreover, Luke is chronologically precise in naming the rulers of Herod's divided kingdom after his death (Lk 3:1-2) and is aware of Judas's uprising at the time of Quirinius's registration (Acts 5:37). It must be asked whether one so aware of historical detail as this author would have made a blunder of this magnitude.

Luke 2:2 is quite elliptical, consisting of only nine words. Some have suggested a resolution based on an alternative meaning of the word "first" *(prōtos).* There are instances of this word meaning "former" (e.g., Acts 1:1; see Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1965], pp. 23-24). Is Luke referring to an earlier census, not otherwise known to us, and describing it in relation to the famous census conducted under Quirinius? For greater detail, see earlier, §5.7.

[13]Josephus *J.W.* 2.118; Acts 5:37. *Ant.* 18.3 refers to Judas as a Gaulanite from the city of Gamla See also Josephus *J.W.* 2.433; 7.253; *Ant.* 18.23-25; 20.102.

[14]Josephus *J.W.* 2.118, 433; 7.253; *Ant.* 18.4, 23-25.

[15]Opposition by Pharisees is explicit in the golden-eagle incident and is also probably connected with the removal of the idolatrous athletic trophies (see earlier, §4.4 and §4.9).

[16]Josephus *J.W.* 2.119. In *Ant.* 18.11-25, Josephus implies that three "philosophies"—Pharisees, Essenes and Sadducees—are valid expressions, but that the "Fourth Philosophy"—violent action against Rome—is not.

[17]Here Josephus is writing for Greek-speaking readers in describing these religious factions as if they were Greek philosophical groups like, e.g., Stoics, Epicureans.

[18]See earlier, §3.5.7; 4.9.

[19]Contra Martin Hengel, *The Zealots* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), pp. 330-41.

[20]So Morton Smith, "Zealots and Sicarii: Their Origins and Relation," *HTR* 64 (1971): 1-19, arguing against the thesis of Hengel, *Zealots,* noted above.

[21]James and Simon, sons of Judas, were crucified in the late forties at the time of the famine, under the procurator, Tiberius Alexander (Josephus *Ant.* 20.102). See later §14.4.

[22]Tacitus *Annals* 2.42.

[23]Tacitus *Histories* 5.9. N. T. Wright's comment in *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), p. 151, that Tacitus is referring to a stable situation in Judea that required no external intervention by Roman troops is conjectural.

[24]See Tiberius's parable of the flies (Josephus *Ant.* 18.33).

[25]Josephus *J.W.* 2.119.

[26]See earlier, §7.3.2.

[27]See note 16.

[28]See §3.7.

[29]Josephus *Ant.* 13.171.

[30]See Stephen Westerholm, "Pharisees," *DJG,* pp. 609-14.

[31]It is not clear from historical records what is meant by the "Great Synagogue."

[32]Mishnah *Abot* 1.16.

[33]Cf. Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees before 70* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), pp. 341-76.

[34]Contra J. C. O'Neill, *Who Did Jesus Think He Was?* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), p. 33, who thinks Paul's teacher was Simeon ben Gamaliel, the son of Gamaliel.

[35]Josephus *J.W.* 2.162; Philo *Special Laws* 2.253. Philo does not specifically identify these persons as Pharisees, but they are clearly intended.

[36]Mishnah *Abot* 1.1.

[37]Mishnah *Shabbat* 7.2.

[38]Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 118b.

[39]See rabbinic references conveniently noted in William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 244-47.

[40]As in the *Assumption of Moses* 6.

[41]Josephus *Ant.* 18.3.

[42]See Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 109-33.

[43]Acts 23:7-8; Josephus *J.W.* 2.164; cf. *Ant.* 18.16-17.

[44]For the view that the Sanhedrin was convened as need arose rather than a body with standing authority over Jews outside Judea, see J. S. McLaren, *Power and Politics in Palestine: The Jews and the Governing of Their Land 100 B.C.-A.D. 70,* JSOT 63 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), p. 97.

[45]The *Lament of Abba Saul,* having listed the "houses" of the high priests, adds, "For they are the high priests; their sons are the treasurers [of the sacred treasury of the temple, the Corban]; their sons-in-law are temple officers" (Babylonian Talmud *Pesaḥim* 57a).

[46]Josephus *Ant.* 18.3.

[47] Ibid., 18.26. Josephus spells his name *Ananus.*

[48] Ibid., 18.35, 95.

[49]Babylonian Talmud *Pesahim* 57d.

[50]Ibid.

[51]See Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God,* pp. 490-93.

[52]An early tradition preserved in the Talmud confirms that a decision about Jesus was taken well ahead of the Passover: "Jesus was hanged on Passover Eve. Forty days previously the herald had cried,'He is being led out for stoning, because he has practiced sorcery and led Israel astray and enticed them into apostasy. Whosoever has anything to say in his defense, let him come and declare it.' As nothing was brought forward in his defense, he was hanged on Passover Eve" (*Sanhedrin* 43a).

John 11:45-53 appears to support some kind of proclamation against Jesus in the weeks

prior to the Passover. According to the Johannine tradition Jesus had been in and around Jerusalem in the months between the feast of Tabernacles and the Passover. In other words, he had not arrived from Galilee just in time for Passover.

[53]Mark 15:25 has "the third hour," 9 a.m., whereas John 19:14 has the "sixth hour," midday.

[54]See excursus 7A.

[55]For discussion of a prefect's forensic and administrative role throughout the province, see B. Kinman, "Pilate's Assize and the Timing of Jesus' Trial," *TynBul* 42 (1991): 281-95.

[56]In 66 the governor Gessius Florus sought to punish some people in Jerusalem for their public disrespect of him. Josephus's description of the events (*J.W.* 2.297-308) casts some light on Pilate's trial of Jesus thirty-three years earlier. Florus set up the *bēma* (Roman's magistrate's bench—see Mt 27:19; Jn 19:13; cf. Acts 18:12, 16, 17; 25:6, 10, 17) in front of the palace (i.e., Herod's former palace, now the governor's praetorium = barracks). The chief priests, the nobles and the most eminent citizens (i.e., the leaders of the Sanhedrin) were present, as at the trial of Jesus. Unlike the case of Jesus, however, where these leaders had sought the death of Jesus, here they defended the accused. Unmoved, Florus had a number of people brought before him who were then scourged and crucified.

[57]Whereas B. McGing, "Pontius Pilate and the Sources," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 416-38, holds a low view of Philo as a historical source, E. Mary Smallwood, "Philo and Josephus as Historians of the Same Event," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity,* ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata (Leiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 114-29, rates him higher than Josephus in providing hard facts.

[58]See earlier, §7.3.2.

[59]Tacitus *Histories* 5.9. See further Paul W. Barnett, "Under Tiberius All Was Quiet," *NTS* 21 (1975): 564-71.

[60]The *lituus* was the augur's staff of a Roman priest, and the *patera* was a libation bowl.

[61]Josephus *Ant.* 18.55.

[62]Ibid., 18.60-62. This action could be explained as well intentioned.

[63]Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* 299-305.

[64]See further P. S. Davies, "The Meaning of Philo's Text About the Gilded Shields," *JTS* 37 (1986): 109-14.

[65]M. F. Collins, "The Hidden Vessels in Samaritan Traditions," *JSJ* 3 (1972): 97-116.

[66]Josephus *Ant.* 18.85-89.

[67]Ibid., 18.88.

[68]Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* 301, 302.

[69]See Paul L. Maier, "Sejanus, Pilate and the Date of the Crucifixion," *CH* 37 (1968): 3-13.

[70]Philo *In Flaccum* 1.1; *Legatio ad Gaium* 160. See E. Mary Smallwood, "Some Notes on the Jews Under Tiberius," *Latomus* 15 (1956): 325.

[71]Tacitus *Annals* 3.72; 4.2, 72; Suetonius *Tiberius* 48, 65; Dio Cassius 58.2, 4, 5, 7.

[72]Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* 160-61.

[73]For arguments in favor of 33 as the date for the crucifixion, see excursus 1A.

[74]See further E. Mary Smallwood, "Philo and Josephus as Historians of the Same Events," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity,* ed. L. H. Feldman and G. Hata (Leiden: Brill, 1987), pp. 126-28.

[75]S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967).

[76]See B. McGing, "Pontius Pilate and the Sources," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 416-38.

[77]Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.

[78]John's account has hints along that line: "*Zeal* for thy house will consume me" (Jn 2:17, emphasis added).

[79]This assertion runs contrary to the argument of Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God,* who repeatedly connects Jesus' words and actions with the specifics of Roman occupation. See, e.g., pp. 244-368.

8

Jesus of Nazareth (c. 29-33)

8.1. Clearing the ground

8.1.1. The problem of the theological Jesus. We must recognize the problems for history created by Christian doctrine. From the beginning of the history of the earliest church, the followers of Jesus formulated statements of belief about him. That task continued through the eras of the fathers and the reformers and beyond, leaving a valuable deposit of creeds and confessions for the churches and their members. In consequence modern-day believers can easily perceive Jesus' mission to have been quite straightforward, namely, to establish his identity and mission as articulated in the subsequent creeds. The reader of the Gospels will naturally expect to find Jesus teaching such doctrines: that he was the second person of the Trinity, One who was fully human and fully divine, whose mission was to die for sins and be raised to life to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. But does reading the Gospels through these doctrinal lenses make sense of the Gospel accounts, apart from selected proof texts that support these doctrines? Did Jesus behave and teach according to the creeds *historically*?

One immediate problem for this approach is that it has no explanation for Jesus' mission to Israel, except to declare that she willfully rejected the Son of God and the salvation he offered her. A closely related difficulty is the observation that the historical Jesus appears not to have publicly and dogmatically made the very theological claims of deity and salvation that Israel is held culpable for rejecting.

Any historical reconstruction of Jesus, based on the Gospels, must answer at least two questions. First, is it a plausible version of Jesus' mission to Israel? Second, does it explain the belief structure of the early church?

So who was he and what did he come to do?

8.1.2. Working assumptions. Before proceeding further I must set out three working assumptions, which are elaborated and justified in the first excursus at the end of the chapter. Not to do so would lead the writer and the reader into one impenetrable thicket after another.[1] Extensive and complex are the questions related to the dating of Jesus' ministry and whether the Gospels are historical in character, and to what extent.

First, a historical study must establish the dates for the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth.[2] In my reconstruction, John was active c. 28-29, and Jesus was active c. 29-33, with 29 representing a period of some overlap between the two men. Second, as argued in chapters six and seven ("Jesus' Context"), I hold that the four Gospels portray Jesus within the historical milieu of Galilee and Judea within this time frame and not later. Third, I am satisfied that key elements in Jesus' teachings, for example, "the kingdom of God," cannot be accounted for adequately by appeal to the religious culture of Judaism and Hellenism. Rather, they are most satisfactorily explained *historically* by the impulse of Jesus himself upon early Christianity and its formularies embedded in the literature of the New Testament.

8.1.3. Jesus' movements and Jesus' plan. In my view, an outline of Jesus' movements throughout his three- to four-year ministry is possible. The feasts in the Gospel of John give some idea of the overall time frame, and the narratives of Mark and John, in particular, fill in quite a few geographic details.

Jesus' public ministry throughout this period may be roughly sketched as follows. John's baptism brought Jesus out of obscurity into the public arena, though it appears he remained under John's shadow until the baptizer's arrest (in 29). Initially (from 29) Jesus came to Galilee, announcing the arrival of the kingdom of God and casting out unclean spirits and healing the sick. At first, Jesus was able to teach in the local synagogues, but his teaching proved to be unacceptable to the local Pharisees. Consequently, the doors to the synagogues were soon closed to him. He proceeded to preach in the fields and by the lakeside. During this period he chose and trained twelve disciples.

As a climax to his ministry in Galilee, Jesus sent his disciples to the towns of the tetrarchy, announcing the coming of the kingdom of God, casting out demons in his name and calling for repentance. As a climax to their mission to Galilee, a great crowd gathered and attempted to make him their king. This was at Passover time in 32.

As a result Jesus was forced to withdraw from Antipas's jurisdiction for ministry in Gentile regions to the west, north and east of Galilee. Finally, he set out for Jerusalem, where he was arrested, interrogated by the temple authorities and handed over to the Roman governor, who executed him for treason against Rome during the feast of Passover in 33.

Is there any pattern here, any purpose, any sense of intention or mission? On

the face of it, Jesus attempted to persuade the Galileans to turn back to God, but was forced to leave the region on pain of death. Then he came, similarly, to Jerusalem where he was, indeed, killed. It seems clear that he knew death awaited him in the temple city. So was *that* his plan? If so, for what reasons?

8.1.4. Jesus the man. In Jesus' era a distinction was made between *history* and *biography.*[3] While the distinction was by no means rigid, history tended to narrate events, whereas biography portrayed the character of the central figure. Nonetheless, the biography was not written merely to focus on the person in question. Rather, this portrayal tended to be a vehicle for the philosophical or polemical purposes of the author. In terms of human characterization, biographies were rather stereotypical in their presentation of the person.[4] Typically there was a certain woodenness in the biography. Emotions and reactions, which are so much a part of the modern biography, were largely disregarded at that time. This was as true of the Hellenistic-Jewish biography of the intertestamental era as it was of the Greco-Roman biography of the same period.

While the Gospels as literary products of their times do not altogether escape these limitations,[5] they do not fail to portray Jesus as recognizably human. This is particularly evident in the Gospel of Mark where, more than the other Gospels, the emphasis is on what Jesus did and what happened to him, rather than what he taught. Mark allows us to see a range of emotions in Jesus: compassion for a leper (Mk 1:40-42), anger at the Pharisees' hardness of heart (Mk 3:1-5), indignation for the children who are spurned (Mk 10:13-16), love for the unrepentant rich man (Mk 10:17-22), deep distress in Gethemane (Mk 14:33-34), his sense of abandonment at Golgotha (Mk 15:34). On five occasions Mark notes that Jesus observed the people or his surroundings (Mk 3:5, 34; 5:32; 10:23; 11:11).[6] Here Mark's word *periblepomai,* "look around [as in a circle]," implies an emotional intensity in Jesus that left its imprint in the memories of those present with him. Consistent with this, the Gospel of John describes Jesus' tears and distress when confronted with Mary's grief over the death of Lazarus (Jn 11:33-35).

While the Gospel writers urge upon the readers their own convictions regarding Jesus' messianic identity as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, they also to a remarkable degree keep before the readers his true humanity. They include in the picture not only his emotions, as noted above, but also his hunger, thirst and fatigue. In turn these are connected with the Evangelists' narration of his death and the circumstances of his death, which disproportionately dominates the latter part of each gospel. To be sure, each writer understands Jesus' death in theological terms (see e.g., Mk 15:26-39). But this understanding is understated and does not distract from the human dimension of his sufferings.

8.2. The Forerunner

We cannot consider Jesus independently of John the Baptist.[7] Jesus left his imprint

upon his disciples and through them upon the earliest church. John, however, left his imprint on Jesus.[8]

John, deeply influenced by the prophet Malachi, saw himself as the "messenger" sent to announce Yahweh's coming in judgment on Israel and her temple (Mal 3:1, 5). He came to warn that the arrogant and the evildoer will be consumed in fire but those who revere the name of Yahweh will be delivered.

> For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. (Mal 4:1-2)

But according to John the Baptist, Yahweh would come in a person. He would be One "mightier than" John, whose sandal straps John was not worthy to untie (Mk 1:7-8). John baptized with water; the "mightier One" would baptize with fire, as by the Holy Spirit. Convinced that Yahweh's "great and dreadful day" was imminent, John passionately called Israel to return in repentance to Yahweh and to signify that by plunging into the waters of the Jordan River. Those who did so would find deliverance through Yahweh's mercy and be a people prepared for his coming (Mk 1:3-5). Those who refused would be consumed in the fires of judgment (Mt 3:11-12 = Lk 3:16-17). According to Matthew, John's preaching, stated in short, was "The kingdom of heaven is near. Repent" (Mt 3:2).

In the course of baptizing the many who came to him, John identified Jesus of Nazareth as the "mightier One" in whom Yahweh was to visit his people. But paradoxically John's "mightier One" was to be a slaughtered Lamb, evocative of the exodus, when God shielded his people from his impending judgment by the blood of a lamb (Jn 1:29-31). In accepting that he is "the Christ," but then asserting that he "must suffer," Jesus repeats the same paradox (Mk 8:29-31).

John's call to Israel to come to the Jordan for baptism marked the eschatological moment for Jesus to be baptized and, in consequence, to be assured from heaven that he was the "beloved Son" with whom God was well pleased (Mk 1:9-11 and pars.). The arrest of John by Herod the tetrarch was the signal for Jesus himself to begin proclaiming publicly the coming of the kingdom of God.

8.3. Jesus in public and private

Who did people of the time think Jesus was and what did they think he was doing as he stepped into the shoes of John the Baptist? Distant echoes of the peoples' perception of Jesus survive in the Gospels. Here we notice a two-sidedness. On one hand, he was regarded as a prophet (Mk 6:14-15; 8:28; Jn 6:14). He preached powerfully to the crowds that God's great day had come, as John had done before him,[9] and John was universally recognized as a prophet (Mk 11:32 and pars.). On

the other hand, the people addressed Jesus as a *rabbi,* "teacher" (Mk 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45); he taught in the synagogue and he was followed by disciples. Thus we see Jesus in public teaching as a prophet and herald but also teaching his disciples in private as a rabbi.[10]

The two are connected. His ringing note, "God's time has come," sounded in the synagogues with the prophetic scroll in hand is inseparable from his summons to twelve men to leave wives and work to follow him in order to become "fishers of men." But the teaching in public, which was typically *en parabolais,* "in parables," he explained privately to his disciples (Mk 4:33-34).

8.4. Jesus' public ministry in Galilee

8.4.1. The kingdom of God. In the synagogues of Galilee, on the shores of the lake and on the surrounding hills, Jesus announced the arrival of the kingdom of God, that is, the present and active rule of Yahweh. And there were signs. The cosmic and apocalyptic character of God's significance-laden moment was powerfully demonstrated. The herald addressed the unclean spirits with God's authority and cast them out from their human hosts (Mk 1:23-28 [cf. 3:11]; 5:1-13; 7:24-30; 9:14-29 and pars.). As Jesus moved through Galilee, the "strong man" was bound and his captives set free (Mk 3:27). To be sure, Jesus also healed the sick, but he did so out of compassion, in response to their cry for help. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom and his casting out of the unclean spirits were different. Proclaiming and expelling were proactive, constituting a "search and destroy" mission to liberate the prisoners from the dungeons of Satan. Jesus combined these signs of the "kingdom of God" with the herald's summons to "repent," the prophetic call for Israel to "return" to Yahweh her God.

The twelve disciples did the same across the towns of Galilee. For this he called them to be "with him." They, too, proclaimed that God's day had come, and that the covenant people must turn back to their God. The disciples, too, revealed the sign of God's emerging kingdom, the expulsion of unclean spirits from those possessed by them (Mk 3:13-15; 6:7-13).

But something deeper is happening in the Gospels for those who have eyes to see and ears to understand. Jesus' words and deeds to Israel as revealed in the Gospels are about Yahweh her God and his kingdom. Jesus' words and acts are not about himself. Yet he did not proclaim God's rule as a future, distant hope; it was a *present* reality. God at that very time actively ruled in Jesus' words and in Jesus' acts of liberation from the unclean spirits. The strong man was being bound and his captives were being set free (Mk 3:27). Jesus was the instrument and bearer of the kingdom he heralded. It was incarnate and present in him: "If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12:28; cf. Lk 11:20). But he made no explicit personal claims. As in his customary manner of teaching to the crowds, he was a parable. "He who has ears

to hear, let him hear," was his repeated and enigmatic cry as he concluded yet another parable of the kingdom.

8.4.2. The kingdom of God and miracles.[11] Broadly speaking, the Gospels place three interpretations on the miracles of Jesus. First, Jesus' miracles of casting out unclean spirits are the revelation of the new eschatological reality ("If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" [Mt 12:28; cf. Lk 11:20]). Thus, second, they suggest a fulfillment of prophetic expectation; Jesus' words, "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk," echo Isaiah's promises for Israel's return from exile (Mt 11:5-6; Is 35:5-6). In consequence, third, the miracles reveal his hidden but true identity (e.g., "that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" [Mk 2:10]; "the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory [of the word made flesh]" [Jn 2:11; cf. 1:14]).

In general, these interpretations find confirmation in two speeches of Peter in the book of Acts, on the day of Pentecost and in the household of Cornelius. In the first, Peter proclaims that by his "mighty works and wonders and signs" which God did through him, Jesus was "a man attested *[apodedeigmenon]*" to the people of Israel by God (Acts 2:22; cf. Acts 3:20; 10:36). God did his miracles through Jesus, and these were God's stamp of approval on him. In the second, in his ministry in Galilee and Judea, Jesus "went about doing good," that is, "healing all that were oppressed by the devil." This was because "God anointed *[echrisen]* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power" for "God was with him" (Acts 10:38). This is implicitly christological, in the Davidic sense, calling to mind the "shoot from the stump of Jesse" upon whom "the Spirit of the Lord . . . and might" will rest (Is 11:1-2). Furthermore, healing those oppressed by the devil is an eschatological act.

The Gospels narrate Jesus' miracles as genuinely factual, and they invest them with eschatological and christological meaning.

8.4.3. The kingdom of God and sinners. If Jesus' public call was to have ears to hear him, then, who did hear him? Not the righteous scholars of the Torah who were the self-appointed custodians of covenant purity of the hand and the mind. To them Jesus was blasphemer (Mk 2:6-7), sabbath breaker (Mk 2:23—3:6) and fast breaker (Mk 2:18-22), one who was defiled by his contact with unclean things (Mk 7:1-5) and with unclean people (Mk 2:13-17). Surely such a one must be a barrier[12] to the coming of the kingdom of God rather than an instrument of its entry!

Those who "heard him gladly" (Mk 12:37) were the moral riffraff, the sinners, the underside of upright Israel, who would find no welcome at the portals of the synagogue. Jesus was "heard" and "followed" by tax collectors employed by corrupt, Hellenizing Herod and by the prostitutes who joined their revelries in wicked Gentile cities like Tiberias.

Like John the Baptist, Jesus addressed Israel the covenant nation. While John's emphasis was on the coming wrath (Mt 3:7-10), Jesus' call was couched in rather more compassionate tones, directed to Israel as the "poor," "lost," "mournful" people of Yahweh (Lk 6:20-23). The official representatives of the covenant religion, however, were unresponsive, unprepared to recognize their poverty and plight in the presence of their covenant God.

Jesus, however, also issued his summons to *individuals* alienated from God, often excluded by disease, disability or physical stigma from the religious establishment through moral and ritual defilement. These were the "poor" who recognized their poverty among a nation of "poor" who did not.[13] "Come to me," Jesus would characteristically say to them (Mt 11:28), and many did, to the frustration of the Pharisees (Lk 15:1-2). But he came not for the "righteous" but for the "sinners" (Mk 2:17 and pars.). John called the nation, and he called first for repentance. Jesus also called Israel to repentance and within that call invited sinners to come to him and eat with him.[14]

Thus Jesus' mission was to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," as a lost nation, but with concern for an individual like Zacchaeus, a lost son of Abraham (Lk 19:10). Jesus fulfilled that mission through individual interaction as well as by public ministry to the people at large. He portrayed his mission by evocative images. He was a *physician* who "came to" call "the sick" (Mk 2:17), a *shepherd* who "came to seek and to save" even one "lost" sheep (Lk 19:10; 15:4), a *messenger* "sent" to the house of Israel (Mt 15:24).

The light of the kingdom announced and enacted by Jesus shone first in Galilee of the Gentiles. Soon that light would be borne from Galilee by the followers of Jesus to shine among the nations of the world (Mt 4:12-17, 23-24; 28:16-20). These sinners of Galilee would be the "firstfruits" of the sinners of the Gentiles, the peoples of the nations to whom the gospel of the grace of God would come in the years following Jesus' ministry and resurrection.

8.5. Who, then, is Jesus?

But who is this man? What does he think he is doing? Is it all haphazard? Or, does he have some plan? Like John the Baptist Jesus of Nazareth provoked the question, "Who are you?" (Jn 1:19; 8:25). Was John the Christ or the Elijah-restorer or the Moses-prophet (Jn 1:19-23; Lk 3:15)? Was Jesus the Moses-prophet, or was he the Christ (Jn 7:40-44)? Such was their impact that their contemporaries wondered, in turn, whether John or Jesus might be one or another of the long-awaited agents of God, sent to fulfill his end-time promises. So, who Jesus he and what is he doing?

The answer cannot be found by reading the pages of the Gospels in isolation from the covenant Scriptures of Israel. We need to have those Scriptures open in one hand and the Gospels in the other. Jesus can only be comprehended against

the background of God's dealings with his covenant people.

8.5.1. The Twelve. First, we cannot fail to notice Jesus' choice of *twelve* disciples. While his words are often evocative, like riddles, this action must had obvious symbolic impact. The sight of this rabbi striding across the countryside accompanied by *twelve* men was highly provocative, both to the disciples and to those who observed them.

In the Old Testament twelve was the number of the tribes of Israel; twelve was Israel in its fullness (Gen 35:22; 49:28; Num 1:44). The loss of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. left only two and a half tribes, but Ezekiel foresaw the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel (Ezek 47:13—48:29). Jesus' choice of twelve men made a startling eschatological statement. By it he signaled the restoration of Israel to its end-time fullness.

Yet the disparate and undistinguished character of the men chosen was almost as striking as their number. The Twelve were composed of fishermen (who were followers of John the Baptist), a "sinner" (a toll collector employed by Herod the tetrarch) and a "zealot." To our knowledge none were drawn from the religious elites, whether Pharisaic or Essene. The Twelve were apiece with the "poor," the "lost," the "sick" and the "sinners" whom Jesus welcomed, whom he invited to "come to" him and with whom he sat at table, eating (see, e.g., Mk 1:16-20; 3:16-19; 6:7 and pars).

8.5.2. The promise of the Spirit. Jesus' intentions in calling Twelve and in healing the sick must be interpreted in eschatological terms. He was deliberately and overtly fulfilling the hopes and expectations of the people of God, as mediated to them by the prophets of the covenant. This was no mere *movement,* able to be identified in sociological categories alone or even primarily.[15]

According to John the Baptist, the One whom he baptized with water would in turn baptize with the Spirit of Yahweh (Mk 1:8 and pars.; Jn 1:34). Throughout his ministry Jesus endorsed this prophecy (Mk 13:11). He foresaw that the eschatological Spirit was to descend upon his followers (Jn 14—17). The narrative of the book of Acts follows this view of John as confirmed and restated by Jesus.

8.5.3. A rabbinic fellowship: Jesus' esoteric teaching. Jesus as rabbi who taught disciples in private is culturally consistent with the rabbinic ethos of first-century Judaism.[16] According to the Mishnah:

> Moses received Torah from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets delivered it to the men of the great synagogue. These said three things: be deliberate in judging, and raise up many disciples, and make a hedge for the Torah.[17]

Jesus and his disciples had been born into and nurtured by the powerful religious culture of first-century Judaism. The Gospels describe Jesus and his disciples in technical rabbinic terminology. They had "come" to him, "followed after" him,

"learned from" him, "taken [his] yoke upon" them (Mt 11:28-30; Mk 1:16-20). Even a woman "sat at [his] feet" like the pupil of a rabbi (Lk 10:39).

Thus Jesus with his twelve were, in effect, a rabbinic school, moving from place to place. During his Galilean ministry Jesus would explain to his disciples in private the parables he had spoken in public (Mk 4:33-34). In the final year of ministry, after the feeding of the multitude (Jn 6:14-15), when Jesus traveled in Gentile regions to the west, north and east, not appearing again in public in Galilee (Mk 9:30), he spent the greater part of his time with his disciples, away from the crowds.

Jesus' teaching to them was expressed in a form that could be memorized, in the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, and this form may have represented the greater part of his teaching.[18] Rainer Riesner argues that to parallelism must be added other poetical techniques—such as alliteration, assonance, rhythm, rhyme—that made Jesus' words "memorizable," enabling them to be preserved "intact."[19] B. Gerhardsson suggests that Jesus made particular use of aphorisms, which were preformulated, to condense his theological teaching into an easily remembered form.[20] It is quite possible that his disciples began to commit to writing the words of the Teacher while he was still with them.

The rabbinic style of fellowship between Jesus and the Twelve effectively anticipated the birth of the early church. Their fellowship did not cease with his death but continued despite his absence from them. Jesus' school developed without interruption into the new community of faith in Jerusalem. The "tradition" that they had "received" from Jesus they "handed over" to those who responded to Peter's proclamation and were baptized. This enlarged group continued in the apostles' doctrine *[didachē]* (Acts 2:42; cf. Acts 5:38-39). In a short time the converted persecutor Saul of Tarsus visited the apostle Peter in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18-19). The language of the rabbinic school figured prominently in Paul's letters, and related terminology appeared in other New Testament writings.[21]

Naturally, it must not be denied that Jesus was a public figure in Israel, a prophet announcing the kingdom of God to the people. No less, however, was Jesus a rabbi who created a rabbinic school. Much of the subsequent history of early Christianity will not make sense unless this is understood.[22]

8.6. The revelation of the Christ

But who is he? The question remains unanswered. To be sure, there are strong hints. His emphatic end-time eschatology implies its own Christology. The One who proclaims Yahweh's emerging kingdom is at the same time its conveyer. He who elects and appoints the Twelve, the final Israel of God, must himself be Yahweh somehow present with his people. He is unique, apart from the Twelve; he is not one of them.

According to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus knew who he was, that is, the Christ.

The disciples, however, did not know who he was, at least not for some time. Only by his last year did they come to realize his true identity, first by his questioning of them and then by his direct assertion.

First, near Caesarea Philippi, capital of Philip's (mostly) Gentile tetrarchy, Jesus asked them who they, and not others, said he was. "Peter answered him, 'You are the Christ.' . . . And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things" (Mk 8:27-31; Mt 16:13-20).

Second, in the temple precincts the authorities asked, "By what authority are you doing these things?" (Mk 11:28), that is, his mounted entry into the city and his expulsion of the traders from the temple. Jesus answered by the parable of the evil tenants (Mk 12:1-12). His interrogators understood that he had identified them as the ruthless tenants of God's vineyard and himself as God's last messenger "sent" to them, a "beloved son." In other words, he was the long-awaited Christ. The Christ was both a *son* of Yahweh and *loved* by him (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:24; Is 55:3; cf. Is 42:1).

His listeners did not miss his inferences. When under arrest and standing before them on trial, they demanded, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" He replied, "I am; and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mk 14:61-62). Clearly the Christ is the Son of man, and Matthew 16:13-16 makes it clear that the latter is a messianic title.

8.6.1. The son of David. So this is who Jesus is—the Christ, that is, the long-awaited son of David, the Lord's anointed. In both Mark 14:62 and Matthew 16:13, Jesus the Christ speaks of himself as "the Son of man," using a phrase that can take the place of a personal pronoun.[23] Yet there is good evidence that Jesus used "the Son of man" as his alternative way of referring to the Christ.[24]

When Peter confesses Jesus to be "the Christ" at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus proceeds to refer to God "his Father" (Mk 8:38). Since God is his father, Jesus sees himself as "his son." This evokes memories of the long-expected son of David, Yahweh's anointed One.

> I will be his father, and he shall be my son. (2 Sam 7:14)

> [Yahweh] said to [his anointed], "You are my son." (Ps 2:7)

We assume that Jesus had become aware of his Davidic ancestry and that his inner life resonated with the "holy promises made to David" (Acts 13:34 NRSV). The very name of his home town, *Nazareth,*[25] informed him of that lineage, along with the consciousness of identity nurtured within the life of the Davidide family.[26] Thus he knew himself to be the "anointed One" (the Christ; Ps 2:2; Is 11:1), Yahweh's much-loved David (Ps 89:1-4, 19-29), "son" of Yahweh (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:26-27), on whose "throne" he would sit, in whose "kingdom" he would rule and whose "house" he would build (2 Sam 7:11-16).

David is the dominant figure of the Old Testament, capturing the land promised to Abraham and his seed and becoming the king who was "a man after [Yahweh's] own heart," whom he "appointed . . . prince over his people" (1 Sam 13:14). Narratives about David occupy some forty chapters of the books of Samuel and Kings. The "holy promises made to David" (Acts 13:34 NRSV, citing Is 55:3) were built upon three great texts: Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17; 2 Samuel 7:12-16. From these spring Israel's hope for a future David, hope that finds expression in the Prophets and in the literature of Judaism after the Prophets.[27] Jesus, as that son of David, is thereby bound to the promises of the covenant, uniting himself to all that has gone before in God's election of the nation Israel as his chosen vessel in history.

As we shall see, however, there was more to Jesus than his identity as the "son of David." Yet the Twelve came to understand and grasp this, which lay at the core of his consciousness, to be of fundamental importance. "You are the Christ," they confessed. It was the understanding of Jesus as the long-awaited "shoot from Jesse's stump" (Is 11:1, 10) that, in his mind and theirs, rightly rooted him in the promises of the covenant. Whatever other differences there were—and there are many—this, indeed, separated Jesus from those leaders of merely "charismatic" character, men like Athronges beforehand or Simon Bar Gioras afterwards, who were not (to our knowledge) descended from David.

Here, then, we hear the heartbeat of the historical Jesus. Those who were with him at the time, and others like Paul who would come after, became convinced that in this man, this son of David, the covenant promises of Yahweh had at last been brought to fulfillment.

8.6.2. The death and resurrection of the Christ and of his house. At Caesarea Philippi Jesus taught his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem where he would be rejected by the temple hierarchy and the scribes and be killed, but after three days he would be raised again. Jesus then set out for Jerusalem, repeating twice his dire prediction about what awaited him there (Mk 9:30-32; 10:32-34): The Christ, the son of David, will go to his temple city where he will be rejected, killed and raised again.

It was also at Caesarea Philippi, according to Matthew 16:16-18, that Jesus the Christ spoke directly of building his church, the new temple.[28] "On this rock," that is, the rock that is himself—the Christ—he said, "I will build my church." Here is the promised son of David come to build a house for the name of Yahweh, his Father, according to Nathan's oracle given to David a thousand years earlier.

> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you,who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. (2 Sam 7:12-14)

Yahweh's prophecy spoken through Nathan, more than any other in the Old Testament, nourished Jesus' view of himself and of his mission. Present in Nathan's prophecy are Yahweh's promise to David for the future of (1) his son, (2) his kingdom, and (3) his house.

But in the context of Jesus' ministry, the new temple was to replace an existing temple, the great sanctuary build by Herod the king. Only after the present temple was destroyed would the new temple be raised, "in three days" (Mk 14:58; cf. Jn 2:19). However his original words may have been twisted to secure a verdict against him, there can be no doubt that Jesus prophesied the end of the temple and its "resurrection" within a three-day time frame similar to his own resurrection following his death.

Jesus' words and actions as he led the Twelve up to David's city and house would replay again and again his oracle given in the far north, Caesarea Philippi. His tears shed on seeing the city, his mounted entry to the temple city, his curse of the fruitless fig and his expulsion of the temple's corrupters all spoke of the destruction of the house of David, but also of its "resurrection." He prophesied its ruination and desecration by an invading army in the near historical future, but equally he told of its ultimate reconstitution at the end of the age when the Son of man would come with the clouds to "gather his elect from the four winds" (Mk 13:27). The Christ's oracle about his own impending death and resurrection at Jerusalem are inextricably connected with the destruction and restoration of the house of David, the temple.

What then did Jesus mean by this rebuilt temple? It is, of course, a metaphor for a rebuilt Israel, founded on the Twelve who were to be filled with the eschatological Spirit of Yahweh. For this purpose he called them and spent the time he did with them "in private," where he taught them how they were to relate to one another in the period after his death. Theirs was to be a life of sacrificial service to one another, based on his example of sacrificial service to them (see, e.g., Mk 9:33-35; 10:35-45 pars.). Clearly he saw his Twelve as the new covenant people of God in embryo, the mustard seed from which a great tree would grow, the foundation for the new temple that he was to build (Mk 4:30-32; Mt 16:18). Already they were his "church," but this was only the beginning.

8.7. Other dimensions of the Christ

Having elicited from the Twelve their recognition of him as "the Christ," that is, the son of David, Jesus then filled out many other dimensions of his inner identity and mission.

8.7.1. The filial, not merely messianic, Son. In each of the four Gospels, Jesus speaks of God as the "Father" of the Son of Man (Mt 25:34; Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26; Jn 5:26-27).[29] Jesus' identification of God as "Father," and therefore of himself as "Son," is the more likely to be authentic because it is indirect in each case. It is

also "in agreement with the mysterious or puzzling nature of 'the Son of Man' on the lips of Jesus."[30]

But who is this "Son [of God]"? Are those scholars correct who see this phrase as *messianic* and nothing more? In our opinion Jesus meant more than that.

First, we should notice that Jesus himself rarely uses the messianic title "the Son of God." Rather, he spoke of God as "my Father" or, in relationship to the Son of man, "his Father." Sometimes he described himself as "the Son" or as "the beloved Son" (Mk 13:32; 12:6). This nuance emerges in the following well-known statement:

> All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son. (Mt 11:26-27 = Lk 10:22)

This is the language of personal relationship between Jesus and his Father. It is the language of dependence, obedience and prayer.

Second, the survival in the Gospels of the Aramaic word *abba* reinforces the personal, rather than the messianic, nature of the sonship references. *Abba* was a domestic word in contemporary Aramaic used by a child to address a father.[31] Joachim Jeremias held that Jesus' address to God in prayer as *Abba* is unparalleled in Jewish literature.[32] According to Jeremias, *Abba* was not an expression of childlike naiveté so much as the expression of an adult's complete surrender to the obedience of a Father from whom he has received unique revelation and authority.[33] This filial consciousness is consistent with but more profound even than the messianic and Davidic consciousness of Jesus.

This *Abba*-Son relationship, however, was not recognized by the Jewish people of the day who saw and heard Jesus. Just as the meaning of the parables was not "given" to them (Mk 4:11) but only to the Twelve, so too the unique Father-Son relationship between Yahweh and Jesus was "hidden" from the people at large. Only the Father knows the Son; only the Son knows the Father. But the Son reveals the Father to those whom he chooses, that is, to the Twelve (Mt 11:25-27).

The Nicodemus incident illustrates this. Nicodemus recognized Jesus as a "teacher come from God" (Jn 3:2), that is, as a rabbi. According to Jesus, however, only by supernatural rebirth will it be possible for Israel, as represented by this distinguished spokesman,[34] to enter the kingdom of God (Jn 3:3-7), that is, to recognize Jesus not as a mere rabbi but as God's "only Son" (Jn 3:16).

8.7.2. The Sufferer. The "Son of man must suffer many things," he said (Mk 8:31). The apostles write of "Christ's sufferings" (2 Cor 1:5; 1 Pet 1:11; 4:13). Again, a Davidic background can be found for Jesus as sufferer. The temple liturgy in Ps 132:1 was sung as a messianic prayer: "Remember, O LORD, in David's favor, / all the hardships he endured." David himself cried out, "I bear in my bosom the insults of the nations" (Ps 89:50-51). In Zechariah's passage about David and his

city, it is written, "They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn" (Zech 12:10 NIV). Not only is David a suffering figure, the Old Testament foresaw that the messianic (Davidic) age would be preceded by the birth pangs of suffering (Is 26:17; 66:8; Jer 22:23; Hos 13:13; Mic 4:9-10); surely these would also engulf the One who was to come. Sufferings, too, would be the portion of the "saints of the Most High," and also, by implication, they would be the portion of their Leader, the Son of man, before his exaltation (Dan 7:27).[35]

Suffering, then, was rooted in the figures with whom Jesus identified himself, David and the Son of man. Clearly, too, the messianic age that he saw dawning in the kingdom he proclaimed and enacted (Is 35; cf Mt 11:26) was an age that would be preceded by the birth pangs of suffering, as noted above. Jesus, however, introduces a critical element not found in these concepts of suffering. His sufferings will be *for* others, his people.

> For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom *for [anti]* many. (Mk 10:45)
>
> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out *for [hyper]* many. (Mk 14:24)

Here Jesus takes to himself the role of another Old Testament sufferer, the mysterious Servant of Yahweh of whom Isaiah spoke. The prophet wrote a number of poems about a humble Servant of God, who would be gravely mistreated, and whose death would somehow save his people from God's punishment.

> He was cut off out of the land of the living,
> stricken *for* the transgression of my people . . .
> [My servant shall] make many to be accounted righteous;
> and he shall bear their iniquities.
> Yet he bore the sin of many. (Is 53:8, 11-12)

The concepts of David suffering and of a period of suffering ahead of the messianic age were fundamental to the inherited tradition of Israel. Yet the idea that the Christ must suffer *for* others does not appear to be a part of mainstream thought in first-century Judaism. Isaiah's Servant Songs have distinctively contributed to Jesus' view of his mission. The conviction that the Christ, son of David and Son of man, is a suffering Servant, as taught by Jesus, was peculiar to him. Seyoon Kim comments that: "His death atones for those who would be represented by him . . . and dedicates them to God as his new eschatological people. Therefore this death is a sacrifice that inaugurates a new covenant."[36]

"Christ crucified," Paul's words to encapsulate the manner and the meaning of Jesus' death for others, was an offense to Jews—both in prospect and retrospect (Mk 8:31-32; 1 Cor 1:23). With the announcement of that death also comes the apostolic call to a life of sacrifice for others and of love for them, as exemplified in

the totality of Jesus' life, but in particular in his death *for* others.

Closely connected to the concept of Christ's suffering were his words to them about the *meaning* of his death. Die he must (Mk 8:31), to pay a ransom price for freeing a people in thrall to the strong man (Mk 3:27) and to establish the blood-covenant bond between that people and their God (Mk 14:24 and pars.). As he led them from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem, he often taught them about the *reason for,* as well as the *fact of,* his death.

8.7.3. David's son who is David's Lord. A third and also unexpected element in Jesus' self-understanding was his view that as David's son, he was also—somehow—David's *Lord,* a priest-king.

> The LORD says to my [= David's] lord,
> "Sit at my right hand
> until I make your enemies your footstool." (Ps 110:1 NRSV)

Jesus identified the psalmist as David, whose son—Jesus himself—was the Christ (Mk 12:35-40 and pars.). But how could the one whom David calls "my lord" *also* be David's son? Jesus confronted the scribes with this question. That the people "heard him gladly" suggests that the scholars had no answer to Jesus' riddle.

There are good reasons to believe that Jesus, the son of David, saw himself as the Lord destined to be at God's right hand. First, we note the Aramaism, *Marana tha,* "Our Lord, come," in the invocation Paul quotes to the Corinthians (1 Cor 16:22). Most probably this is an echo of a liturgy from the earliest, Aramaic-speaking church, addressing Jesus as "Lord." The early recognition of Jesus as "Lord" most probably derived from Jesus himself, based on his interpretation of Psalm 110:1.

Second, Peter's speech in Acts 2 cites Psalm 110 as the Scripture that Jesus fulfilled when he was resurrected and exalted (Acts 2:33-36). In turn, the historicity of the Acts references is supported by the frequent, early and broad-based allusions to Jesus as the "Lord" who is at the "right hand" of God throughout the letters of the New Testament (Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22). It is a solid probability that the widespread use of this psalm arose from Jesus' own interpretation of it.

Further, it is likely that Jesus connected in his mind the *Son of man* ruling the nations in the presence of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:13-14) with the *Lord* at God's right hand whose enemies are a footstool for his feet (Ps 110:1). The similarity of Son of man and Lord in the two passages is striking. Most probably, Jesus established the concept of the Son of man with the disciples first.

It was consistent with Jesus' characteristic way of speaking of himself that he could refer to himself with a phrase—"the Son of man"—that could be used as an everyday periphrasis for "I," on one hand, or as a title for the exalted heavenly king

prophesied by Daniel, on the other.[37] The phrase "the Son of man," as used by Jesus, was a riddle to his hearers. Was he speaking as an ordinary man or as the highest king?

As it happened, whether or not by Jesus' intention, "Son of man," with a few exceptions, does not survive in the vocabulary of the New Testament (apart from the Gospels). On the other hand, the "Lord" and the "right hand" of God are very common throughout the pages of the Epistles. "Son of man," though meaningful to Jews because of Old Testament use, made no sense to Gentiles. "Lord," however, became well known among the Gentiles because it was by this word, in particular, that Jesus was preached to them ("We preach . . . Jesus Christ as Lord" [2 Cor 4:5]).

8.8. Jesus, Israel and the Gentiles

It appears that Jesus saw his ministry as a time of transition in God's purposes for the peoples who lay outside his historic covenant with Israel. They, too, were to be part of his new temple.

First, however, Israel must be given her opportunity to recognize and accept her promised king. He declared that he was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He restricted the mission of the Twelve to these "lost sheep" (Mt 15:24; 10:5). But the Pharisaic opposition to him and sinners' acceptance of him were potent signs for the future. The covenant nation would reject her messianic king, and the Gentiles would receive him.

Israel's rejection of him was a matter of passionate sorrow for Jesus.

> A man had a fig tree; . . . and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, . . . "Cut it down." . . . . And he answered him, "Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good." (Lk 13:6-9; cf. Mk 11:12-14, 20-25)

> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! . . . How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not! (Mt 23:37-39 = Lk 13:34-35)

Jesus knew that he faced rejection ("the very stone which the builders rejected" [Mk 12:10 and pars.]) but that there would yet be a temple for God ("the very stone . . . rejected has become the head of the corner").

During his ministry, inside as well as outside Jewish territories, there were Gentiles who sought his ministry (e.g., Mk 7:27). Jesus saw these as anticipating the ingathered Gentiles who will sit with the patriarchs of Israel at the messianic banquet as their descendants are thrown into the darkness.

> I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. (Mt 8:11-12; cf. Mt 22:1-10)

Jesus likened himself to the prophet Jonah, who went to Gentile Nineveh where the people responded to Jonah's preaching with repentance. Because God's holy nation had rejected God's son who is "greater than Jonah," Jesus predicted that the men of Nineveh will rise up against Israel in the judgment and condemn her (Mt 12:41; cf. Mt 11:20-24).

So Jesus preached to Israel and came finally to the Messiah's city and temple where he faced conflict, rejection and death at the hands of the nation's leaders and custodians. By rejecting the Messiah, the holy nation sealed its own fate. Except for individual Israelites, God would pass over the nation Israel and gather in the nations. There would yet be a chosen people and a temple for God to indwell. The cursed fig withered and died. The merchants were cast out. The temple curtain was rent from the top down, that is, by an act of God. These were awesome signs presaging the tramp of Roman legionnaires' feet thirty years later, the cries of anguish and the smoke of destruction. But, said Jesus to Peter, "Have faith in God" (Mk 11:22). The future is always his.

8.9. Jesus' mission: "I will build my church"

Jesus made several references to himself as the foundation of the new temple. He spoke of the "rock" *(petra)* at or upon which he will build his church, alluding to the son of David who will build a house for the name of Yahweh (Mt 16:18; 2 Sam 7:13). He also cited Psalm 118 as referring to himself as "the stone *[lithon]* which the builders rejected [but which would] become the head of the corner" (Mk 12:10). He is both the builder of this temple and its foundation.

Peter, to whom Jesus addressed the oracle at Caesarea Philippi, later combined both allusions ("build . . . house" and "stone . . . rejected") in his first letter, rehearsing the gospel-invitation. "Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house" (1 Pet 2:4-5). In his death Christ was "the stone rejected by the builders." In God's sight, however, Jesus understands himself to be the "beloved son" (Mk 12:6; in Peter's words, "chosen and precious"). Through Jesus' resurrection from the dead, he is the "living stone," a cornerstone upon whom those who "come to him" are founded, in the "spiritual house," the new temple of God. Those who accept the invitation to come to him are "built in," that is, by God (the verb is a divine passive). The Christ will build his church.

Jesus' plans to construct a new temple, which were fulfilled in the story of the New Testament as well as in the subsequent history of the church, coincide with some strands of contemporary Jewish thought. The rabbis envisaged a new temple founded on "a cosmic rock," identified with Mount Zion, source of the rivers of the world and the site of creation and paradise.[38] They also believed this "rock" to be the capstone over the netherworld (an image echoed perhaps in Jesus' allusion to the "gates of Hades"). Jesus' mission was to build a "new" temple that would

be radically *ungeographical,* composed of *people,* that is, of Gentiles gathered into a restored Israel. Jesus' mission is at the same time soteriological (through his death for sins and his resurrection on the third day; Mk 8:31; 9:30-32; 10:32-34, 45) and ecclesial (through his building of the "new temple," a "body" of God's people; Jn 2:19-21; Mk 14:58 and pars.).

Excursus 8A: Working assumptions

1. Dating Jesus' ministry.[39] Jesus was crucified on a Friday, the day preceding the sabbath, which, in the year in question, also preceded the Passover. Chronographers have established that this conjunction of sabbath and Passover occurred in either 30 or 33. It is our belief that the latter date is the more likely.[40] Since John the Baptist began his ministry in 28 (Lk 3:1-2), the earlier date (30) would scarcely provide sufficient time to encompass the two ministries of John and Jesus. In our view, John's ministry was exercised in 28-29, and Jesus' ministry occupied the years 29-33.

It is clear from the Gospels of Mark and John that the feeding of the five thousand occurred one year prior to death of Jesus; these Gospels make clear that the feeding occurred at Passover season.[41] There is an uneven distribution of time in these Gospels. Mark and John devote only five or so chapters to Jesus' first two to three years of ministry; the remaining chapters are allocated to his final year. There is an even greater concentration of narrative for the final week. Jesus' last year and his last week appear to have had greater significance for these authors than did the earlier part of his ministry.

2. Jesus in the context of his time.[42] It is evident that the Gospels were written after Jesus' death and from a postresurrection perspective. Each writer has a view of Jesus that informs the outline of his work and his emphasis. As each begins his Gospel he knows the end of Jesus' story. Moreover, each has firm convictions about Jesus that permeate his text. At the same time, however, each writer confronts the reader with Jesus as a figure of history, who lived and died in particular circumstances.

Readers of the Gospels see Jesus in the world of Galilee, Gaulanitis, Peraea and Judea. He is circumscribed by identifiable historical figures like John the baptizer, Herod the tetrarch of Galilee-Peraea, Caiaphas the high priest of the temple in Jerusalem and Pontius Pilate the governor of Judea. The Jesus the reader hears is addressing that situation in the late twenties and early thirties, not the situation of the churches thirty or more years later. Whereas the letters of the apostles address the circumstances of the churches in the post-Jesus era, it is Jesus "back there" whom we see and hear in the Gospels. The Evangelists do not put a post-Easter Christology into the mouths of those like Peter and the centurion, whose confessions they record (Mk 8:29; 15:39). The Gospel writers' perspective is of the Lord who is timeless in his significance but time bound historically speaking. Thus the Gospels are documents of and for faith and at the same moment documents of and for history.

The historian has to work with and indeed work *within* the four *bioi,* "biographies," that have always been regarded as closest in time to Jesus. Each Gospel is a complete work in itself. Only by dismantling the other four can a "fifth" Gospel be created. However, human subjectivity is such that the resulting reconstruction of Jesus will tend to be an image of the artisan.

Perhaps, though, the expanded knowledge of Jesus' life and times now available to us will make it possible to get back to Jesus "as he was." The Gospels are rather limited in this respect. To be sure, every piece of available background information needs to be assembled to make his ministry imaginable, but a cultural backdrop can go only so far in enhancing our knowledge of

the person in question, whether it is Herod the tetrarch, Caiaphas the high priest or Jesus of Nazareth. Background cannot supply foreground.

Excursus 8B: The criterion of dissimilarity

1. Definition. There are a number of elements of belief in the early church, as reflected historically first in the Epistles and then in the Gospels, that were not current in the religious environment of Judaism (or Hellenism). The origin of these elements is not easily accounted for on cultural grounds. In all probability, therefore, these owe their currency in the early church to the impulse of Jesus.[43] Their uncontrived appearance in the Gospels lends credence to the historical credibility of these writings.

2. The Kingdom [of God]. The phrase "the kingdom" or "the kingdom of God" is often used in the Epistles of the New Testament (e.g., Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20).[44] Yet the "kingdom" vocabulary is relatively unusual in Jewish literature of Jesus' era.[45] Most probably, therefore, its extensive use by the early church derives from Jesus. According to the Gospels, the "kingdom of God" is often to be found on the lips of Jesus, including in the Lord's Prayer.[46]

3. [The] Christ. The word *Christ* occurs hundreds of times in the letters of the New Testament, but it is reasonably rare in the apostles' Bible, the Septuagint (LXX). Further, it is not used in the Greek Old Testament in an absolute sense, "*the* Christ," except in qualified references (e.g., "the anointed of the Lord").[47] I conclude, therefore, that Paul and the other apostles writing in the letters did not derive their use of "[the] Christ" directly from their Bible.[48] Paul's use of the messianic name or title for Jesus must derive either from the apostles before him or from Jesus himself. The latter is the more probable; it appears to have been Jesus' own view of himself, a view that emerges from the gospels.[49]

4. The God of Israel as Abba. In his letters, which are written in Greek, Paul twice uses the Aramaic word ***abba*** for God. He translates ***abba*** as "Father," but he does not explain it further; evidently his readers knew the origin and significance of the word (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; cf. Mk 14:36). ***Abba*** was a domestic and familial address to God virtually unparalleled in Jewish literature of the period.[50] The most likely explanation for its appearance in Paul's letters is that Jesus addressed God as ***Abba*** and taught this form of address to the original disciples, who passed it on to Paul. Paul, in turn, taught it to the Gentile churches. Similarly, 1 Peter 1:17 enjoins, "if you invoke as Father him who judges." The invocation of the "Father" in prayer, common to the traditions of Paul and Peter, points back to Jesus' distinctive teaching about God as "Father."

Consistent with this, Paul's letters radically redefine God. As a Pharisee, Saul blessed God as "our Lord and God, the God of our fathers,"[51] and as the God who is "One." But Paul the Christian wrote of God as "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever" (2 Cor 11:31). Paul's understanding of God underwent dramatic change that can be accounted for by Jesus' teaching of God as ***Abba,*** "Father," but in scarcely any other way. Further, the God who is "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus" is also "*our* Father," the Father of those who are joined to his Son by faith (e.g., 1 Thess 1:3, 10).

Closely connected is Paul's understanding of Jesus as "*his* Son," that is, as "the Son of God" in a *personal* sense (1 Thess 1:10; cf. 2 Cor 1:19). Yet a filial and relational view of "the Son of God" implied by the use of ***abba*** does not arise from either the Jewish or the Hellenistic contemporary religious culture.[52] Historically speaking, the apostolic redefinition of God as "Father" must have originated with Jesus as, indeed, the Gospels confirm (see, e.g., Mk 13:32; cf. Mk 12:16; Jn 8:36; Heb 1:8).

5. Christ's death hyper, *"for," others.* The apostles Paul[53] and Peter both teach that Christ died ***hyper,*** "for" (= "on behalf of"), sins, that is, vicariously (see, e.g., 2 Cor 5:14; 1 Pet 3:18; cf. Heb

10:12; 1 Pet 2:21; 1 Jn 3:16).[54] Evidently both tap into earlier tradition. The Old Testament passage underlying this common tradition is probably Isaiah 52:13—53:12 where the Servant of the Lord dies *for* the people.[55] But what is the sense of *for* in the Greek version of Isaiah as used by the apostles? According to the Septuagint version, the prepositions are ***dia*** (= "*on account of* sins") and ***peri*** (= "*concerning* sins"); ***hyper*** does not occur in this text. In the apostles' tradition, the LXX preposition ***dia*** has become ***hyper,*** introducing a vicarious sense. But who changed the preposition in the apostolic tradition? Logic dictates this must stem from Jesus. This is confirmed when we notice that Mark and Luke, who follow separate traditions for the Last Supper, both quote Jesus using the vicarious ***hyper*** preposition in regard to his death (Lk 22:19, 20 [cf. 1 Cor 11:24]; Mk 14:24 [cf. Mk 10:45]). Here, then, is another a critical belief expressed in the early church that cannot be explained culturally (i.e., as influenced by the Septuagint text of Is 52—53) but is accounted for in the uncontrived Gospel narrative of the Last Supper.

6. Jesus as Mara, *"Lord."* Prominent among Old Testament passages appealed to in the letters are the words from Psalm 110:1, "The LORD said to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand.' " (Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 5:1, 7).[56] It is likely that these words underly the invocation of the early church's ***marana tha,*** "Our Lord, come!" (1 Cor 16:22; cf. "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" [Rev 22:20]), as well as the many references in the letters to "the Lord [Jesus]."[57] The spread of references across the letters points to a common and early tradition. Did the early church generate this tradition, or, more probably, did it derive from Jesus? Once more we find an uncontrived, if enigmatic, word of Jesus recorded in the Gospels to be the most likely explanation for the origin of a wide usage in the early church (see Mk 12:35-40).[58]

Jesus asked, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?" Then, quoting Psalm 110:1, he asked again, "David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?" (Mk 12:35, 37). The apostles proclaimed their answer to Jesus' riddle in the resurrected One who was, "according to the flesh," the son of David (Rom 1:2-3; cf. Acts 2:30-35).[59]

7. Intercessory (nonliturgical) prayer. The churches addressed in the letters were praying communities (see, e.g., Jas 5:13; 1 Pet 4:7; Rev 8:4). "Pray for us" is the repeated plea of the writers (e.g., 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1; 2 Cor 1:11; Rom 15:30; Col 4:3; Heb 13:18). There appears to have been greater freedom in praying in the churches than in the synagogues of the period; the synagogues were formal and liturgical.[60] But this new manner of prayer most probably did not just begin ***de novo*** or evolve over a period; Jews, as the apostles were, were conservative in such matters. It is more likely that the impulse towards freer intercession came from their Teacher, whose patterns of personal prayer are often noted in the Gospels.[61]

The early church was a praying church for whom God was Father and Jesus was Christ and Lord at God's right hand, the king in God's kingdom, whose death was ***hyper,*** "for," the sins of his people. These elements, which are significantly discontinuous with the religious culture of the synagogue of those times, are satisfactorily accounted for by uncontrived reference to Jesus in the Gospels.

Excursus 8C: Did Jesus make claims to deity?

Jesus did make claims to diety, but he made the claims obliquely and indirectly. Jesus' words, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Lk 11:20), imply such a claim. The proclaimer and the bringer of the kingdom of God must represent God in the closest possible way.

Once Jesus declared a paralyzed man's sins forgiven, which he demonstrated by healing the man (Mk 2:5). The scribes who were present understandably declared this to be a blasphemy. For who could forgive sins but God alone (see, e.g., Ps 130:4)? Later, Christ commanded the rich man to "follow me" as the way to eternal life. In the ensuing conversation, Jesus taught that to

follow *him* was, in effect, to keep the Ten Commandments, including the first, which repudiates any God except Yahweh (Mk 10:21). Who but Yahweh (somehow) present with his people could make such a demand?

In the course of his ministry, Jesus' references to Yahweh in the Hebrew Scriptures provide examples of Jesus' oblique claims to deity. He regarded his *words* of teaching as eternal: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mt 24:35). Isaiah had written: "the word of our God will stand forever" (Is 40:8). Jesus spoke of himself as "I am," the very words by which Yahweh disclosed his identity to Moses (Ex 3:14; see Jn 8:24, 28, 58; 18:5-6; cf. Mk 14:62-63; 13:6).

Early in his ministry Jesus described himself as the *bridegroom:* "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" he asked (Mk 2:19). But the bridegoom was an image used for the God of Israel: "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Is 62:5). Another descriptive role Jesus applied to himself with regard to Israel was the *shepherd.* "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered," he said (Mk 14:27; cf. Jn 10:11-16). Jews were familiar with the shepherd as a metaphor for Yahweh, Israel's God (see Ps 23:1; Ezek 34:15).*Rock* was another such title for Yahweh that Jesus used to describe himself. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation / a stone, a tested stone" (Is 28:16). Jesus taught that to build one's life on his teachings was to build on a rock (Mt 7:24-27). He was the stone, rejected by the builders, that would become the cornerstone of the new temple (Mk 12:10-11).

Jesus' choice and appointment of twelve disciples, to whose number he did not belong, also implied some kind of functional association with Yahweh. In this regard several of the above metaphors are instructive.

Jesus' implied deity claims and various Old Testament allusions support the proposition that Jesus the man was at the same time divine. His words about himself are spoken indirectly and as the obedient One, sent to do the Father's will. He is not a free agent actively claiming to be God. The people need to have ears to hear and eyes to see so as to grasp who he was and why he came. Jesus' approach to revealing his divine person and ministry could be summed up by the words "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor 10:1).

Further reading

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Notes

[1]For an example of the complexity of the issues surrounding Jesus studies, see, e.g., the multivolumed works by John P. Meier and N. T. Wright.

[2]See excursus 1A, pp. 19-22.

[3]Greek *historia* and *bios*. See generally, Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*. SNTSMS 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 55-81.

[4]Ibid., pp. 177-90.

[5]Ibid., pp. 206-19.

[6]Only one of the Marcan references is repeated in parallel passages (Lk 6:10).

[7]See earlier, §6.6.

[8]There was a "John the baptizer" movement (Acts 19:1-7), but no tenets attributable to John have survived in any detail.

[9]Josephus points to "the crowds [that] were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons" and to "eloquence that had so great an effect" (*Ant.* 18.118).

[10]Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979), pp. 174-222, refers to Jesus' "esoteric" teaching.

[11]The historicity of the miracles of Jesus rests on several pieces of evidence. (1) There are references in the Jewish tradition. According to Josephus, "Jesus . . . wrought surprising feats" (*Ant.* 18.63). The Talmud, written later but probably arising from earlier information, says, "They hanged Yeshua . . . [because] he practiced sorcery" (*b. Sanh.* 43a). (2) The rhythmic form of a number of Jesus' sayings indicates that real events have been memorized: for example, "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up" (Mt 11:4-5; see Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*. [London: SCM Press, 1971], 1:21). (3) We find mention of different kinds of miracles across the various Gospels and their underlying sources. Mark narrates exorcisms (see, e.g., Mk 1:28), nature miracles (see, e.g., Mk 4:35-41), healings (see, e.g., Mk 3:1-6) and a resurrection (see, e.g., Mk 3:21-43). The Gospel of John, which appears to be independent of Mark, describes nature miracles (see, e.g., Jn 6:1-13), healings (see, e.g., Jn 4:46-54) and a resurrection (see, e.g., Jn 11:1-44). The constituent strands underlying Matthew and Luke, which, too, are independently composed, also point to miracles at the hands of Jesus. Q has a healing (Mt 8:5-13 = Lk 7:1-10). L has a nature miracle (Lk 5:1-11), a healing (Lk 13:10-17) and a resurrection (Lk 7:11-17). M has an exorcism (Mt 9:32-35). There is a breadth of independent evidence across the Gospel sources for a range of miracle types. For a review of scholarly opinion on the miracles of Jesus, see Barry L. Blackburn, "The Miracles of Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus,* ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 353-94.

[12]See earlier, §3.9; 7.4.

[13]There are many references in which Israel is Yahweh's poor; *poor* is a synonym for *the nation*. See, e.g., Psalms 68:10; 72:2; 74:19, 21; cf. Isaiah 29:19.

[14]See Meyer, *Aims of Jesus,* p. 161.

[15]Unlike Sean Freyne, "Urban-Rural Relations in First-Century Galilee," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity,* ed. Lee I. Levine (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 86-87,

who refers to "the Jesus movement" as a "counter-cultural movement."

[16]See Philip S. Alexander, "Orality in Pharisaic-Rabbinic Judaism at the Turn of the Eras," in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition,* ed. Henry Wansbrough (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), pp. 159-84; Rainer Riesner, "Jesus as Preacher and Teacher," in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition,* ed. Henry Wansbrough (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), pp. 185-210.

[17]*Pirqe Abot* 1.1.

[18]So Riesner, "Jesus as Preacher and Teacher," p. 202.

[19]Riesner, "Jesus as Preacher and Teacher," pp. 206-7, rejects the view of Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), p. 27, who says that oral transmission means "the inevitability of change, flexibility and degrees of improvisation." Riesner may be correct. However, his thesis is built on the assumption of the continuity of a rabbinic ethos within early Christianity. In view of the diminishing Jewish character and the growing Gentile character of Christianity, the rabbinic influence must have diminished in time.

[20]Birger Gerhardsson, "The Narrative Meshalim in the Synoptic Gospels," *NTS* 34 (1988): 339-63.

[21]See Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 142-44.

[22]Ibid., pp. 144-58.

[23]While this term can be no more than a periphrasis for *I,* as Jesus used it on occasion, clearly it also refers to the ascended, exalted and sovereign human figure ("one like a son of man") envisioned by Daniel (Dan 7:13-14). Daniel's "son of man" was referred to subsequently in apocalyptic literature. See, e.g., 1 Enoch 37—71.

[24]See William Horbury, "The Messianic Associations of 'The Son of Man.' " *JTS* n.s. 36 (1985): 34-55.

[25]See earlier, §5.3.

[26]N. T. Wright's discussion in *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), pp. 481-89, 536-37, which concedes that Jesus thought of himself as Messiah without resolving the question of Jesus' *actual* descent from David, is unsatisfactory. However Wright presents it, in his viewpoint Jesus' ministry is merely subjective insofar as Jesus was concerned and therefore could only have been perceived as Davidic to onlookers in a purely symbolic sense. Based on this argument, Jesus must remain one charismatic messiah among others, like Athronges or Simon Bar Gioras.

[27]See earlier, §2.5.

[28]Argument for the historicity of this oracle is found in Meyer, *Aims of Jesus,* pp. 188-97.

[29]See Seyoon Kim, *The Son of Man as the Son of God* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985), pp. 1-6.

[30]Ibid., p. 6.

[31]The classical exposition of this view is presented by Joachim Jeremias in *The Prayers of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1967), pp. 57-65; cf. also the support of N. T. Wright, *Jesus,* pp. 648-51. This has been challenged by James Barr, "*Abba* Isn't 'Daddy,' " *JTS* 39 (1988): 28-47, who argues that while *abba* was colloquial, it was not "childish" or necessarily a reference to "my father." Nonetheless, Barr allows that *abba* as an address for God "may have been first originated" by Jesus, though he questions how widely Jesus used the term. J. Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 146-47, has conveniently reproduced several possible parallels to Jesus' use of *abba.*

[32]Jeremias, *Prayers,* pp. 57-65. This view is contested by Barr, Crossan and others.

[33]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[34]"Do not marvel that I said to you (singular) 'You (plural) must be born anew' " (Jn 3:7).

[35]Compare Daniel 7:27 with Daniel 7:13-14. The saints will share the sufferings and then the kingdom of the Most High with "one like a Son of Man."

[36]Kim, *Son of Man,* p. 73.

[37]For differing views, see Geza Vermes, "The Use of *Bar Nasha* in Jewish Aramaic," in *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels,* ed. Matthew Black (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), pp. 321-22;

J. C. O'Neill, *Who Did Jesus Think He Was?* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 136-63.

[38]See Meyer, *Aims of Jesus,* 185-186.

[39]See excursus 1A.

[40]See C. J. Humphreys and W. G. Waddington, "Astronomy and the Date of the Crucifixion," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos,* ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), pp. 165-81; Paul L. Maier, "The Date of the Nativity and the Chronology of Jesus' Life," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos,* ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), pp. 113-30.

[41]John is specific (Jn 6:4). Mark is inferential; the grass was green, as it is in spring, the season of Passover (Mk 6:39).

[42]See generally Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?;* Eugene E. Lemcio, *The Past of Jesus in the Gospels,* SNTSMS no.? (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[43]See generally David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), for references to the extensive dependence of Paul upon the details of the life and teaching of Jesus.

[44]See also 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 15:24, 50; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 1:13; 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Timothy 4:1, 18; Hebrews 1:8; 11:33; 12:28; James 2:5; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 1:6, 9; 5:10; 11:15; 12:10; 16:10; 17:12, 17, 18.

[45]See, e.g., George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 130-33. Related terminology is also rare in the Qumran literature. See, e.g., "this shall be a time of salvation . . . an age of *dominion* for all the members of his company" (*War Scroll* 1, emphasis added); "for thou art terrible, O God, in the glory of thy *kingdom*" (*War Scroll* 12, emphasis added). Reference is made to the "kingdom of his people" (*Liturgical Fragments* 5). For an opposing view, that the kingdom was common and a well-recognized theologoumenon, see Bruce Chilton, "The Kingdom of God in Recent Discussion," in Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, *Studying the Historical Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 255-80.

[46]It may be asked why *kingdom* is not even more common in the letters. A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Paul and Jesus: The Problem of Continuity," *SJT* 38 (1985): 202-3, explains the difference between Jesus' vocabulary and Paul's as a result of Paul's experience of God's righteousness and the Spirit within his own life (pp. 202-3).

[47]*Christos* occurs thirty-seven times in the Septuagint. See Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), pp. 1-2.

[48]See earlier, §2.5, 6.

[49]Jesus was crucified by the Romans as "king of the Jews" following a Jewish trial in which he is reported to have accepted that he was "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed" (Mk 14:61-62; 15:2, 18, 26).

[50]See later, 52.

[51]Benediction 1. See Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* rev. and ed. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973), 2:454-63.

[52]So Martin Hengel, *The Son of God* (London: SCM Press, 1976), pp. 16-56.

[53]It is evident that the believers in the first churches "received" and "delivered" traditions from Jesus. Paul states that he had received the tradition about the Last Supper "from the Lord" (1 Cor 11:23-25). Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper have been "received" by the original disciples, who in turn have "delivered" these to Paul; Paul has in turn "delivered" this tradition to the Corinthians.

[54]Peter Head, "The Self-Offering and Death of Christ as a Sacrifice in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles," in *Sacrifice in the Bible,* ed. Roger T. Beckwith and Martin J. Selman (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), pp. 112-14.

[55]1 Corinthians 15:1-5 repeats a tradition Paul "received," that "Christ died *for our* sins in accordance with the scriptures." The Scriptures in question appear to be Isaiah 52:13—53:12.

[56]For discussion of the significance of Psalm 110 in the formation of early christological understanding, see Hengel, *Studies,* pp. 119-225.

[57]See 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 6; 2:15, 19 for randomly chosen references to Jesus as "Lord" in an

early letter.

[58]Hengel, *Studies,* p. 173, does not think it is impossible that this text played a role in the teaching of Jesus, but it is not easily proved. R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale House, 1971), p. 102, rather more confidently points to Mark 14:62 as proof that Jesus did in fact apply this psalm to himself.

[59]The integrity of the Acts reference is confirmed by Paul's reference to Jesus as descended from David.

[60]This is not to imply that Jewish prayer at the time was fixed immovably. New prayers and hymns appear to have been composed at Qumran. In mainstream Judaism, R. Abbahu is said to have spoken "a new benediction every day" (*b. Ber.* 4.8a). For reference to improvised synagogue prayers, see Stefan C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 99-100.

[61]See Markus Bockmuehl, *This Jesus* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), pp. 125-44.

9

Resurrection, Exaltation & the Spirit

9.1. Jesus the Christ, risen and exalted

In Paul's opening lines in the letter to the Romans, he describes the content of the gospel of God as follows:

> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.[1]

These words cannot be separated from the salutation; together they reveal a striking sequence: "Jesus Christ . . . descended from David . . . designated the Son of God in power."

The man Jesus was born by human descent *(genomenou ek spermatos)* from David. By his resurrection from the dead and the coming of the Spirit of holiness, he has been "marked off" *(horisthentos)* as the Son of God *in power.* He is Jesus the Christ. The parallel phrases "according to the flesh . . . according to the Spirit" point to the sequence of his coming in history as Jesus followed by his heavenly rule.[2]

We have already discussed Jesus as the Davidic Son of God/Messiah during the period of his historic ministry, as narrated in the Gospels.[3] Subsequent to that, however, as the exalted Lord he is the Son of God in power, by virtue of his resurrection from the dead and the coming of the Spirit of holiness. In this chapter we discuss his resurrection from the dead, his exaltation and the outpouring of the Spirit of holiness, each of which is also identified as a *historical* event.

9.2. Resurrection

9.2.1. Earliest evidence: Paul's letters. By the time Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians (in c. 50), the story of the resurrection of Jesus had reached fixed form, either as part of a kerygmatic summary (1 Thess 1:10) or as part of a credal statement: "We believe that Jesus died and rose again" (1 Thess 4:14). Paul's readers are not expressing doubt regarding the fact of the resurrection. His references are made in passing, not by way of argument.[4]

Similarly, in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul does not defend the resurrection. Rather, Paul is arguing for something the Corinthians are doubting, *their* resurrection at the end (1 Cor 15:12). Significantly, Paul does this by quoting to them the tradition he had "received" earlier from others and then "delivered" to them when he was with them (c. 50; 1 Cor 15:1-3). While Paul is not arguing for the resurrection of Jesus and the Corinthians are not questioning it, he does offer this comment in passing: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile" (1 Cor 15:17). Resurrection faith that does not rest on resurrection *fact* is empty.

There is a parallel with the Lord's Supper where, however, aberrations in practice were also occurring. This prompts Paul to repeat the original tradition that he had "received" ("from the Lord") and that he had "delivered" to them at the beginning (1 Cor 11:2, 23). He appeals to the "received" tradition, which the recipents are not doubting, to set right current departures from tradition in belief and practice in the church.

It is clear that both traditions were preformed and not of Pauline composition and that they predated the apostle's visit to Corinth. Subsequent generations, including our own, may regard it as providential that the Corinthians were subject to these departures from their received traditions. Otherwise he would not have needed to remind them of the terms of the original tradition he brought to them, which he had assumed that they were upholding. Had there not been difficulties in Corinth, we would not have known the content and the format of the traditions and, above all, their earliness and their non-Pauline, pre-Pauline authorship.

9.2.2. The pre-Pauline tradition of the resurrection. This tradition consists of a raft ("what I also received") of four connected planks, each introduced by "that" *(hoti):*

- that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures
- that he was buried
- that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures
- that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, etc. (1 Cor 15:3-5)

While each plank is connected to its neighbor, there is a special connection between the second and the first and between the fourth and the third. The second ("he was buried") reinforces the reality of the first ("Christ died"). The fourth ("he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve," etc.) emphasizes the fact of the third ("he was raised the third day"). This tradition focuses attention on Christ's death

and on his resurrection on "the third day." Yet the climax of the tradition comprises the resurrection of the Messiah and his appearances to a sequence of witnesses.

This tradition does not refer directly to the empty tomb. This is a little surprising in view of the prominence given to the empty tomb in each of the four Gospels. Nonetheless, the empty tomb is *implied* in Paul's received tradition. Indeed, the tradition depends on it. (We should note that the received tradition states that Jesus was "entombed" *[etaphē]*, that is, not buried in a grave in the ground but laid in a tomb in the aperture of a rock face.[5]) The statements subsequent to "he was entombed," that is, "he was raised the third day . . . he appeared to Cephas" logically demand that the burial chamber was empty. In short, this tradition, without attempting to do so, fits exactly the narratives in the Gospels, as referred to below.[6]

When, then, did Paul "receive" this preformed tradition? So far as we know from Paul's movements, there appear to be two main possibilities. One was the occasion when he was catechized by believers in Damascus at the time of his baptism, that is, in A.D. 34/35 (Acts 9:17-18).[7] The other would have been during his first visit to Jerusalem three years after his Damascus Road encounter, that is, c. A.D. 36 (Gal 1:18).[8]

The first option is preferred. Such fundamental data must surely have come Paul's way at the time of his conversion, not three years later. What else had he been preaching in and around Damascus apart from the death and resurrection of the Messiah? Note that Paul's words *en prōtois* in 1 Corinthians 15:3, usually translated, "I delivered to you as of *first importance*" can be rendered equally well as "I delivered to you what I also received *at first,*" that is, at Damascus. Nonetheless, the tradition quoted in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 would have emanated originally from the Jerusalem apostles before reaching Damascus.

9.2.3. An apostolic tradition. In the course of rehearsing the tradition he received, Paul mentions the apostles, either as a group ("the twelve . . . all the apostles") or by name (Cephas . . . James, Paul himself), adding "whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed" (1 Cor 15:11). In other words, the message that Christ had been raised from the dead on the third day was the message of the apostles, and not of Paul alone. This is confirmed in the Acts account of Peter speaking to the household of Cornelius in Caesarea Maritima in the midthirties (?), where he declares that God "raised [Jesus of Nazareth] on the third day" (Acts 10:40).

The "third day" tradition, however, almost certainly derives from Jesus himself. He anticipated a great two-sided eschatological event occurring after "three days." One was the raising of the temple (symbolizing a new Israel), three days after its destruction (Jn 2:19; cf. Mk 14:58; 15:29; Acts 6:14). The other was Jesus' own resurrection three days after his death (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34 and pars.). He spoke symbolically of the latter when asked for a "sign," replying that as Jonah spent

"three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish" so the Son of man would be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Mt 12:38-41 NIV).[9] The memorable character of these three-day sayings leaves little doubt that they came from the lips of Jesus. The "third day" is emphasized in the tradition of the apostles because Jesus himself left that imprint in their memories.

The fourth part of the rehearsal of the tradition is

- that he appeared to Cephas,
- then to the twelve.
- Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time. . . .
- Then he appeared to James,
- then to all the apostles.
- Last of all . . . he appeared also to me. (1 Cor 15:5-8)

There is a clear sequence in these appearances of the third-day resurrected Christ, punctuated by the fourfold "then" or "next" *(epeita)*. Nonetheless, the text as we have it was probably not the exact form of words "handed over" to Paul; he appears to have added his own literary and historical glosses, most obviously the details of Christ's appearance to Paul himself "last of all" *(eschaton)*. It is quite likely that the original tradition baldly stated that "he appeared to Cephas," perhaps followed by "then to the twelve, then to five hundred brothers, then to James, then to all the apostles." The point of the tradition is that Christ appeared to a succession of known people between Easter and the ascension in an order that was well remembered.

9.2.4. Paul on the Damascus Road.[10] Paul, however, is unique. He includes himself in the sequence of those to whom the raised Christ appeared. Yet, as noted above, he could not have been part of the tradition that he received from others. That list must have terminated with his words "then [he appeared] to all the apostles." Paul has reformulated the statement to include himself at the end of those to whom Christ appeared.

Those before Paul to whom the risen Christ appeared saw him *before* his exaltation by ascension. Paul alone saw the risen Christ *after* his exaltation, later than the time frame of the forty-day period (Acts 1:3). Thus the apostle Paul saw Christ, both *risen* and *glorified*, a revelation[11] of Christ as he will be at the parousia.[12]

It is sometimes claimed that the word *appeared (ōphthē)* means a mystical seeing, as of a vision, and that since this was what Paul "saw" it was what the other apostles also "saw." In other words, after death Jesus was taken directly to heaven whence he "appeared" to various people, mystically, as it were. This, however, is not at all the meaning of Paul's words. First, the word *ōphthē*, "appeared," is not limited to visionary seeing but is used also for physical seeing.[13] Moreover, the verb *raise* used in the phrase "raised the third day," is used elsewhere in combination with the words "from the dead," which literally mean "from among the corpses."[14]

Thus *raised* preceding *appeared* gives the latter a physical not a mystical meaning. Christ, as "raised *from the dead* . . . appeared."[15]

Furthermore, when Paul asks, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor 9:1),[16] he is using the ordinary word *hōran,* "to see," for physical sight.[17] If "seeing" the Lord "raised from the dead" qualified others to be apostles, then Paul is, indeed, an apostle. It was no mere subjective vision that arrested Paul en route to Damascus.

Yet, unlike the other apostles, Paul saw Christ as both resurrected *and* glorified. Thus while insisting that he is truly an apostle (1 Cor 9:1), Paul acknowledges that he was "untimely born,"[18] that is, born after the ascension. Perhaps then he is in some sense superior to the other apostles? On the contrary, as a former persecutor he is unfit to be called an apostle. It is only by the grace of God is he an apostle. Indeed, he is the least of the apostles (1 Cor 15:8-11).

9.2.5. The tradition underlying the Gospels. Most scholars agree that the Gospels were not written before the earliest letters of Paul, including those written to the Thessalonians and the Corinthians (c. A.D. 50-56). Whereas the letters address issues current in the churches at the time of writing, the Gospels each narrate a *bios Iēsou*, a "biography of Jesus" in the context of his own time.[19] Stated briefly, the letters of Paul argue a case regarding matters of current concern in the churches while the Gospels tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth.

There are two parts to the stories told by the Evangelists. First, each Gospel narrates that a woman or women, coming early on the first day of the week to anoint the body of Jesus, found the burial chamber empty.[20] This is striking given the literary independence of John from the Synoptics.[21] Somehow the witness of the women, whose names are given, has found its way into these narratives. A contrived account would not have mentioned the witness of women since it was at that time legally valueless.[22]

Second, each Gospel—apart from Mark—narrates various appearances of the risen Jesus. Mark, however, tells his story with the assumption that the disciples will see the risen Jesus in Galilee (Mk 14:28; 16:7). The book of Acts states that Jesus "presented himself alive" to the apostles "after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days" (Acts 1:3).[23] The resurrected Jesus is not yet the glorified Jesus, as he will be at his exaltation. His resurrection appearances to them are as in a *transformed body.* On one hand, his movements are not limited by physical barriers like doors and walls, as they appear to have been before. On the other hand, he is able to be touched, and he eats with them (Lk 24:28-42; Jn 20:26-29).

Whereas the list of appearances quoted by Paul is in strict sequence, it may not be complete; for example, it makes no reference to Mary Magdalene, who is mentioned in all four Gospels. The Gospel narratives probably present a selection of appearances of the risen Jesus, some in Jerusalem, some in Galilee. Thus it is not easy to reconcile the various accounts of the people to whom Jesus appeared alive.

The Gospel writers were not attempting to prove the resurrection as a historical fact since they have accepted it as true. Rather, they present the resurrection as the climax of Jesus' ministry in terms of their overall literary aims and interests. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each presents the resurrection within the framework of the story he wishes to tell. Each writes his biography of Jesus through the lens of his own understanding and according to the impression of Jesus and the reader's response to him that each wishes to establish. There is nothing unusual about this. Any biographer organizes the available information to support his or her own impression of the subject.

Table 7 outlines the appearances, as reconstructed from 1 Corinthians and the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, but it does not represent the totality of the appearances or a definitive sequence of appearances. For example, it does not include Christ's appearance to the apostle Paul, which occurred after the Easter-Ascension time frame. Nonetheless, the table does convey some idea of the extensive nature of the appearances within that thirty-seven-day span.[24] Overall it seems that Jesus appeared initially in Jerusalem, then in Galilee and finally in Jerusalem, where he ascended.

1 Corinthians	**Matthew**	**Luke**	**John**
	Jerusalem Appearances		
			Mary (Jn 20:15)
	Women (Mt 28:9)		
Cephas (1 Cor 15:5)		Simon (Lk 24:34)	
		two men (Lk 24:15)	
the Twelve (1 Cor 15:5)		disciples (Lk 24:36)	
			ten disciples (Jn 20:17)
			eleven disciples (Jn 20:26)
	Galilee Appearances		
500+ believers (1 Cor 15:6)			
James (1 Cor 15:7)			
			seven disciples (Jn 21:1)
	eleven disciples (Mt 28:16)		
	Jerusalem Appearances		
all the apostles (1 Cor 15:7)			

Table 7. The resurrection appearances of Jesus

9.3. The exaltation of the Christ

The book of Acts makes a careful distinction between Jesus' resurrection and his exaltation. Raised from the dead on the "third day" (Lk 24:21), he "presented himself alive" to the apostles during the "forty days" after his passion (Acts 1:2-3)

until the "day" came when "a cloud took him up out of their sight" at Mount Olivet (Acts 2:9-11; cf. Lk 24:50-53). Luke intends for us to understand that the ascension occurred thirty-seven days after the crucifixion. During that discrete period, he was "staying to them," and "he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem" (Acts 1:4). A one-sentence description of the ascension—the only description in the New Testament other than in Luke's last words—is given (Acts 1:9; cf. Lk 24:50-53). As resurrected he was accessible to their *sight* as well as to their *hearing;* as exalted he was no longer visible.

In spite of an absence of narrative, there is widespread reference to the *fact* of the exaltation of Christ, both in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles. Various words describing movement upward are employed, for example, "taken up" (*analēmpsis,* Lk 9:51; *analambanō,* Acts 1:2, 11, 22), "exalted" (*hypsōtheis,* Acts 2:33; 5:31), "highly exalted" (*hyperupsōsen,* Phil 2:9), "ascended" (*anabainō,* Eph 4:8, 9, 10; Rev 4:1; 11:12; cf. Acts 2:34), "snatched up" (*harpazō,* Rev 12:5), and "gone [into heaven]" (*poreutheis,* 1 Pet 3:22).

The exalted Jesus was given "glory" (1 Pet 1:21), given "a name above every name" (Phil 2:9) and "crowned with glory and honor" (Heb 2:9). A number of New Testament writers assert that he is at God's "right hand" (Rom 8:34)—whether seated (e.g., Acts 2:33-35; 5:31; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2) or standing (Acts 7:55-56). This springs from Psalm 110:1, which Jesus interpreted as applying to David's son, the Messiah/Christ, who was to sit at Yahweh's right hand (Mk 12:35-37). This was Jesus' understanding of messiahship; he was to exercise Yahweh's kingdom on his behalf throughout history (1 Cor 15:25; Rev 11:15; Eph 5:5), not only over Israel, but over all the nations (Mt 28:19; Rev 12:5). Jesus' interpretation of Psalm 110:1 appears repeatedly in the early preaching of the Christ exalted "at God's right hand," as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and as echoed in the letters of the New Testament.

The name *Christ,* or *the Christ,* dominates as the title for Jesus in the literature referring to the post-exaltation epoch. It was by this name and title that the early Christians preached Jesus (see, e.g., Acts 17:3). It was this name that provoked apprehension among the Roman authorities, who feared that Jesus was "another king" who made claims to a loyalty higher than Caesar. This led to their assaults on the adherents of this Christ, as an anti-imperial sect, whose members they derisively named *Christianoi,* "messiahmen."[25]

9.4. The Spirit

Can we include the coming of the Spirit in a history of early Christianity? Surely the subject is too nebulous and subjective to allow this? But there is such a discipline as "the history of ideas," and it is here argued that the experience of the Spirit among first Christians is at least a part of such a history. Their experience of the Spirit, however, was more than intellectual. It established a new relationship with

God (as "*Abba*, Father") to which the apostle Paul, for one, could confidently appeal (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). It was the newness of this experience, which was a pristine newness at the beginning of a new age, that rendered the experience of the Spirit so unforgettable for them.

As with the exaltation of Christ, there is but one description of the *event* of the coming of the Holy Spirit but many references to the continuing *fact* of the Spirit. The book of Acts has the only (brief) account of the historic coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), though both Paul and Peter affirm the bald fact that the Spirit has been "sent" (Gal 4:6; 1 Pet 1:12).

Paul makes much of the activity of the Spirit of God among those hearers who have opened their hearts to the word of God, the gospel (Gal 3:2, 5; cf. 2 Cor 1:19-22; Eph 1:13). He appeals to the presence of the Spirit as evidence that he is a minister of the new covenant. Indeed, the new covenant is "*in* the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:3-6). Paul appeals to the sure reality of his readers' experience of the Spirit (Gal 3:2; 2 Cor 13:5). Throughout his letters he constantly refers to his readers' awareness of the Spirit in their own lives and in the ministry of the church. In short, his writings unintentionally confirm the account of the book of Acts, that there was a historic coming of the Spirit of God.

Because his writings are more voluminous, Paul has more to say than other writers of the New Testament letters about the readers' experience of the Spirit. Yet such references are by no means absent from other letters. The readers of the letter to the Hebrews have "become partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Heb 6:4; cf. Heb 2:4). Peter's readers are told, without further explanation, that they have been "sanctified by the Spirit" (1 Pet 1:2). John's readers know about the Spirit that "has been given to us" (1 Jn 3:24).

The Gospel of John has numerous references to the Spirit. These, however, are mostly directed to the future ("the hour is coming " [Jn 4:23; cf. Jn 2:4]), when the Spirit will come. The One baptized by water, who is the Spirit-bearer, will baptize the people with the Spirit (Jn 1:26, 32-34). John offers a revealing gloss on Jesus' words: "For as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn 7:39). Clearly that great moment lay in the future.

Luke-Acts is a two-volume work whose second volume provides the opportunity for Luke to describe the coming of the Spirit. John achieves the same end in his one-volume work when, after the resurrection, Jesus breathes on them and declares, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:19-23). John thereby anticipates both the exaltation of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit, though he does so symbolically, without description.

9.5. Fulfillment

As noted above, the Holy Spirit in the New Testament appears as an initial outpouring that issues in an ongoing presence and activity in the lives of the new

covenant people of God. Both the event and the ongoing activity are perceived as fulfillment of the promises of the prophets under the old covenant.

According to Acts 2:15-21, the apostle Peter explained the behavior of those on whom the Spirit descended as fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel.

> I will pour our my spirit on all flesh;
> your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
> your old men shall dream dreams,
> and your young men shall see visions.
> Even upon the menservants and maidservants
> in those days, I will pour our my spirit. (Joel 2:28-29)

Joel's oracle may have been informed by the earlier words of Moses: "Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Num 11:29). According to Peter, it was the risen and exalted Jesus, as Lord and Christ, who had now poured out the long-awaited Spirit. This, too, was in fulfillment of prophecy. In Psalms 16 and 110, respectively, David had forseen the resurrection of his descendant and his exaltation at the right hand of Yahweh. According to Peter, God had—through resurrection and exaltation—now placed one of David's descendants upon his throne. The manifest presence of the Holy Spirit was the evidence of his coronation.

According to Paul, the Spirit of God was active in bringing powerful moral change to the lives of the people. Under the old covenant, the Torah had been impotent to do this, because of the stonelike hearts of the people in their relationship with God (2 Cor 3:3-9). Through the Spirit God was able to write his law within the softened hearts the people. The Spirit had given life to a people who formerly were dead within because of their failure to be truly the people of God in obedience to Yahweh's covenant requirements. This new submissiveness was attributable to the fulfillment of prophecies—in particular those of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 11:19-21; 36:25-27).

9.6. Proclamation

How will the Spirit come in the aftermath of the initial Pentecostal outpouring upon the original community of believers in Jerusalem? It is clear from the narratives of the Acts of the Apostles that the Spirit came in the context of preaching and hearing the gospel, focused on the death, resurrection and exaltation of the Christ (Acts 2:37-42; 10:44). Acts relates how the original apostles and others like Stephen and Philip proclaimed the risen and exalted Christ in Judea and Samaria and then, beyond those regions, among the Gentiles through the apostle Paul. Wherever they were, as they preached Christ and those who heard them opened their hearts to their words, the Spirit of God came also to them, as it had on the day of the initial outpouring (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 10:44; 19:6).

The letters of the New Testament confirm these narratives of the Acts. As with the narrative of the exaltation of Christ, the Acts account of the manner of the Spirit's coming is corroborated in the theological statements in the letters. The letters of Paul declare that the Spirit came to the readers as they heard the proclamation of the word of God.

> Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by *hearing* with faith? (Gal 3:2, emphasis added)
>
> In [Christ] you also, who have *heard* the word of truth . . . and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. (Eph 1:13, emphasis added)
>
> The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was *preached* among you. . . . God has . . . given us the deposit of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. (2 Cor 1:19-22, my translation)

The same relationship between the proclaimed word of the gospel and the coming of the Holy Spirit is found in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 2:4; 6:4-5).

9.7. The exalted Christ and the historical Jesus

If the preaching of the now-exalted Christ was accompanied by the arrival of the Spirit, did the proclaimers display any interest in Jesus of Nazareth?[26] The coming of the Spirit heralded the arrival of the Day of the Lord, in fulfillment of the ancient prophetic oracles. That coming, powerfully impressive as it was, however, was a mere "deposit," indicating the fullness of the Spirit at the end of the ages.[27] Surely, then, the historical Jesus was no longer of interest in light of his exaltation to heaven mirrored on earth by his dispatch of the Spirit to his people.

On the contrary, the proclamations of the apostles recorded in the Acts are careful to connect the exalted Christ back to the historical Jesus. Peter's speeches in the Acts make the connection explicit. On the day of Pentecost, Peter uses the pronoun "*this* Jesus" to tie the One he proclaims as "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36) back to the antecedent "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested . . . with mighty works and wonders and signs . . . as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22, 23, 32). The outline of Peter's message to Cornelius's household in Caesarea Maritima is dominated by the words and works of Jesus of Nazareth, *before* his resurrection (Acts 10:34-43). It is apparent that the now exalted One was explicitly the exalted "Jesus of Nazareth." The Lord and Christ is the historical Jesus now exalted.

Even though Paul was not a witness to the historical Jesus, his speech given in the synagogue in Pisidia recorded in the book of Acts refers to John the baptizer, to Jesus' Galilean disciples and to the trial under Pilate (Acts 13:24-25, 28-31). The risen One, the savior, in whom the forgiveness of sins is to be found, was the historical figure, Jesus (Acts 13:23, 30, 32-38).

We find the same connection between the exalted Christ and the historical Jesus in

the preaching of the apostles revealed in the letters of the New Testament. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, we have echoes of Paul's preaching in the city six years earlier. Paul proclaimed Jesus in exalted terms as "Son of God," as "the Christ" and as "Lord" (2 Cor 1:19; 2:12 [cf. 4:4; 9:13; 10:14]; 4:5).[28] At the same time, however, the letter contains a number of biographical generalizations about the historical Jesus,[29] his poverty in birth, his sinlessness in life, his "meekness and gentleness," his slavelike ministry and his death though crucifixion (2 Cor 4:5; 5:21; 8:9; 10:1; 13:3). It is likely that the apostle's proclamation of Christ crucified, risen and exalted, would have prompted questions about the *historical* Jesus from the hearers. Who was he? What happened to him? What was he like? It is clear from this letter that the original proclaimers had given the Corinthians a pool of information about Jesus that Paul could evoke in making the practical points he needed to make.

The letter to the Hebrews reveals a similar pattern. The exalted one seated at God's right hand (Heb 1:3), who is the heavenly high priest (Heb 2:17), is Jesus, the same person who partook in our nature, "flesh and blood" (Heb 2:14), who "offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears" (Heb 5:7), and who belonged to the tribe of Judah (Heb 7:14). In preaching the gospel, the writer directs the readers' confidence toward their great high priest, but they also know of this priest as the historical Jesus who lived, suffered and died.

The readers of the first letter of Peter know that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and given glory (1 Pet 1:21), that he has "gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God" (1 Pet 3:22), and that they are to show reverence in their hearts to Christ as Lord (1 Pet 3:15), the "chief Shepherd" whose appearance they await (1 Pet 5:4). Yet these readers know of and are called upon to imitate the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet 2:21). Clearly, at the time they were evangelized they were told both of the exalted Christ and of the suffering Jesus (1 Pet 1:10-12).[30]

The information from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of the New Testament are in agreement. The exalted Christ was the historical Jesus. This consistent emphasis excludes any idea of the Exalted One as a redeemer based on a mythical construction; Christ the savior *is* Jesus of Nazareth. He has taken his genuine humanity into heaven, where he is at God's right hand as Lord and Christ. Nor is it possible to extrapolate some kind of Spirit Christology in which Christ is now equated with the Spirit. The man Jesus, exalted as Christ to the right hand of God, *gives* the Spirit to those who open their hearts to the preaching of the gospel. Christ and the Spirit remain separate.

9.8. Summary

The bridge between the historical Jesus and earliest Christianity is a complex of events, beginning with the resurrection of Jesus and ending with his exaltation as Christ signaled by his outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Each of these events is historical, being narrated descriptively in the Acts and referred to as matters of

present fact in the letters of the New Testament.

The original disciples do not seem to have seen the Lord after his exaltation. He was taken up away from their sight. Paul appears to be unique in the New Testament; he alone saw the risen *and exalted* Christ.

The witness of the New Testament to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead rests on two strands of evidence. The first strand is the apostles' tradition, which is echoed in Paul's quotation of a preformed tradition and in details given by Peter recorded in the Acts. This strand focuses its emphasis on Christ who was "raised on the third day," followed by a sequence of "appearances" to various people. The second strand appears in the Gospels, which record the women's discovery of the empty burial chamber on the first day of the week, followed by a number of occasions in which Jesus appeared *bodily* to the disciples.

The historic coming of the Spirit and the Spirit's subsequent powerful activity in believers and churches fulfilled the promises of the prophets. Both the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of the New Testament establish that the Spirit came to these believers in the context of the preaching of the word of God, the gospel. However, although the Spirit pointed onward to the ultimate consummation of God's end-time purposes, the original hearers were clearly told that the exalted One was the historical Jesus of Nazareth. This is evident both from the Acts records of the apostles' preaching and from echoes of that preaching in the New Testament letters.

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Notes

[1]The carefully crafted shape of this passage suggests that the words originated as a preformed confession that Paul is repeating. So C. E. B. Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans,* ICC, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975): 1:57.

[2]This confession as articulated by Paul gives tangential support to the integrity of Peter's Pentecost speech recorded in the book of Acts, in which he affirmed that (1) Jesus of Nazareth was a descendant of David (Acts 2:22, 29-30), (2) who had been raised from the dead (Acts 2:32) and (3) who had poured out the Spirit (Acts 2:33). Peter's thrice-stated "this Jesus" (Acts 2:23, 32, 36) indicates the continuity of the Jesus of history with the Christ of faith; the historical Jesus is the heavenly Jesus.

[3]See earlier, §8.6.

[4]For an alternative reconstruction of the historic belief in the empty tomb and Jesus' bodily resurrection, see Pheme Perkins, "The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth," in *Historical Jesus,* ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 423-42. Using a social science approach, Perkins implies that the burial tomb was empty upon inspection but that the disciples may have removed the body of Jesus; the tomb was not empty because of Jesus' bodily resurrection. The "empty tomb" is given a sociological significance as breaking the conventional family connections with burial tombs, consistent with Jesus' breach of those conventions as the bearer of the message of the rule of God. Moreover, Perkins comes close to equating Jesus' resurrection with his exaltation to heaven as a righteous man wrongly executed. Perkins sees 1 Cor 15:3-5 as having used "established genres of angelophany and epiphany to externalize this primitive tradition in narrative" (p. 426). She sees the new fearlessness of the disciples after Easter as Jesus' "presence" for their "experience of God's effective power" (p. 433). His "ascent into the presence of angelic host" points to an "immediate realized eschatology rather than an extended delay" (p. 434).

Against Perkins, it may be said that (1) if the disciples did remove Jesus' body from the tomb, then they spread the Christian faith based on this hoax, and (2) Perkins's view does not account for the careful distinction between Jesus' resurrection and his exaltation made by the New Testament writers. Perkins's quotation of *Jubilees* 23:30-31 as reflecting "some ambiguity over the fates of the bodies and spirits of the righteous" is confused. That "their spirits will increase in joy" while their "bones rest in the earth" is not "ambiguous" but metaphorical for the victory of the righteous, notwithstanding their apparent defeat.

[5]This is consistent with the Gospels, which describe Jesus interred in a *taphos,* "sepulchre" (Mt 27:61, 64, 66; 28:1), or a *mnēmeion,* "tomb" (Mk 15:46; 16:2, 3, 5, 8; Lk 23:55; 24:2, 9, 12, 22, 24; 19:41, 42; 20:1, 2-4, 6, 8, 11). The owner of the tomb was the prominent Joseph of Arimathea and so was readily identifiable.

[6]The words of Geza Vermes, the distinguished historian of Judaism, should be noted: "When every argument has been considered and weighed, the only conclusion acceptable to the historian [is] . . . the one disconcerting fact: namely that the women who set out to pay their last respects to Jesus found to their consternation, not a body, but an empty tomb" (*Jesus the Jew* [London: Collins, 1974], p. 41).

[7]See later, §2.2.1 and 13.3.1.

[8]Note that partial years were then counted as full years.

[9]Jesus also spoke of his death as the "third day" when he would be "perfected" (Lk 13:31-35).

[10]See Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 55-56.

[11]"[The gospel] came through a revelation *[apokalypsis]* of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11-12); "[God] was pleased to reveal *[apokalypsai]* his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Gal 1:16).

[12]This is the Christ who is described in Revelation 1:12-16.

[13]This word is the passive form of the ordinary Greek word ***horan,*** "to see," which, as used here, literally means "was seen by." While *ōphthē* is used in supernatural contexts—for example, "the angel of the Lord appeared *ōphthē* to [Moses]" (Ex 3:2)—it is also used for ordinary and physical seeing (Acts 7:26; 1 Tim 3:16). Even use of the verb *blepō,* "to see," in supernatural contexts—for example, "[Peter] thought he was seeing a vision" (Acts 12:9)—does not demand a nonliteral definition of the word *see* in other contexts. *Ōphthē* does not necessarily mean heavenly revelation by visionary means. Thus, Paul's use of *ōphthē* in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 does not mean that there could be no *seeing* in the usual sense of the word.

[14]See, e.g., Romans 6:4. "Christ was raised from the dead *[ek nekrōn]"* literally means "Christ was raised from among the corpses." The phrase ***ek nekrōn*** is commonly used throughout the New Testament in connection with Jesus' resurrection.

[15]For a classical expression of the belief that the resurrection reports arose from actual events rather than from mythical origins, see Adolf Schlatter, *The History of Christ,* trans. A. J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 375-89.

[16]Paul's verb, ***horan,*** one of the standard verbs meaning "to see," is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense implies the ongoing consequences of that occasion when Saul of Tarsus "saw" the Lord.

[17]See note 13 above.

[18]Greek *tō ektrōmati* is used in the Septuagint to mean "abortion," "stillbirth" or "miscarriage." It may be Paul's acknowledgment of physical disability or disfigurement or, perhaps more probably, his recognition of his "birth" outside the period in which others saw the resurrected Lord.

[19]See Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 153-57.

[20]Matthew 28:1-6 (Mary Magdalene and the other Mary); Mark 16:1-6 (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome); Luke 24:1-3 (Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary mother of James); John 20:1-3 (Mary Magdalene). Male disciples also viewed the emptiness of the tomb (Lk 24:24; Jn 20:2-8).

[21]This is disputed. For discussion on literary relationships of John's Gospel with the Synoptics, see Robert Kysar, "The Contribution of D. Moody Smith to Johannine Scholarship," in *Exploring the Gospel of John,* ed. R. A. Culpepper and C. A. Black (Louisville: Westminister John Knox, 1996), pp. 7-9 and literature cited. For the particular relationship of John with the Synoptics regarding the feeding of the five thousand, see Paul W. Barnett, "The Feeding of the Multitude in Mk 6/Jn 6," in *Gospel Perspectives: 6. Miracles,* ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), pp. 273-93.

[22]The women also were witnesses to the death of Jesus, as well as to the entombment and the emptiness of the tomb. This is significant given the low value attributed to the witness of women in Jewish society at that time. Women were bracketed with slaves, usurers and other unsuitable persons as not being qualified to testify to the appearance of a new moon (which determined the dates of certain Jewish feasts). See Mishnah *Rosh HaShanah* 1.8; cf. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus,* trans. F. H. Cave and C. H. Cave (London: SCM Press, 1967), pp. 374-75.

[23]The speeches of Peter and Paul draw attention to these appearances to his disciples (Acts 10:40-41; 13:31).

[24]Luke 24:21 states that he was raised on the third day after his death, and Acts 1:3 says that his ascension occurred forty days after his "sufferings." Thus the period of his postresurrection

appearances was thirty-seven days.

[25]See earlier, chapter two, §2.2.2.

[26]See generally Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History*, pp. 39-58.

[27]Greek *arrabōn* is the word for a buyer's deposit guaranteeing payment in full. Here it is used to foreshadow the expected completion of the blessing of the Spirit in the end times (see 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14).

[28]For discussion, see Linda Belleville, "Gospel and Kerygma," in *Gospel and Paul*, ed. Ann Jervis and Peter Richardson (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), pp. 137-40.

[29]See R. V. G. Tasker, "St Paul and the Earthly Life of Jesus," *ExpTim* 46 (1934-1935): 557-62, who sees a "Lukan feeling and character" reflected in 2 Corinthians. Tasker comments that "it is then certainly not true that the Jesus of history plays little or no part in the essential Christian thought of St Paul" (p. 562).

[30]See further J. O. Tuni, "Jesus of Nazareth in the Christology of 1 Peter," *HeyJ* 18 (1987): 292-304.

10

The Community of the Messiah in Jerusalem (c. 33/34)

10.1. The historical context of the earliest community

In the year A.D. 33, fifty days after the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, a new Jewish sect emerged. The same public figures who were involved in the arrest, trial and execution of Jesus in Jerusalem continued to hold office. Doubtless these officials thought that they would hear no more of Jesus of Nazareth. Events were to prove otherwise. The members of the temple hierarchy, in particular, were to have ongoing dealings with Jesus' apostles in Jerusalem.

Of the officials who met Jesus, only Caiaphas the high priest was in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. He was to remain high priest until he was deposed in 37. Pontius Pilate had probably returned to Caesarea Maritima, his seat of government, where he remained as prefect of Judea until his recall in disgrace in 37. Herod Antipas, too, had probably returned to his home in Tiberias in Galilee, where he remained until his exile in A.D. 39.

The emperor Tiberius may have received official notice from his military governor regarding the execution of the Jew Jesus for treason. It is unlikely that Tiberius would have heard again of the newly formed sect before his death in 37.

10.2. The foundation of the messianic community

After his resurrection Jesus appeared on a number of occasions to the eleven apostles (Acts 1:2-3; cf. Acts 13:31) and, we infer, also to "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and . . . his brothers" (Acts 1:14).[1] The book of Acts is specific. These appearances occurred throughout the thirty-seven-day period (between the

"third day" [Lk 24:21], when he was raised from the dead, and the fortieth day after his "passion" [Acts 1:3], when he was taken "out of their sight" [Acts 1:9]).

But then, after his ascension (on the fortieth day) and before the coming of the Spirit (on the fiftieth day, the day of Pentecost), the numbers of his followers are given as "about one hundred and twenty" (Acts 1:15). These persons are called "brothers," and it is clear that they were Galileans (Acts 1:15; 2:7).

Where had these extra Galilean "brothers" come from? It is possible that they had remained in Jerusalem after the Passover, but Acts makes no reference to Jesus' resurrection appearances to them in the holy city. More probably these additional people had come to Jerusalem from Galilee during the ten days between Christ's ascension and the day of Pentecost.

In this connection it may be worth noting that the tradition quoted by Paul to the Corinthians also refers to "brothers." These are the "more than five hundred *brothers* [and sisters—the reference is probably inclusive] at once, most of whom are still living" to whom the risen Christ appeared (1 Cor 15:6 NRSV).[2] As noted earlier, this resurrection "appearance" more than likely occurred in Galilee.[3] It is possible that many of the one hundred and twenty who are now in Jerusalem were among the "more than five hundred" who saw the Lord in Galilee.[4]

10.3. The upper room

This community of Galileans "stayed" in "the upper room" (Acts 1:12) in Jerusalem. This will almost certainly be the "large upper room furnished and ready" where Jesus and his disciples met for the Passover (cf. Mk 14:15; Lk 22:12). A "large upper room" implies that it was the upper part of a large house. Archaeological research has revealed a number of large houses in Jerusalem; the existence of "the upper room" where one hundred and twenty people could meet is not inherently improbable.

The traditional location of the "upper room" is in the Mount Zion region in the southwestern part of the old city of Jerusalem. A case has been made that this site was venerated continuously from the first century and that it may have originally belonged to a wealthy disciple in Jerusalem.[5]

As they waited during those ten days for the coming of the Spirit promised by Jesus, it became clear to them that they must appoint a disciple in place of Judas the betrayer. There must be *twelve* apostles, empowered by the Spirit, to witness to Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth, as Jesus had charged them to do (Acts 1:8). By lot they chose Matthias to be the twelfth apostle. To be qualified a candidate must have been among those who had accompanied Jesus from the baptism of John until Jesus' ascension. "Witness" was dependent on the Spirit's anointing, but also upon that person's eyewitness knowledge of Jesus' ministry and resurrection.[6]

10.4. The day of Pentecost

The book of Acts is quite specific regarding the time and place of the appearance of the Spirit of God. It was at the "third hour" (9 a.m.) on the feast known as the feast of (seven) weeks,[7] which occurred on the fiftieth day after the Passover. The one hundred and twenty were seated in the house, that is, in the upper room.

The coming of the Spirit is described in apocalyptic terms of wind and fire. In the prophecy of John the Baptist the wind blew the chaff away and the fire consumed it (Lk 3:16). Here, however, the wind and fire are positive signs for the proclamation of the mighty works of God (Acts 2:11). The one hundred and twenty were dramatically affected, giving utterance to ecstatic speech; those who heard them thought they were drunk (Acts 2:13, 15).

Their speech, which we assume to have been loud, attracted the attention of a throng of foreign Jews who were attending the feast. From the Acts account we deduce their regions of origin may have been Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Egypt and North Africa, Italy, Crete and Arabia. Following the Babylonian deportation, large numbers of Jews lived outside their homeland, the so-called Jewish diaspora.

Some who heard the disciples were pilgrims visiting Jerusalem for the feast, who would then return to their homelands. Others were permanently domiciled in Jerusalem, identified later as "Hellenists," that is, Greek-speaking Jews.[8] Wherever their country of origin, their native tongue was probably the ***koinē*** Greek, which had been disseminated throughout the eastern Mediterranean regions after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. Thus the "tongue" these believers spoke was probably Greek. This surprised the hearers, who were able to identify the speakers as Galileans, whose native language was their own peculiar dialect of Galilean Aramaic.

10.5. The birth of the messianic community

Peter addressed those who assembled, assuring them that he and his colleagues were not drunk. Rather, this was the long-awaited day of Yahweh, prophesied by Joel, when all who call on the name of Yahweh will be saved (Joel 2:28-32). This is the true explanation for the prophetic and ecstatic speech they have heard.

Peter then proceeded audaciously to urge his Israelite hearers to seek that salvation. They had handed Jesus of Nazareth over to the Romans for crucifixion, a man whom they knew (or knew of) because of his miracles. This Jesus, who was a descendant of David, God has now raised alive from the dead and exalted as "Lord and Christ" in fulfillment of David's prophecies in Psalms 16 and 110. Although Israel has participated in the rejection of this son of David, God has exalted him to a true and heavenly messiahship, whence he has poured out his Spirit upon those who now spoke.

What must the people do in response? Their course is simple. Peter calls on them to return to Yahweh their God by submitting to baptism in the name of Jesus

the Messiah. He promised that they, too, will be anointed with the Spirit as the community of the Messiah. By this means they will find salvation in this the day of Yahweh, as foretold by Joel.

Three thousand Israelites, presumably mostly diaspora Jews, were then baptized. One possible location for this great event would have been the Pool of Siloam. Those who were visitors returned to their country of origin, to proclaim the exaltation of the Messiah, Jesus. Permanent dwellers in Jerusalem were added to the one hundred and twenty Galileans.

10.6. The life of the messianic community

We are interested to know how the members of this new community organized themselves. Where did they meet together? Where did they live? How did they support themselves? How did they relate to the wider community in Jerusalem? The following sketch, which is necessarily generalized and incomplete, is based on scattered references in the first six chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.[9] The task of the historian is somewhat complicated by the rather idealized nature of these early chapters that narrate the dawning of the day of the Lord.[10]

This now enlarged group began to meet within the precincts of the temple—at Solomon's Colonnade (Acts 3:11; 5:12)[11]—to be led and instructed by the apostles. This was the focal point of their life "together,"[12] which became well known to the Jerusalem community (Acts 5:12-13). Their continued involvement in the temple (and the synagogues of Jerusalem [Acts 6:8-9; 22:19; 26:11]) meant that the people regarded them as religious enthusiasts within Israel, not separate from it.

Apparently the disciples also met in their homes around Jerusalem for "the breaking of bread," the thanksgiving meal instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper.[13] The newly arrived Galileans, including the apostles, were probably based at and around the "large upper room" where they appear to have developed as a community within a community. Naturally, the question has been raised as to the identity of the generous owner of such a spacious domicile in Jerusalem and how the disciples came to have access to it. One possible such owner is Mary, the mother of John Mark. Mary's house boasted an outer gate, supported the employment of a "maid" (*paidiskē*, "a slave woman") and was large enough to accommodate the many who had gathered to pray for Peter's release (Acts 12:12-17).[14]

The group referred to as "Hebrews" was probably associated with the upper-room community, though not exclusively so. The indigenous Hellenist Jews of Jerusalem probably met in their own homes elsewhere in the city, lacking the same sense of identity as a discrete community that the Galilean Hebrews had. Moreover, the Hellenists, that is Greek speakers,[15] continued to assemble on the sabbath in their own synagogues, as they had previously done (Acts 8—9; 26:10-11). The book of Acts suggests that members of as many as five synagogues of diaspora Jews

engaged in debate with Stephen (Acts 6:9).[16] The Galileans, however, may have made the large upper room a messianic synagogue, the first church. There is some evidence that rabbinic teachers met in and taught from "upper rooms."[17]

Thus the disciples in Jerusalem became a loose association, a quasi sect within but not separate from the wider Jewish population in Jerusalem. Only in a generalized, somewhat anachronistic sense is Luke able to refer to them as "the whole church" (Acts 5:11; cf. Acts 8:1, 3).

10.7. The Essenes of Jerusalem

Josephus's reference to the "gate of the Essenes" near the southwestern corner of the city walls suggests the existence of a community of Essenes in Jerusalem. Tangentially, archaeologists have located a gate and community remains consistent with an Essene quarter in the Mount Zion region of the holy city.[18] As it happens, a strong case has also been made for the location of "the large upper room" in the same part of the city, adjacent to the Essene community.[19] This raises the possibility of an Essene influence on earliest Christianity.[20]

The Jerusalem-based Essenes were probably more loosely organized than the desert monastery at Qumran.[21] The members lived together in a commune and went outside to work, pooling their wages for the common life of the community. Philo gives an account of their life together.

> He (the treasurer) takes these (wages) and at once buys what is necessary and provides food in abundance and anything else which human life requires. Thus having each day a common life and a table they are content with the same conditions, lovers of frugality who shun the expensive luxury as a disease of both body and soul.[22]

Moreover, it is likely that new members entered the community by stages, with compulsory relinquishment of property upon entry. That, at least, was the procedure in the community at Qumran.

> The priests . . . [and the co-covenanters] are to have [the novitiate] bring with him all his property and the tools of his profession. These are to be committed to the custody of the community's "minister of works." They are to be entered by that officer into an account, but he is not to disburse them for the general benefit.
>
> Not until the completion of a second year . . . is the candidate to be admitted to the common board, when . . . he is to be registered in the due order of rank . . . and share in the common funds.[23]

It would be surprising if a well-established group like the Essenes did not exercise some influence over the new messianic community, especially if they were located nearby. The upper room may well have been the center of a community

that followed some of the principles of the Essenes. Certainly there was a daily distribution of food to widows (Acts 6:1-2).

Unlike the Essenes, however, the disciples did not separate themselves from the wider community of Israel, continuing to worship in the temple and the synagogues of Jerusalem. Whereas the Essenes went out to work at various occupations and pooled their wages as a matter of obligation for a totally communal life, the disciples provided only for the needy based on the voluntary donation of property by wealthier members like Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37; cf. Acts 2:45). Perhaps, too, the apostles were supported in their ministry by such gifts. Such sale of property for a common relief fund was voluntary (Acts 5:4). At Qumran, however, all the sectaries were obliged to hand over all their possessions upon entry to the community. It was probably the same for the Essenes of Jerusalem.

Such influence, however, may have been limited to the apostles and the Galileans based in the large upper room. The indigenous Hellenists of Jerusalem would have been too diffusely scattered throughout the city to have been directly shaped by the Essenes' patterns. But the upper-room community, like the Essenes, seem to have been domiciled together or nearby and to have shared a common life. The apostles themselves distributed food daily at tables to the Hebrew widows (in particular) in the upper-room community (Acts 6:1-2). The Hellenists' widows, being located throughout and around Jerusalem, were not able to participate to the same degree in the daily distribution of food. This became a cause of discontent that was to have significant consequences (see Acts 6:1-6).

10.8. The apostles' teaching

In the absence of their former Teacher, Jesus' disciples themselves became teachers. From the day of Pentecost they immediately set about teaching those who had been baptized (Acts 2:42). The book of Acts frequently refers to their "teachings" (Acts 2:42; 4:2, 18; 5:21, 25, 28, 42). The temple authorities complained that they "filled Jerusalem" with their teaching (Acts 5:28). They did not hesitate because they were unlearned amateurs according to the high standards of the Jerusalem scribal academies; the recent influence of Jesus upon them was sufficient background.[24] What did they teach?

10.8.1. The historical Jesus. As we shall see, the apostolic community and its leaders were intensely conscious of Jesus' exaltation as Yahweh's Anointed One, his Christ. Yet they were no less insistent that the now-exalted Christ was in unbroken historical continuity with Jesus, the man of Nazareth. This may be noticed in the opening words of Peter's initial address, given on the day of Pentecost, "Jesus the *Nazōraiōn*, a man . . . [whom] you crucified" (Acts 2:22-23). This historical figure is the antecedent of two backward references

signaled by the words "this Jesus," the first to his resurrection (Acts 2:32) and the second to his exaltation as "Lord" and "Christ" (Acts 2:36).

In the various enunciations of the apostolic witness in the days following Pentecost, Peter made frequent reference to "Jesus" (Acts 4:2; 5:30, 42). Peter referred to him as "God's [holy] child Jesus" (Acts 3:13; 4:27, 30), "the *Nazōraiōn*" (Acts 3:6; 4:10),[25] and to his crucifixion at Jewish hands (Acts 4:10; cf. Acts 3:15; 5:30). The earliest preaching, as recorded in the book of Acts, does not portray the Christ as a mere theological icon; the Messiah is the man Jesus, the *Nazōraiōn,* through whom God did mighty works, and the one whom the Jews handed over to the Romans for crucifixion.

10.8.2. "This Jesus" was "Lord" and "Christ." The wind and the flames of fire on the day of Pentecost were the outward signs of the Spirit's coming. Underlying these, however, was an intense messianic consciousness revealed in the words of Peter and others from that moment. This was evident on the day of Pentecost when Peter asserted that God had exalted a descendant of David as "Lord" and "Christ," in fulfillment of Psalms 16 and 110, which were written by David.

Some time later Peter healed a crippled beggar at the entrance to the temple, explaining that this was done not by his power, but by the "name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (Acts 3:6, 12, 16). Peter explained that, although the people had delivered Jesus for crucifixion, they had done so in ignorance. Moreover, his sufferings were in fulfillment of the words of the prophets. But God had raised Jesus from the dead, as "the Christ . . . whom heaven must receive." Peter called on his hearers to repent and to return to Yahweh their God for the forgiveness of sins "that times of refreshing [which] may come from the presence of God" (Acts 3:11-26).

For speaking like this Peter and John were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. Peter pointedly asserted that Jesus, crucified and risen, was "the stone which was rejected by [them]" but established by God as the cornerstone in the house of God (Acts 4:8-12). A few weeks earlier Jesus himself had used that Scripture in his debate with the same temple authorities (Ps 118:22; cf. Mk 12:10). By adding that "there is salvation in no one else," Peter was claiming that God is now rebuilding his temple on the foundation of Jesus, the Messiah.[26]

On their release Peter and John rejoined the disciples. The book of Acts records their prayer, based on Psalm 2, which was written by David and located as the first of the messianic psalms in the Psalter. In their prayer (Acts 4:24-30) the disciples identified Jesus as the One "anointed" (literally, "christed") by Yahweh, against whom Herod Antipas, Pilate and the peoples of Israel, as the "kings of the earth," had gathered. The powerful messianic consciousness of the community echoed the messianic testimony of the apostles.

10.8.3. "Remembering": Jesus' sense of Old Testament fulfillment. How are we able to explain the community's sense of Jesus as Messiah? Most probably the apostles' awareness that Jesus was the exalted Messiah arose from their pre-Easter association with him. Clearly, they had come to identify him as the Messiah/Christ (Mk 8:29 and pars.). Jesus accepted their confession, declaring himself to be both the foundation of the new temple and its builder (Mt 16:6-20; Mk 12:10).

Jesus expressed his own messianic sense of identity by citing various Scriptures as being fulfilled in him. In particular, he posed the exegetical riddle based on Psalm 110:1 to the scribes in the temple courts (Mk 12:35-37 and pars.). Jesus regarded himself as that descendant of David who was David's "Lord" and who would be at the right hand of Yahweh. This probably prompted the high priest's question to Jesus under arrest before the Sanhedrin: "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus replied, "I am; and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mk 14:61-62). In that text, in which Jesus combines Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13, Jesus saw himself as "the Christ" (= the "Son of man") exalted at God's right hand.

This is but one of many examples from the Gospels in which Jesus saw the hopes and prophecies of the Old Testament fulfilled in himself.[27] According to Luke, Jesus' whole ministry was an expression of the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures:

> *These* are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled. (Lk 24:44)

After his intense survey of Jesus' references to himself, in relation to Old Testament prophecy Richard T. France commented: "Jesus places himself in the centre of the history of the world's salvation. It is in him that the prophecies are fulfilled, and in his coming that the new order is inaugurated."[28] Jesus' powerful sense that the fulfillment of God's purposes was concentrated in himself must inevitably have deeply impressed those who were with him throughout his ministry.

In the period after the first Easter, the disciples "remembered" the Scripture texts that Jesus cited as having been fulfilled in himself (Jn 2:22; 12:16). Jesus had told them the Holy Spirit would "bring to remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26). Doubtless the apostles' references to Scripture texts used by Jesus are explained by this Spirit-inspired "remembering" in the aftermath of the day of Pentecost.

The apostles also recognized that other Scriptures were given meaning in Jesus and his exaltation at the dawning of the "day of the Lord." A cursory reading of their words spoken in Jerusalem reveals that a number of passages were now added

to those "remembered" from Jesus' teaching.[29] Thus were created, as C. F. D. Moule noted, collections of biblical passages "drawn together round Jesus, as a magnet collects iron filings."[30]

This can only mean that the earliest messianic community in Jerusalem gave themselves to reflective scholarship in the sacred texts. They scoured their Scriptures seeking texts that had found their fulfilment in the Messiah, Jesus. Although they were specifically influenced in this by Jesus himself, a broader ethos for this scholarship had been created by the scribal activity of the Pharisees, the Essenes and the Sadducees.[31]

10.9. Formulating the tradition

Jesus was the Rabbi/Teacher, and the Twelve were his disciples.[32] Their discipleship to him is described in rabbinic terminology. They had "come" to him, "followed after" him, "learned from" him, "taken [his] yoke upon" them (Mt 11:28-30; Mk 1:16-20). Even a woman "sat at his feet" like the pupil of a rabbi (Lk 10:39).

He was critical of the "tradition" the people had "received" from their "elders," that is, from the succession of rabbinic teachers before him (Mk 7:1-5). Jesus frequently took his disciples aside in private (Mk 7:17-23; cf. Mk 3:31-35; 4:10; 9:28; 10:10, 23) in order—we assume—to "hand over" the true "tradition" that his people were to "receive."

It appears that the apostles continued Jesus' practice of formulating "traditions" that were to be "handed over" and "received by others." Paul commends the church because they "maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them" (1 Cor 11:2). Two such "traditions" are cited in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. The first is Paul's rehearsal of Jesus' words at the Last Supper on the night he was betrayed.

> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Cor 11:23-25)

It appears that Paul has made a number of adaptations of the tradition in line with the current pastoral needs in Corinth.[33] Nonetheless, comparison with the accounts of the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels establishes that Paul is quoting a tradition that originated with Jesus at the Last Supper. In all probability he had "received" that tradition from the Jerusalem apostles in whose community it was formulated.

The second "tradition" Paul "handed over" to the Corinthians was the apostles'

understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ.[34]

> For I delivered to you . . . what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Although Paul probably received this tradition in Damascus at the time of his baptism,[35] most likely it had been formulated beforehand in Jerusalem, in the earliest community. The tradition is based on a detailed historical sequence narrating Jesus' death, his burial, his resurrection on the third day and his subsequent appearances to a specific list of named people. At the same time, the narrative is suffused with theological interpretation. The One who died was *Christ,* the Messiah, the awaited son of David. Moreover, he died *for our sins.* That the death of the Messiah was for sins and that God raised him alive were both "according to the scriptures." This historico-theological tradition, in fulfilling the Hebrew Scriptures, unites the apostles' proclamation to the prophetic hopes of the Israel. Its economical, carefully crafted formulation reflects serious scribal activity in the earliest community of believers.

It is likely that these "traditions" were formulated in Aramaic in the early Jerusalem community, from which Paul "handed over" these words in Greek to the churches. An example of a surviving early Aramaic liturgical fragment from the Jerusalem church can also be found at the end of 1 Corinthians. Here, in the words *marana tha,* "Lord, come [back]" (1 Cor 16:22),[36] Paul implores the Lord Jesus to return. Both words are important. That Jesus is called "Lord" once again reflects the influence of Psalm 110:1 on him and, in turn, on the early community.[37] That he was expected to "come [back]" sums up his teaching from Daniel 7:13, which he interpreted as referring to the return of the Son of man (Mk 13:24-27; cf. Mk 14:62).[38] In this short prayer we are able to cross the years to hear an echo of a liturgical invocation of the earliest church, in all probability a prayer from the messianic community in Jerusalem.

Paul's address of the "Father" in the Aramaic *(Abba),* twice in his letters to the churches (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) and otherwise written in Greek, also betrays the influence of Jesus through his disciples to Paul. Again, the most likely source of this tradition handed to Paul was the Aramaic-speaking Galilean apostles in Jerusalem who were based on the large upper room.[39] It was probably not the Hellenists but the Hebrews who gave Paul the "traditions" that he reproduces later in his letters (see table 8).

10.10. A narrative of Jesus' last days

Many scholars believe that Mark 11—16 is an edited version of an early narrative of Jesus' final week in Jerusalem, climaxed by his crucifixion and the

women's discovery of the empty burial chamber.[40] Two characteristics of the passage encourage this opinion. One is that the text is quite detailed in regard to personal names, places and passage of time. See, for example, "It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread. . . . And on the first day of Unleavened Bread" (Mk 14:1, 12). This greater concentration of detail is in contrast with the rather more general narratives of the previous chapters, based as they are in Galilee and in regions north and east of that tetrarchy.

Second, these later chapters have a number of references to the high priest (Mk 14:53, 54, 60, 61, 63), though his name is never given. Does this hint at a pre-37 dating for the writing of these chapters? In that year Caiaphas was removed from office. Significantly, Matthew, Luke and John each mention the name of the high priest, suggesting a post-37 date for their Gospels but a pre-37 date for Mark (or his first draft of these chapters).

Ascension	**Pentecost**	**Paul the persecutor**	**Paul in Jerusalem as a believer**
	Addition of 3000 Hellenists		
The twelve Galilean apostles as preachers and teachers:			
Aramaic traditions			
• *Marana tha*			Received by Paul and passed on intact *in Aramaic* to the Greek churches
• *Abba*			
• *Amen*			
Eucharistic liturgy			
• Last Supper/ Lord's Supper			Received by Paul in Aramaic and *translated into Greek* for liturgical & credal use in the churches (possibly first in Damascus)
Credo of the			
• Death			
• Resurrection			
• Appearances of the Christ			

Table 8. The tradition of the apostles "handed over" to Paul

Who was the author of the Gospel of Mark? Papias, the second-century authority, states that the Second Gospel arose from Peter's preaching as remembered, translated and written down by Mark.[41] We know that John Mark was a Jerusalemite and closely connected with Peter (Acts 12:12; cf. 1 Pet 5:13).

Historically, many have identified him as the "young man" who fled naked at the time of Jesus' arrest. This reference is found only in Mark (Mk 14:51-52). Was it Mark's cryptic signature in this otherwise anonymous document?

10.11. Collecting the oracles and acts of the Lord

It is widely held that the Gospels were written thirty to fifty years after the historic life of Jesus. It is generally agreed that the so-called Synoptic Gospels, as we have them, were composed from preexisting blocks of material, called "sources." Debate continues regarding the precise identification of the sources and their relationship to each other and to the finished Gospels.[42] However, the existence of the underlying sources is accepted by most scholars.

It is self-evident that these underlying sources were in existence before the final creation of these Gospels. But do we have any idea when these texts were created?

Here Paul's letters come to our assistance, providing a window through which we glimpse collections of various words of Jesus.[43] Written within a known time frame, c. A.D. 48-64, Paul's earliest letters followed closely the ministry of Jesus, c. 29-33. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, written from Corinth in c. 50, Paul writes, "For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord" (1 Thess 4:15). He then alludes to a teaching about the "coming of the Lord" that echoes Jesus' teaching about the coming of the Son of man found in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 24:30). Major letters like 1 Corinthians and Romans, written in the midfifties, have passages of some length that correspond to passages in the Synoptic Gospels. First Corinthians 9 betrays knowledge of material found in Matthew 10 (paralleled in Luke 9), and Romans 10 draws on material also found in Luke 6.[44] Further, Paul in 1 Corinthians cites the authority of the Lord in matters relating to marriage ("to the married I give charge, not I but the Lord" [1 Cor 7:10-11]) and mission ("the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel" [1 Cor 9:14]). Moreover, dotted throughout these letters are statements that echo the words of Jesus found in the Synoptics (for example, "faith, so as to remove mountains" [1 Cor 13:2; cf. Mk 11:23 = Mt 21:21] and "nothing is unclean in itself" [Rom 14:14; cf. Mk 7:15 = Mt 15:11]).

Thus it cannot be doubted that by the time of the earliest letters of Paul, by c. 50, a collection or collections of teachings of Jesus were in existence, in all probability in written form. However, the task of collecting Jesus' oracles did not begin when Paul wrote his letters; it had been in process for some time, during the forties and thirties. The collecting of Jesus' teachings cannot be separated from remembering, retaining and transmitting those teachings, activities that logically began with the disciples themselves.

In our view Jesus' disciples must have begun memorizing Jesus' teachings, perhaps even writing them down, while he was still with them. Jesus was a

"rabbi" and his followers, "disciples," belonged to a religious-educational culture characterized by the oral transmission of teachings using memorizable forms.[45] This oral transmission has been well known for many years from evidence within the Mishnah and also from the New Testament.[46] The Qumran discoveries, however, have now added a further dimension to our cultural understanding, namely that the *writing down* of traditions, as well as their oral transmission, was part of the world of Jesus and the early church.[47] It would be surprising, then, given the echoes of Jesus' teachings in Paul's letters and the evidence of both oral transmission and writing at that time, if at least some of the teachings of Jesus had not been committed to writing during the period of his ministry and soon after.

10.12. Signs, witness and the growth of the community

The first five chapters of Acts are devoted to the first year or so of the life of the earliest community. The writer sees a close connection between the apostles' signs and wonders, their verbal witness to the exalted Christ and the subsequent growth of the community.

Luke conveys the impression of a concentration of such "signs and wonders" during this earliest period (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12). Three such miracles identified for detailed narrative are: (1) speaking in other tongues on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4), (2) Peter's healing of the crippled man (Acts 3:7), and (3) the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 10). The first two incidents provide the opportunity for Peter to "witness" to Jesus of Nazareth as the risen and exalted Christ (Acts 2:22-40; 3:11-26; 4:1-22). Each miracle, with or without the apostolic witness, leads to the writer's comment on the community, its growth or lifestyle (Acts 2:43-47; 4:23-31; 4:32-37; 5:14).

This dynamic triangle—signs and wonders, apostolic witness and the growth and distinctiveness of the community—is given in the Acts as evidence that the exalted Christ had poured out his Spirit, setting in motion this triad of interacting forces.

10.13. A mixed and increasingly divided community

As noted above, the foundation of the messianic community in Jerusalem was the one hundred and twenty Galilean "brothers," composed of the original disciples along with members of Jesus' family. These would have been Aramaic speaking, though it is likely that they had at least some familiarity with Greek.

On the day of Pentecost, three thousand were added to the community, the majority of whom were Jews from the diaspora, whose common language was Greek. It is probable that they knew some Aramaic. After all, Aramaic-speaking Jerusalem was their home. These, who were later described as "Hellenists," were subject to the leadership and teaching of the Aramaic-speaking Galilean apostles (Acts 2:42).

From the day of Pentecost the Hellenists and the Hebrews met together in the temple precincts, worshiping together (in Aramaic?) and being instructed (in Aramaic?) by the apostles. The Hellenists lived in their original homes and continued to attend their Greek-speaking synagogues while the Hebrews were based at the upper room, which probably also served as their synagogue-church. Dependent widows from both ethnic groups were supported by the apostles, who distributed funds donated by the wealthier members (Acts 2:44; 4:32—5:2).

In the days ahead the community was increased to five thousand (Acts 4:4). One would assume that these were mainly indigenous Aramaic-speaking Jerusalemites. Added later were a number of "priests," members of the tribe of Levi living in and around Jerusalem (Acts 6:7). Luke called the initial Galileans, along with those added to the community after the day of Pentecost, Hebrews (Acts 6:1). The "churches of Christ in Judea" (Gal 1:22; 1 Thess 2:14) probably developed out of this growing number of Hebrew disciples in Jerusalem. The ethnically and linguistically disparate communities of Hellenists and Hebrews were manageable at the beginning. But with the passage of time and the uncontrolled growth of the community, increasing difficulties of pastoral administration became evident, as reflected even within the idealized picture of Acts 1—5.

Inevitably the Hebrew widows associated with the apostles and the upper room received more beneficial treatment in the daily distribution of food as the apostles waited on tables (Acts 6:1-3). The Hellenists' complaints forced the apostles to appoint Hellenist almoners to attend to the daily food distribution to their widows. Inevitably this caused a division of the apostolic community into the Hebrews, led by the apostles, and the Hellenists, led by the seven officers appointed to care for their needs.

Excursus 10A: The use of Acts 1—5 for historical reconstruction

1. The use of Acts for historical reconstruction is problematic to critical scholarship. Unquestionably this work is suffused with the apologetic theological interests of the author, as many have noted.[48] The early chapters, which are devoted to the earliest community, are presented in somewhat idealized terms, calling into question their usefulness for historical research. That idealism is chiefly represented in the description of communal goods within the life of the first disciples.

However, Acts does not fail to report on the failure of Ananias and Sapphira, thus shattering whatever romantic sense we may have felt. Moreover, the earliest chapters flow naturally into their sequels, making any division between the "romantic" and the "real" indistinguishable. In our view these early chapters are undergirded by the same fundamental historicity that we find throughout the book of Acts. The following reasons are advanced for our (critical) use of these chapters as a historical source.

2. Luke-Acts as a whole is recognizably a work of history. Overall, the form and style of the

Acts of the Apostles identify the book as a recognizable work of history. Comparison with other works in this genre confirms this identity. Eduard Meyer, the distinguished historian of classical antiquity, commented that Luke's work, in spite of a more limited content, "bears the same character as those of great historians, of a Polybius, a Livy and many others."[49] A reader of those times would have known immediately that the work was a work of history; that is, they would have recognized it as a style of writing devoted to the narration of events and people.

More than one scholar has noted that in his accuracy Luke takes his place with other historians in that era. Martin Hengel noted that Luke's account "always remains within the limits of what was considered reliable by the standards of antiquity."[50]

3. There are templates for checking the accuracy of Luke. Luke can be checked against the Gospel of Mark. It is widely held that the Gospel of Mark predated and was used by Luke in his Gospel. This means that we have an objective means by which we can measure Luke's use of texts that were at his disposal. Of course Luke has his own purposes in writing, which he does not disguise. Yet when passages in Luke are set alongside similar passages from Mark, Luke proves to have been a sober and careful scribe. Upon comparing Luke 21:8-36 with its parallel in Mark 13:5-37, F. C. Burkitt commented that "what concerns us here is not that Luke has changed so much, but that he has invented so little."[51]

Sources written or oral or both underlie the Acts, though their lines and extent are not readily discernible. If the writer is proved to be accurate in his first volume when compared with Mark, we may reasonably assume that he will likewise be found to be reliable where we do not have sources for comparison.

Luke's writing in his second volume can be checked against the letters of Paul.[52] Apparently Luke did not use Paul's letters as a source; his style in passages with parallels in the letters of Paul is too dissimilar. Nonetheless, the autobiographical passages in Paul's letters confirm Luke's version of the outline of Paul's life: his persecution of the first Christians, his Damascus Road conversion, his return to Jerusalem and subsequent apostolic journeys, including his final journey to Rome.

4. The author of Acts provides many specific details. The author of Acts supplies many impressive details, the greater majority of which are incidental to his narrative and to his apologetic and theological intentions. These are to be found within the early chapters, as well as throughout the book.

Luke provides numerous details regarding people and officials. In the early chapters of Acts we meet John and Alexander, "who were of the high-priestly family" of Annas (Acts 4:6), the property-owning Joseph the Levite from Cyprus and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:36—5:1), an official referred to as the "captain of the temple" (*stratēgos* [Acts 4:1; 5:24, 26]) and the seven named almoners from the Hellenist community (Acts 6:5). Although a problem remains with Theudas appearing chronologically before Judas in Gamaliel's speech (Acts 5:36-37), the information given about these revolutionary figures is consistent with cross references in Josephus.[53]

The same interest in people and their positions can be traced throughout the Acts.[54] Where the author is part of the narrative in the "we" passages, the detail given is more intense than in other passages where he is dependent on the oral testimony of those who had been present, which the author has noted. In some cases, he may have been dependent on now-lost written sources, though this is less likely.

These early chapters also establish the author's interest in details regarding topography and geography. Thus he describes Olivet as "near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away" (Acts 1:12).[55] He mentions also "the upper room, where they were staying" (Acts 1:13), "the gate of

the temple which is called Beautiful" (Acts 3:2) and "the portico called Solomon's" (Acts 3:11). The information is fragmentary, being dependent upon his notation of oral data or, alternatively, upon now-lost written sources. However, his interest in such details is evident throughout his extensive narrative,[56] especially in the "we" passages.

5. Speeches in Acts are authentic.[57] The speeches in Acts are often set alongside those found in Thucydides' *History of the Pelopponesian War.* Not having been present to hear the speeches, the author states that "I have . . . put into the mouths of each speaker the sentiments proper to the occasion."[58] While Thucydides seeks to do justice to historical accuracy, the speeches he records are his own composition, written according to what he presumes would have been said at the time. But the uniformity of style apparent in the speeches in Thucydides' *History* betrays them as free compositions of the author.

The speeches in Acts, however, including those of the early chapters, are quite varied, regarding both setting and content. This is true whether the speech was given by Peter in public or before the high priest in Jerusalem or in private in the house of Cornelius in Caesarea, or by Stephen to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, or by Paul to the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, to rustics in Lystra, to the Areopagus in Athens, or to various official audiences in Jerusalem and Caesarea. These many speeches are quite different in style and content and not at all merely vehicles for the theological interests of the author. Whereas Thucydides worked on the principle of verisimilitude, it is more likely that the author of Acts attempted to discover what had actually been said, by speaking either to those who heard the speech or to those who spoke on those occasions. We know that through his travels Luke had access to both hearers and speakers of the speeches in the book of Acts.

6. First Peter echoes some of the elements of Peter's preaching. In writing his commentary on the first letter of Peter, E. G. Selwyn made an exhaustive survey to establish points of possible contact between this epistle and the speeches of Peter as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Selwyn found numerous parallels between the two that he described as "utterances from the same mind." He concluded that "the connexion . . . is not literary, but historical: the common ground lies in the mind of St Peter who gave . . . teaching along these lines."[59]

7. Aramaisms are consistent with a source focusing on the ministry of Peter.[60] The studies of C. C. Torrey and Max Wilcox have detected Aramaism beneath the Greek text of Acts, particularly in Acts 1:1-5:16, 9:31-11:18 and parts of Acts 12 and Acts 15. These locii of earlier sources in Aramaic are historically consistent with an author who was not an eyewitness of sequences located in Jerusalem and Caesarea that were focused on the activities of Peter.

8. Conclusion. The widespread assumption that the author of the Acts of the Apostles was concerned only in matters relating to theology and apologetics must be questioned. In light of the sure marks of his historical interest and competence noted in the foregoing excursus, we conclude that the historian is able, with confidence tempered with critical caution, to make use of the data in the Acts as he pursues the task of historical reconstruction. At the same time, we must not assume the author of Acts has conformed to the techniques and standards of modern historiography. Such expectations are unreasonable and impractical.

Further reading

Bauckham, Richard, ed. *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting.* Vol. 4 of *Palestinian Setting.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995.

Bruce, F. F. *The Acts of the Apostles,* pp. 1-69. Leicester: Apollos, 1990.

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France, Richard T. *Jesus and the Old Testament.* London: Tyndale House, 1971.

Hemer, Colin. *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History.* Tübingen: Mohr, 1989.

Hengel, Martin. *Between Jesus and Paul.* London: SCM Press, 1983.

Marshall, I. Howard, and David Peterson. *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998.

Moule, C. F. D. *The Birth of the New Testament.* London: Black, 1973.

Winter, Bruce, and Andrew Clarke, eds. *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 1. Ancient Literary Setting.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993.

Notes

[1]See earlier, §9.2.5.

[2]While these "brothers" are probably a metaphorical reference for disciples of Jesus, they could also be understood more literally as Jesus' Galilean relatives from the Davidide enclave in Nazareth. See §5.3.

[3]See E. F. F. Bishop, "The Risen Christ and the Five Hundred Brethren," *CBQ* 18 (1958): 341-44.

[4]Neither the Gospel of Luke nor the Acts of the Apostles mentions any resurrection appearances apart from Jerusalem.

[5]See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The Cenacle: Topographical Setting for Acts 2:44-45," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 4. Palestinian Setting,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 4:303-21. On the other hand, the upper room may have been located close to the temple area.

[6]"Witness" *(martys)* is a forensic concept (Deut 5:19; Mk 14:63 and pars.; cf. Mt 18:16; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19).

[7]That is, seven weeks after Passover (Lev 23:15-43), hence "fiftieth *[pentēcostē]* day" (see Tobit 2:1; 2 Macc 12:32). The day of Pentecost was also known as the "day of the first fruits" (Num 28:26) when the first fruits of the harvest were presented.

[8]See Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1983), pp. 8-9.

[9]Luke does not systematically describe the practical arrangements of the new community. It has to be inferred from his somewhat idealized passing references. The key passages that bear on this question are Acts 2:41-42, 44-46; 3:1, 11; 4:32—5:2, 12, 42; 6:1-2, 8-9; 26:10-11.

[10]See excursus 10A.

[11]Jesus also taught at this place (Jn 10:22-23).

[12]Luke's words, *ēsan epi to auto* (Acts 2:44; cf. Acts 2:1, 47), are evocative of a community together. For the view that this language reflects the Qumran organization, see Brian Capper, "The Palestinian Cultural Context of Earliest Christian Community of Goods," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 4. Palestinian Setting,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 4:336-37. However, this construction is a common idiom (see Acts 4:36).

[13]So F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), p. 132.

[14]Cf. Murphy-O'Connor, "Cenacle," pp. 319-20. For an analysis of the sociology of Jerusalem and of the Christian community, see David A. Fiensy, "The Composition of the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 4. Palestinian Setting,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 4:213-36.

[15]Fiensy, "Composition," pp. 234-35.

[16]Ibid., pp. 230-34.

[17]Rainer Riesner, "Synagogues in Jerusalem," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 4. Palestinian Setting,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 4:206. It may significant that the "guest room" *(katalyma)* Jesus sought for the Passover feast proved to be an "upper room" *(anagaion)* (Mk 14:14-15). Both words have associations with synagogues; so Riesner, "Synagogues," pp. 206-7.

[18]See earlier, §3.7.

[19]Murphy-O'Connor, "Cenacle," pp. 303-21.

[20]Capper, "Palestinian Cultural Context," pp. 336-37.
[21]Ibid., pp. 323-56.
[22]Philo *Hypothetica* 11.10-11, quoted in Capper, "Palestinian Cultural Context," p. 352.
[23]*Manual of Discipline* 6:13-24 in Theodore H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1956).
[24]The chief priests called them *agrammatoi* and *idiōtai,* "unlettered" and "uneducated" (Acts 4:13).
[25]See earlier, §5.3.
[26]See earlier, §8.6.2. and 8.9.
[27]See Richard T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale House, 1971), pp. 83-171.
[28]Ibid., p. 162.
[29]For example, Joel 2:1-5 (Acts 2:16); Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25); Isaiah 52:12—53:13 (Acts 3:18); Deuteronomy 18:15-20 (Acts 3:22); Genesis 22:18 (Acts 3:25); Psalm 118:22 (Acts 4:11); Psalm 2:1 (Acts 4:25-26).
[30]C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (London: Black, 1973), p. 69.
[31]See earlier, §3.8.
[32]See §8.5.3.
[33]See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 545-47.
[34]See §9.2.2.
[35]See §2.2.1.
[36]While the Aramaic could be taken as an indicative, *maran atha* (= "our Lord has come"), the imperative form in Revelation 22:20, "Come, Lord Jesus," supports an imperatival sense in 1 Corinthians 16:22.
[37]See §9.3.
[38]While the primary meaning of Daniel 7:13 relates to the *exaltation* of one like a son of man to a position of honor with the Ancient of Days, Jesus also seems to use this passage to teach about his *return* at the end of the days.
[39]There has been considerable interest in the language spoken by Jesus and the disciples. The view taken here is that Aramaic was Jesus' and the disciples' "first" language but that they probably also had some facility in *koinē* Greek, at least in a spoken form. Stanley E. Porter, "Did Jesus Ever Teach Greek?" *TynBul* 44 (1993): 199-235, argues for a more significant use of Greek by Jesus in Galilee. See also Stanley E. Porter, ed., "The Greek Language of the New Testament," in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 99-130.
[40]See, e.g., William L. Craig, "The Empty Tomb," in *Studies in History and Tradition in the Four Gospels,* Gospel Perspectives 2, ed. Richard T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981) pp. 190-91.
[41]Eusebius *HE* 3.39.15; §18.3.1.
[42]See, e.g., E. Earle Ellis, "The Making of Narratives in the Synoptic Tradition," in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition,* ed. Henry Wansbrough (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), pp. 310-33.
[43]See e.g., Dale C. Allison, "The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels," *NTS* 28 (1982): 1-32.
[44]See Allison, "Pauline Epistles," pp. 10-13.
[45]See §8.5.3.
[46]See ibid. and §3.8.
[47]So Ellis, "Making of Narratives," p. 311.
[48]See F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 21-26, 60-66.
[49]Quoted in Bruce, *Acts,* p. 27.
[50]Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity,* (London: SCM Press, 1979), p. 61.
[51]Quoted in Bruce, *Acts,* p. 35.
[52]See Bruce, *Acts,* pp. 46-52; Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*

(Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), pp. 244-76; David Wenham, "Acts and the Pauline Corpus," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting,* ed. Bruce Winter and Andrew Clarke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 1:215-58.

[53]We know of Theudas who arose during the midforties (Josephus *Ant.* 20.97ff.), but not of anyone by that name before then. See further, Bruce, *Acts,* pp. 175-76.

[54]See further Hemer, *Book of Acts,* pp. 159-243; Bruce, *Acts,* pp. 27-34.

[55]A sabbath journey was less than one kilometer. See Bruce, *Acts,* p. 105.

[56]Hemer, *Book of Acts;* Martin Hengel, "The Geography of Palestine in Acts," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 4. Palestinian Setting,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1995), 4:27-78.

[57]See Bruce, *Acts,* pp. 34-40; Hemer, *Book of Acts,* pp. 415-27; Conrad Gempf, "Public Speaking and Published Accounts," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting,* ed. Bruce Winter and Andrew Clarke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 1:259-303.

[58]Thucydides *History of the Pelopponesian War* 1.22.1.

[59]E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 36.

[60]See Bruce, *Acts,* p. 69.

11

The Scattering of the Community & the Conversion of Saul (c. 34/35)

11.1. The appointment of leaders of the Hellenists

Perhaps a year after the day of Pentecost[1] an event occurred that dramatically disrupted the messianic community in Jerusalem and changed the course of the history of early Christianity. Twice previously the temple hierarchy had arrested and imprisoned various apostles, releasing them on one occasion with a warning and on another with beatings (Acts 4:1-3, 5-22; 5:17-40). On the second occasion they were spared death by the intercession of Gamaliel, an honored teacher of the law, who advised the Sanhedrin to let God's judgment—rather than theirs—fall on the apostles' activity (Acts 5:33-39). Some time later came the critical moment when all-out assault fell on the young community. Remarkably, the onslaught was an entirely unexpected consequence of an innocent action, the appointment of leaders for the Hellenist subcommunity of the earliest church.

From the day of Pentecost the earliest messianic community was divided, as we have seen.[2] One group consisted of the one hundred and twenty "brothers," composed of the original core disciples along with relatives of the Lord and unidentified others from Galilee. These were the foundation of the group whom the Acts identified as "Hebrews," whose natural language was Aramaic. Nonetheless, they must have known some Greek. This language was commonly used throughout Palestine as a result of the spread of Hellenism following the conquests of Alexander the Great three centuries earlier.

The second group consisted of Jews from the diaspora who were described as accepting baptism at the hands of the apostles. Many of these were pilgrims in

Jerusalem who had come for the great Feast of Weeks. These must have returned to their homes following the feast. Others, perhaps numbering some hundreds, were permanent dwellers in Jerusalem, having previously migrated there from the diaspora. These were Greek-speaking, though they doubtless also spoke some Aramaic since they lived in Jerusalem.[3]

The one hundred and twenty Galileans who had recently settled in Jerusalem appear to have been concentrated at or near the upper room, which is believed to have been located in the Mount Zion area of Jerusalem.[4] Generally speaking, the Hellenists, being permanent dwellers in the holy city, were probably domiciled in other parts of Jerusalem, attending Greek-speaking synagogues as well as being taught by the apostles.[5]

The community sought to provide food for members who were in need. Wealthier members sold property and gave the proceeds to the apostles, enabling them to serve food daily to widows from the community.[6] However, the Hellenist widows complained that they were not fairly treated. This may have been a logistical problem. The Hebrew widows may have been fewer in number, and they may have been located close to the apostles and the upper-room community.

The apostles felt they must give priority to preaching the word of God and prayer so they resisted the greater demands on their time needed to provide for the Hellenist widows. Nonetheless, they would continue to serve the Hebrew women. The apostles' solution was to appoint seven men from the Hellenist community to fulfill the role of almoners in the Hellenist community. It is evident from their Greek names that these seven were Hellenists (Acts 6:5). These men were now recognized as the effective leaders of the Hellenist community of believers.

Meanwhile, a brief note in Acts suggests that the Hebrews, the smaller of the two groups of the wider messianic community, had grown in number. They grew at least in part because of the addition of numbers of priests who were "obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). These were Jerusalem-based members of the priestly order of Aaron, who were now drawn into the messianic community. As priests, it is presumed that they remained loyal to the temple. In this they were sharply separated from the leader of the Hellenists, Stephen, whose attack on the temple we are soon to hear.

The apostles' action in response to the Hellenist widows' pleas was to have far-reaching consequences. First, it accentuated the differences that had characterized the two groups in the messianic community from the beginning. The gap between the two was now widened. Second, it gave prominence to an alternative group of leaders (signaled in the recording of their seven names, as the apostles' twelve names had been recorded earlier [Acts 1:13]). Third, Stephen, the first named of the Hellenist almoners, would prove to be a powerful and determined preacher and polemicist. Such was the force of Stephen's ministry that it soon

provoked opposition that would engulf the whole community, Hellenists and Hebrews.

11.2. The Hellenist synagogues of Jerusalem

Estimates vary as to the population of Jerusalem at the time. There are grounds for believing there were about one hundred thousand people permanently living in the city, apart from the times of the great feasts when the numbers may have reached a million.[7] The majority of pilgrims would come from the diaspora, with rather fewer from Palestine. However, a significant proportion of Jerusalem's stable population were Jews from the diaspora, who continued to use Greek as their mother tongue and to meet in Hellenist synagogues to hear the Scriptures read in Greek and to pray in Greek.

It is clear that numerous synagogues existed in Jerusalem at that time. The Talmud suggests as many as 390.[8] A significant number of these were Hellenist synagogues attended by Greek-speaking Jews. Light has been thrown on such synagogues by the discovery in the region of the lower city (the City of David) in 1913-1914 of a tablet bearing a dedicatory inscription written in Greek.[9]

> Theodotus (son) of Vettenus, priest and
> archisynagogos, son of an archisynago-
> gos, grandson of an archisynagogos, con-
> structed the synagogue for the rea-
> ding of the law and the teaching of the commandments and
> the guest-room and the (upper?) chambers and the instal-
> lations of water for the hostelry for tho-
> se needing (them) from abroad, which was foun-
> ded by his fathers and the el-
> ders and Simonides.

The inscription, which comes from the New Testament period, reveals a synagogue established in previous generations that had been rebuilt or enlarged.[10] The dedicator, Theodotus, has a Greek name. His father's Latin name, Vettenus, suggests that his family had migrated to Jerusalem from Italy (Rome?). It is possible that he had been an emancipated slave who had been given the name of his owner, Vettenus. This family was closely connected to both this synagogue and the temple; Theodotus is both a priest and an ***archisynagogos*** ("ruler of a synagogue"). The inscription also reveals that this synagogue provided for regular meetings of indigenous Hellenist Jerusalemites, as well as hostel accommodation for pilgrims from abroad.

The book of Acts records a dispute between Stephen and the members of five Hellenist synagogues in Jerusalem. One was "The Synagogue of Freedmen" (Acts 6:9), many of whose members presumably were or who had been emancipated

slaves.[11] (Is it possible that this is the synagogue dedicated by Theodotus?) There were other synagogues whose members were diaspora Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia who were now domiciled in the holy city.[12] The Greek language would have been used in services as it was throughout the diaspora in the eastern Mediterranean. It is not clear whether Stephen belonged to one of these five synagogues or to a synagogue elsewhere. In any case, his views had become known and highly controversial among the Hellenist Jewish community of Jerusalem.

11.3. The charges against Stephen

Peter and the Galilean Hebrew apostles customarily went to the temple to bear witness to Jesus as "Lord and Christ." The appointment of almoners for the Hellenist believers meant that the message of Christ was taken to the Greek synagogues of Jerusalem, five of which are mentioned in Acts 6:9. In effect, Stephen, their leader was now evangelizing the Greek-speaking Jews of the holy city.

Stephen's preaching aroused opposition from "some" members of these synagogues, who, however, were not able to overturn his arguments. Presumably, others were either persuaded by what he said, or they were as yet undecided. But those who were opposed to Stephen brought the news of his preaching to the attention of the temple authorities. Stephen was seized and brought before the Sanhedrin, where he was accused—falsely, according to Acts—of speaking against the temple and the law of Moses. A Sanhedrin trial soon followed, with witnesses from the Greek synagogues accusing Stephen of blasphemy, the accused defending himself, and finally the judges determining Stephen's guilt of the theological crime of blasphemy, for which he was stoned.

The book of Acts makes it clear that Stephen's immediate offense was not preaching Christ, but speaking against the temple and the law (Acts 6:13). These were the sacred symbols of Israel's covenant faith, along with circumcision, the religious calendar and the dietary laws. From the time of Alexander the Great and the spread of Hellenism, Israel's covenant was under theological and moral threat; Hellenism was aesthetic, intellectual and enticing. Successive devout scribes, Hasidaean and Pharisaic, had clung to these symbols of Yahweh's covenant. So now a *Hellenist* Jew was attacking these two sacred emblems, the law of Moses and God's holy place, his temple. This was an assault against God himself.

Various explanations have arisen explaining Stephen's surprising emphasis. Was he influenced by the Qumran-Essene opposition to the temple? But the sectaries had withdrawn from the temple community because of the impurity and corruption of the Hasmonaean high priests. Stephen, however, was opposed to the temple *in principle,* as his speech in defense indicates. Moreover, Stephen was also accused of being against Moses, which the sectaries were not. Was Stephen merely a liberal Jew like some others from a diaspora background, rather aloof from the intense

commitment to these symbols? It is possible that Stephen may have been among those Jews of diaspora origin who were unpersuaded by the centrality of the temple. This does not altogether explain the strength of his polemic against the temple, as recorded in his defense speech. Nor does it take into account the active and intentional commitment to *Christian* proclamation of his fellow Hellenists, who, historically, are the first missionaries. The almoner second to Stephen was Philip, who came to be called "the evangelist" (Acts 21:8).

The driving force behind Stephen's preaching about the temple and the law of Moses must have been something else. Indeed, the book of Acts makes plain that Stephen was persecuted for his view of Jesus of Nazareth and of Jesus' teaching about the destruction of the temple (Acts 6:14). Stephen had grasped something the Galilean-Hebrew apostles had not yet comprehended. Jesus, the Davidic Messiah, had prophesied his death and resurrection after three days and also the destruction of the temple, likewise to be reconstituted "in three days." Jesus' death will secure its "death," and his resurrection will secure its "resurrection," that is, a new people of God founded on the Twelve and joined to Jesus the messianic king. But the Galilean disciples did not fully understand this. They continued to teach in the temple, and when Saul's onslaught occurred, they did not leave Jerusalem, as Acts pointedly observes (Acts 8:1).

Having a more radical grasp of Jesus' teaching, Stephen preached the message of the destruction of the temple in the Greek synagogues of Jerusalem. To be sure, his Hellenist-diaspora perspective may have helped him see what the Galilean-Hebrew apostles could not yet see. Yet it was Stephen's apprehension of Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, who would first destroy the temple and then rebuild the true temple, that drove Stephen's preaching.

11.4. Stephen before the Sanhedrin

The real issue in the recent trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin was his identity as the messianic claimant to the throne of David (Mk 14:61). Yet his accompanying claim—that the temple would be destroyed and raised in three days—appears to have generated more emotional heat in the Sanhedrin. In speaking to the Roman prefect, the high priest portrayed Jesus' messianic claim as treason: Jesus claimed to be "king of the Jews," contrary to the Roman settlement. By doing so, he secured the execution of this pretender. But the issue that incensed the temple hierarchy was Jesus' associated prophecy of the destruction of the holy place.

This same issue seems to have set the Sanhedrin against Stephen. The high priest before whom he appeared was almost certainly Caiaphas, who had presided at the Sanhedrin trial of Jesus. Certainly Jesus of Nazareth was the core of Stephen's faith, informing and inspiring his attitudes toward the temple, but it was his opinions regarding the place of the temple in this new faith that had most enflamed his accusers. How will Stephen respond?

In his lengthy speech recorded in Acts 7:2-53, Stephen the Hellenist of diaspora origin struck his critical emphasis from its opening lines. The God of glory appeared to Abraham when he was *in Mesopotamia*, that is, outside Israel, in the dispersion, as it were (Acts 7:2-3). Although he came to the land in which his hearers "are now living" the great patriarch himself was to have no inheritance in it (Acts 7:4). Upon their redemption from a land of slavery, they came to the land of promise to worship God—as he will comment later—in a "tent of witness," built according to God's directions (Acts 7:44).

Throughout their history, from the time of their sojourn in Egypt until now, the people have repeatedly disobeyed God. God had raised up Moses to be a deliverer of the people from Egypt, but they rejected him as "ruler and judge over" them (Acts 7:20-29). Even though Moses was a God-appointed prophet who led them out of Egypt, to whom God gave "living oracles" at Mount Sinai, the people rejected him, preferring to be led by Aaron and the golden calf (Acts 7:37-44). God directed Moses to construct a tabernacle, according to his pattern, but under Solomon the people built a temple, even though the Most High does not live in temples made with hands (Acts 7:44-50).

Stephen points to two problems with the temple when it came to be built. It had not been built according to God's pattern; its very form was an expression of human willfulness and disobedience. Worse, a temple "made with hands" meant it was no different from idols, which were also said to be "made with hands" (Ps 115:4; cf. Is 46:6).[13] The people preferred the golden-calf idol to Moses then, and they prefer the temple-idol now.

Having concluded this review of habitual disobedience—in particular toward Moses—Stephen turned to accuse the members of the Sanhedrin. They have resisted the Holy Spirit, as their fathers did, who persecuted the prophets and killed those who prophesied the coming of the Righteous One. Like their fathers, they have now betrayed and murdered the One like Moses who had come among them (Acts 7:51-53).

Stephen portrayed Abraham as a man of the diaspora, who never was able to settle in the land. To be sure, God promised it to his posterity, but their repeated disobedience—of Moses, in particular—had, we infer, nullified those promises. Thus the temple is an aberration, deserving of no continuing place among the people of God. By affirming the honored place of Abraham, but also of Moses, whom Stephen is accused of rejecting, he casts himself in the role of the truly faithful Israelite, a Jew of the dispersion. Jews like him are the true descendants of Abraham.

Moses is the central figure in Stephen's long defense. However, we sense that Moses is actually a type of Christ, who is the new Moses. Truly it is Christ who is "a ruler and a judge" over the people, their "ruler and deliverer" (Acts 7:27, 35). Christ is "the prophet" whom God raised up to speak the "living oracles" of God

(Acts 7:37-38). Just as the people rejected Moses, they now have killed the Righteous One, who had been anticipated and prefigured by Moses.

This is a remarkable speech that, because it is like no other in the Acts of the Apostles, has high claims to authenticity. Saul of Tarsus was present to hear it. He will have communicated its contents to the author of the Acts, but it bears no resemblance to any speech of Paul or to Pauline theology recorded in his letters. Stephen's affirmation of Abraham as a non-Palestinian and his denial of that land and its temple as the fulfillment of God's promises effectively places huge emphasis on *the dispersion*. Stephen has radically understood Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of the temple and its rebuilding. The Galilean-Hebrew apostles, however, still clung to the temple and the holy city as the locus of God's purposes—at least for the time being. Hence, the theological opposition against them was limited to brief arrest and minor beatings.

Stephen saw in Jesus' temple oracles a mandate for ministry to Jews of the diaspora. Here, too, were the seeds of evangelization of godfearers of the synagogues and ultimately of the Gentiles. Stephen's Hellenist colleagues would begin this ministry, but it would be left to Saul of Tarsus, who listened to Stephen's words, to pursue that ministry to its logical conclusion, the inclusion of the Gentiles in the end-time, saving purposes of God. It is not too much to say that Philip's preaching to Samaritans, to the Ethiopian godfearer and to diaspora Jews arose directly out of Stephen's view of God's purposes for gathering his people, informed as this was by the conviction that the Messiah was Jesus.

Stephen's grasp of Jesus' intention for the destruction of the old temple and the raising up of a new temple sealed his fate. The temple that stood in their midst was sacrosanct, the dominant visible symbol of Yahweh's covenant. When the corrupting forces of Hellenism sought to subvert Israel under the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, it was the temple he desecrated. The feast of Rededication (Hannukah), which was established by Judas Maccabeus after he recaptured Jerusalem and purified the temple, was an annual reminder to the people of the sanctity of their holy place. But this man Stephen, a follower of Jesus the false-messiah, who now attacked their temple, was a religious and political traitor, a blasphemer who must die.

11.5. Saul's assault on the community

It is likely that Stephen's chief accuser was another Hellenist Jew, the "young man," Saul of Tarsus. This eminent younger scribe appears to have been a rabbi in the Hellenistic synagogues of Jerusalem.[14] As one who had migrated *from* Cilicia to Jerusalem, first to study the Torah and then to teach it to the people of the holy city, he was outraged by Stephen's rejection of the temple and his affirmation of God's new plan to redirect his purposes to the Jews of the dispersion. Saul of Tarsus rightly saw, however, that Stephen's polemic was not merely a Hellenist's prefer-

ence for the diaspora over the holy city and its holy place. Saul grasped that Stephen's radicalism was utterly dependent upon and inspired by Jesus the false-messiah. Jesus' death on a "tree" was deuteronomic evidence of the divine curse upon him and upon those who followed his beliefs (Deut 21:22-23).

What was Saul's role? Did the Sanhedrin commission him to investigate and act upon Stephen's activities in the Hellenistic synagogues? Or, more probably, did Saul alert the authorities to the turmoil aroused by Stephen? That "those from Cilicia" were among those who disputed with Stephen in the synagogues (Acts 6:9) appears to be Luke's hint preparing us for the dramatic introduction of the "young man" at whose feet "the witnesses laid down their clothes," who was "consenting to his death," and who immediately became the agent of the assault against the church in Jerusalem (Acts 7:58; 8:1, 3).

The sequence, so far as we can see, began in the Greek synagogues where Saul was among those who disputed with Stephen and who instigated accusations against him to the Sanhedrin. The comment in Acts that Saul "was consenting *[syneudokōn]* to [Stephen's] death" (Acts 8:1) suggests close collaboration with the high priest and the temple hierarchy. After the stoning of Stephen, Saul appears to have been the high priest's agent of persecution against the community of faith.

While the arguments of Stephen the Hellenist provoked the crisis, it does not appear that Saul's assault was limited to the Hellenist believers. The book of Acts and Paul's own letters are in agreement that his persecution was against the whole community. Paul writes that he "persecuted the church of God . . . and tried to destroy it" (Gal 1:13; cf. Phil 3:3); Acts notes that "a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they all were scattered" (Acts 8:1). True, the apostles did not leave Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), but this must not be taken to imply that the Hebrews in general remained. The statement that the church in Jerusalem was "scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria" should be taken seriously; both Hebrews—Galilean and Judean—and Hellenists were driven out. A reason for the apostles' decision to continue in Jerusalem is not given, but it is likely that they saw Jerusalem and the temple as the locale of God's end-time ingathering of his people and that they believed it was their duty as the twelvefold foundation of the new temple to remain there.

The severity of Saul's assault emerges at a number of points in the Acts and is corroborated by references in Paul's letters. Although the book of Acts is an apologia for Paul, its author does not spare him. Saul, "still breathing threats and murder," "in raging fury" "laid waste the church"; he "persecuted" "this Way to the death" (Acts 9:1; 26:11; 8:3; 22:4). In his own words, he "persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it" (Gal 1:13). In "zeal" for Yahweh he "was a persecutor of the church" (Phil 3:6).

Various references scattered throughout the book of Acts give us some idea of the extreme nature of Saul's assault. Acting on the authority of the high priest and

the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (Acts 26:9), Saul himself entered the houses of believers, dragged out men and women and handed them over to prison (Acts 8:3; 22:4). When these prisoners were brought to the synagogues for trial, Saul was their accuser. He instigated their flogging and voted for their execution (Acts 26:10).

Saul effectively destroyed the messianic community in Jerusalem, at least temporarily. Apart from those who were seized and imprisoned, "all were scattered," that is, except the apostles (Acts 8:1). His task in Jerusalem now completed, Saul traveled to Damascus because he had received news through the high priest and the Sanhedrin of a community of believers there (Acts 22:5).

11.6. Saul the zealot

Clearly, then, Saul was the chief persecutor of the messianic sect and most probably the one who had first brought its teachings to the attention of the high priest and the Sanhedrin. Saul himself explains his persecutions as inspired by "zeal"; Saul was, technically speaking, a "zealot."

> I persecuted the church violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. (Gal 1:13; cf. Acts 22:3)

> As to the law, [I was] a Pharisee;
> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church. (Phil 3:5-6)

A "zealot" was a religious extremist, one who would take others lives to defend the honor of Yahweh, regardless of personal risk. Historically, zealotry stemmed from the era when Judaism first was surrounded by Hellenism, and its origins may be traced to the action of Mattathias, father of the Maccabee patriots, against Antiochus IV's attempt to stamp out Judaism.[15] Zeal for Yahweh burst forth at particular moments of crisis, for example, when Herod attempted to erect iconographic trophies at the stadium in Jerusalem,[16] when Herod placed a golden eagle on the gate of the Temple,[17] and when Quirinius and Coponius imposed a head-tax upon the Jews of Judea, provoking the insurrection led by Judas and Saddok. Simon, one of Jesus' twelve, was called "the Zealot" (Mt 10:4; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13).

Zealots held strictly to covenantal orthodoxy, which in Jesus' day meant adherence to Pharisaism. Whereas Pharisees in general more typically bore with injustice, including the sullying of the name of Yahweh, looking for divine vengeance at the Last Day, zealots took action *now,* regardless of the danger to themselves.

What was it about the teaching of Stephen that so outraged Saul, Pharisee and Zealot? Without doubt he took offense at Stephen's attack on the Temple and the Law of Moses. Yet, as observed above, the (Hellenistic) believers were not alone

in their criticism of the temple; the Essenes also traditionally stood aloof from the temple. Nor were their criticisms of the law without parallel; doubtless many Jews of the diaspora also had a weak grasp on the fundamentals of the covenantal faith. Likewise, Stephen's views of God's purposes residing with the Jews of the diaspora rather than with Palestinian Jewry were probably not without some corresponding support from other Greek-speaking Jews. In short, it is unlikely that Stephen's various views had not been heard before, in one form or another. It is unlikely that criticisms against the temple and the law of Moses by Stephen by themselves can account for Saul's violent response to the messianic sect. Stephen's special quality may have been that he brought all these criticisms against temple and law *together* coherently and, above all, polemically.

Saul's genius may have resided in his discernment that Stephen's whole worldview was informed by something else, or, rather *someone* else, Jesus the *Nazōraiōn,* who was said to be the Messiah. Perhaps Saul had special insight, penetrating beyond the comprehension of others at that time, regarding what was at stake in the messianic claims made for Jesus of Nazareth. The book of Acts seems to indicate this as it records the persecutor's words years later to Agrippa the Younger: "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth [the *Nazōraiōn*]. And I did so in Jerusalem" (Acts 26:9-10).

Most probably Saul justified his assaults against the followers of Jesus because their leader had met his end by crucifixion in the recent past. It must have been common knowledge that the *Nazōraiōn* had recently been crucified by the Romans outside the city walls, under the *titulus* "king of the Jews." Indeed, it is likely that the high priest crafted the accusation against Jesus so that the Romans had no alternative except to crucify him for treason. But, as the high priest well knew, a criminal hanged on "a tree" was accursed by Yahweh (Deut 21:22-23), providing an absolute and automatic denial of his messianic claims.[18] Paul's own later references to this, though from a new understanding (Gal 3:13; cf. Acts 13:29), suggest that he had seen the crucified Jesus as subject to the deuteronomic curse. A man who had accepted the proposition that he was the Christ (Mk 14:61-62), but who subsequently had been crucified, could only have been a *false* Christ, accursed by God for his blasphemy. The young zealot, driven by hatred of this Jesus, persecuted his people and attempted to stamp out the church.

What inner processes were occurring as Saul pursued his course against the believers of Jerusalem, Hebrews and Hellenists? Here we can only speculate, but he was probably responding to two influences. On one hand, he must have learned more about the historical Jesus in the course of his interrogations of his prisoners. Saul could not have been uninformed about Jesus the *Nazōraiōn* as he set out for Damascus. Besides this, he surely was affected by the nonvindictive behavior of Stephen and others as they met their deaths in the name of Jesus (Acts 7:60).

Something of the love and mercy of the One he pursued would have been discernible in the lives of his victims as he mercilessly arrested and punished them.

Had Saul heard Stephen argue that the Messiah's death possessed saving power and significance for both Israel and the Gentiles? Conceivably such a theological view underlay Stephen's attack on temple and Torah,[19] even though Acts does not establish that precise connection. Had Stephen taught that the death of the Messiah now made the sacrifices of the temple redundant and the scrupulous observation of the Torah unnecessary? Certainly Jesus himself taught that his death was expiatory and redemptive; his "surrender" saying (Mk 10:45) and his Last Supper "cup" saying establish as much (Mk 14:24; cf. 1 Cor 11:25).[20] Moreover, the earliest community, including the Hellenist sector, must have clearly grasped this understanding; the "breaking of bread" by households must regularly have reminded the believers *liturgically* of the inner meaning of Jesus' death, that it was *for* others (Acts 2:46).[21]

But did Stephen publicly teach that temple and Torah were now superseded by the Messiah's death, and did Saul hear this message? The book of Acts does not assert this. If we accept the broad historicity of the Acts account, we must assume that, although the Messiah's expiatory death motivated and informed Stephen's polemic against temple and Torah, he did not claim Christ's death as the rationale for eradicating the old practices. Quite possibly Stephen's point of entry was the hope of a "new temple," that is, a hope for the ingathering of Jews of the diaspora, which was indeed made possible by the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

11.7. Damascus road

The ferocity of Saul's assault drove most of the community of faith from Jerusalem. While the majority found refuge in Judea, Samaria and Galilee (Acts 9:31-32), at least some made their way beyond the borders of the land of Israel to Damascus.[22] Armed with letters from Caiaphas the high priest to the synagogues of Damascus, Saul set out to capture and bring back as prisoners fugitive believers from Damascus (Acts 9:2; 22:5). Evidently Saul had heard that these believers from Jerusalem had presented themselves in the synagogues of this northern city. Although the high priest in Jerusalem enjoyed powerful influence over the worldwide network of synagogues, it is not altogether clear on what basis these fugitives were extradited.[23] Perhaps Saul, with the high priest's support, hoped to implicate them with Stephen as blasphemers against the holy place.[24]

On the way to Damascus the heavenly voice confronted Saul with the real meaning of his actions in the question, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). In persecuting Jesus' followers, Saul was persecuting Jesus himself. For what reason? It would be a mistake to think that Saul persecuted Jesus based on the Pharisee's deep sense of sin and a felt need for forgiveness through Christ's sacrificial death. Saul the Pharisee was no guilt-ridden Martin Luther,

longing for the release of a clear conscience. To be sure, Saul would come to acknowledge a sense of sin, but this was a later conviction, based on a recognition of his failure to keep the law, which only came to him as a believer in Christ (Rom 7:7-25; Phil 3:4-11). Saul's motivation as persecutor was not personal guilt. It was outrage at the blasphemous Christology of a crucified pretender.

Various elements in Stephen's teaching arguably laid a foundation for Saul's later theological views as a Christian. Stephen's dramatic declaration of his preference for the diaspora Jews over the people of the land of Israel may well have prepared the way for Saul's vision of ministry to the Gentiles. Stephen's view of Moses as a type of the One who was to come perhaps laid the groundwork for Paul's view of the law of Moses as fulfilled in the person, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus (Rom 10:4). Stephen's rejection of the centrality of the temple may have diminished the significance of the holy place in the mind of Paul, who would see the new covenant people as the "temple of the living God" (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16). Henceforth Saul's view of these various elements—the land of Israel, the Gentiles, the law and the temple—would each undergo radical change.

Much of Saul's dramatic reinterpretation of these elements is attributable to Stephen's words heard in the Hellenistic synagogues, although Saul radically disagreed with them at the time. However, it was Saul's acknowledgment of Jesus as *the Christ* on the road to Damascus that transformed his comprehension of Stephen's words and inspired a radical new worldview.

In Saul's own words, "[God] reveal[ed] his Son to me" (Gal 1:16). This was the moment he "received mercy"[25] from God (2 Cor 4:1). Stephen's teaching may have introduced the alternative, radical worldview that Saul would come to embrace "in Christ," but this of itself did not convert Saul. Rather, God's revelation of "his Son" and his mercy turned Saul's life around and allowed him to comprehend Stephen's worldview. Henceforth, the "love of Christ" would control and direct Saul's life, driving him to criss-cross the eastern provinces of the empire proclaiming the Messiah Jesus.

11.8. Peace after the storm

Saul's journey to Damascus and his amazing conversion brought the persecution in Jerusalem to an end. In time many of those scattered from the holy city returned to their homes. These were mostly the Hebrews, who were eventually reunited with the apostles. Many, however, did not return to Jerusalem but resettled in Judea and Galilee, establishing churches in these regions. Peter was to visit these believers in the coming days (Acts 9:31-32). The Hellenists, for the most part, appear to have been permanently forced out of Jerusalem; eventually their radical antitemple perspectives would bring more trouble on their heads.

The book of Acts traces the ministry of one these emigres, Philip, the second of the Hellenist almoners. We follow Philip as he fulfilled the vision of Stephen for

God's blessing on those outside the holy city and its temple. He preached to Samaritans, to the Ethiopian godfearer who was returning home from a pilgrimage in Jerusalem and to Greek-speaking Jews and godfearers in the Greek cities along the seaboard from Azotus to Caesarea (Acts 8:4-40). Later the unnamed Hellenists preached the word of the Lord along the northern seaboard of the Mediterranean from Phoenicia to the north across to Cyprus, coming finally to the great Greco-Syrian metropolis, Antioch. Saul's persecution had the effect of driving many Hellenist believers back to the diaspora, in all likelihood to their places of origin. Assemblies of believers grew out of their preaching in the years following their redispersion. It is not too far from the truth to speak of the Hellenists' "mission." The mandate for this had been the preaching of Stephen and his vision for God's salvation of the those on the margins of Israel.

Closer to Jerusalem, however, churches came into existence in Judea, Samaria and Galilee as a consequence of the scattering of the Hebrew believers from the church in Jerusalem. When Acts speaks of "the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria," which "had peace" and was "built up," it is referring to *the church of Jerusalem,* which had been scattered in those places through Saul's persecution (Acts 9:31). The presence of disciples in Lydda and Joppa are most probably explained by the witness borne by these scattered believers from Jerusalem, whether Hellenist or Hebrew. Other churches came into being as a result of the scattering of the members of the mother church. Paul calls this church, "the church of God," which knew him because he persecuted it, distinguishing it from the "churches of Christ in *Judea,*" whose members had not known him "by sight" (Gal 1:13, 22; cf. 1 Thess 2:14).

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul records the astonishing report about Saul that came first to the mother church in Jerusalem, a report that was in turn passed on to the new churches in Judaea.

> The churches of Judea were hearing from the Jerusalem church, based on reports initially coming from Damascus, that "he who was formerly persecuting us now preaches the faith he was once attempting to destroy." (Gal 1:22-23) [26]

These new churches in Judea would continue to hear amazing news about the persecutor, Saul. Presumably this remarkable message began filtering back to Jerusalem first from Damascus, where fugitive Hellenist Jewish Christians listened in astonishment to the former persecutor preaching the Son of God in the synagogues. With the passing of the years, similar reports probably also came from Arabia, then from Syria and Cilicia, in fact from wherever the Christian Paul was proclaiming the faith he had previously attempted to eliminate.

11.9. The church in Jerusalem

The Hellenists gone, the church in Jerusalem regrouped as its members gradually

returned after the persecution. This church was destined to become a more unified Hebraic community, the more so as historical developments in Palestine brought deeper problems between Jews and Gentiles. The church of Jerusalem must have assumed something of the growing religious nationalism as Israel moved toward war with the Romans. This church and its leadership likely enjoyed a primacy over the churches of Judea and Galilee because of its identity with Jerusalem, the holy city, and the birth of other churches from the scattered remnants from Jerusalem no doubt ensured an ongoing respect for the mother church. The leadership of James, a Davidide who was a brother of the Messiah, likely fostered Jerusalem's standing among the churches of Judea and Galilee.

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Notes

[1]The book of Acts gives no indication of the passage of time occupied by the first five chapters of its narrative. Opinions vary as to the time involved. For example, throughout his writings Martin Hengel estimates two years or less. Two critical dates to be kept in mind are A.D. 33, the date proposed for the crucifixion, and A.D. 50, the date generally agreed upon for Paul's arrival in Corinth (based on an inscription in Delphi that dates Gallio's coming to Achaia in that year). Within these seventeen years must be accommodated (1) the fourteen years between Paul's conversion and the Missionary Concordat in Jerusalem when he agreed to "go to the Gentiles" (Gal 2:1-9) and (2) the period between that agreement and his arrival in Corinth, which could not have been more than two to three years.

[2]See §10.5.

[3]Contra Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years.* (London: SCM Press, 1997), p. 33, who think the Greek-speaking Jews had little knowledge of Aramaic.

[4]See §10.3.7.

[5]For the suggestion that the Hellenist Jews were concentrated in the lower city (the City of David), see David A. Fiensy, "The Composition of the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 4. Palestinian Setting,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 230-34.

[6]See §10.6.

[7]See Wolfgang Reinhardt, "The Population Size of Jerusalem and the Numerical Growth of the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 4. Palestinian Setting,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 237-65.

[8]Babylonian Talmud *Ketubbot* 105a; cf. Fiensy, "Composition," pp. 233-34.

[9]Rainer Riesner, "Synagogues in Jerusalem," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 4. Palestinian Setting,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 192-201. The layout of the text above follows Riesner, who has reproduced the Greek inscription.

[10]Riesner, "Synagogues," pp. 194-95.

[11]Such a synagogue is rendered historically plausible by Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 155-56, who refers to the Jewish quarter of Rome. He describes the Jews there as mostly Roman citizens who had formerly been captured by the Romans and brought as slaves to the city, where, for the most part, they had been manumitted. Philo notes that these Jews maintained their historic faith.

[12]See Martin Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 56.

[13]See P. W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 10-11, 65-67.

[14]Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul,* p. 67.

[15]See §3.5.

[16]See §4.4

[17]See earlier, §4.9.

[18]See Martin Hengel, *The Atonement* (London: SCM Press, 1981), pp. 39-44.

[19]Ibid., pp. 44-47, 54.
[20]Ibid., pp. 53, 64, 72.
[21]Ibid., p. 73.
[22]On the history of Damascus and the Jewish community there, see Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch,* pp. 55-61.
[23]Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch,* pp. 50-51, reject as unhistorical the high priest's power of extradition from a foreign city. They suggest that Jewish Hellenist synagogues of Jerusalem may have dispatched Saul to deal with Jewish Hellenist believers who had fled there, but this is quite conjectural.
[24]See F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), p. 233.
[25]Greek *ēleēthēmen*. The aorist tense may point to a *single* moment of time, and the passive voice likely tells us that Saul received that mercy from *God*.
[26]Author's translation. According to the Greek tense used in Galatians 1:23, they "*kept on* hearing."

12

Peter in Palestine (33-47)

12.1. The importance of Peter

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of Peter in the rise of early Christianity.[1] Peter was the initial witness of Jesus' resurrection and messiahship to the people of Jerusalem in the immediate aftermath of Jesus' historic ministry. Then, following the initial spread of that message beyond Jerusalem by Philip and the dispersed Hellenists, Peter himself took the "word" to the peoples of the historic land of Israel—to Judea, Samaria and Galilee.

Nonetheless, Peter's remarkable achievements are somewhat obscured in our major historical source, the Acts of the Apostles. This is because Luke's horizons are filled with Peter's role in bringing the news of the Messiah to the Gentiles, which occurred when he preached to the family of the God-fearer Cornelius in Caesarea Maritima. Despite Luke's emphasis on the salvation of the Gentiles, snippets of detail in the book of Acts and passing references in Paul's letter to the Galatians make it plain that, historically, Peter laid the foundations of Christianity in the land of Israel, beginning in the holy city. This was Peter's mission in the decade from the first Easter in 33 until his flight from Jerusalem under Herod Agrippa I in 43(?).

12.2. Earliest sources: The letters of Paul

Of Jesus' disciples who continued their work in the life of the early church, the one we know most about is Peter. The book of Acts is our most extensive source of information about Peter in the first decade or so of early Christianity. Yet, historically speaking, our earliest witness to Peter is found not in the Acts but in the letters of the apostle Paul. Galatians and 1 Corinthians, which were written

not later than by the midfifties, provide our first details about this man. By that time Paul himself had been an apostle for about twenty years, and he had known Peter throughout the greater part of that period.

Although Paul's references to Peter are few, they are quite informative. Significantly, they confirm various details about Peter that we find in the Gospels and the book of Acts. This is helpful since critical scholarship frequently discounts the historical value of these texts.

12.2.1. Paul on Peter during the ministry of Jesus. Paul most often refers to Peter by the Aramaic name *Kēphas,* "Cephas" (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14; cf. Jn 1:42), which means "rock," though in one place he also uses the Greek equivalent, *Petros* (Gal 2:7, 8). This is consistent with the Gospels, which indicate that his original (Greek) name was Simon and that Jesus surnamed him *Kēphas* (Jn 1:42; Mk 3:16 and pars.). The Gospels usually refer to him by the Greek version of *Kēphas,* which is *Petros,* "Peter." The name *Peter* appears either on its own or in conjunction with *Simon;* only occasionally is the name *Simon* used alone and unqualified.

Paul's letters also reveal that Peter was married, confirming the Gospel accounts (1 Cor 9:5; Mk 1:30). The Gospels indicate that Peter, his wife and his mother-in-law were domiciled in Capernaum (Mk 1:29), though Peter left his wife at home when he became a disciple of Jesus (Mk 1:22; 10:28). Later, however, Peter's wife accompanied him in his travels outside Palestine (1 Cor 9:5).

12.2.2. Paul on Peter in the early church. Paul also confirms details about Peter after Easter that Luke mentions in both his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Paul quotes the tradition that Peter was the first witness to the risen Christ (1 Cor 15:5), confirming the narrative in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 24:34). Moreover, Paul indicates that initially Peter was the senior apostle in the Jerusalem church, something that emerges clearly in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles (Gal 1:18-19; Acts 1:13; 1:15; 2:14 and others). Further, Paul reveals that by c. 47 Peter had fallen into second place behind James the Lord's brother as leader of the Jerusalem church, an impression we also find in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 12:17; 15:13-21).

12.3. Peter in the Gospels: A sketch

Simon's name, like that of his brother Andrew, was Greek. Their city of origin was Bethsaida, located east of the Jordan near its northern entry to the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida belonged to the territory of Gaulanitis, which was a Hellenized region. Philip, another disciple bearing a Greek name, also came from Bethsaida (Jn 1:44). Since Peter originated from Bethsaida, it is likely that he was able to understand and speak the Greek language. Greek was also well known in Galilee as a second language alongside Aramaic. When Peter's ministry brought him to the coastal plain of Judea, to the Hellenized cities of Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea (Acts

9:32—10:48), he probably needed to be able to converse in Greek, particularly in the home of Cornelius the centurion.

When we meet them in the Gospels, Simon, his brother Andrew, and John and James Zebedee are partners in a fishing cooperative in Capernaum in Galilee (Lk 5:10). Zebedee senior also appears to have been part of the business, which was large enough to employ hired hands (Mk 1:20). The family owned the boat from which they engaged in net fishing. It is not known whether they sold their fish directly to local people or they "added value" to their produce by drying and pickling the fish they caught. Simon and Andrew with their wives, their children and also their parents (?) and parents-in-laws, lived in an *insulae* (a single-story clustered dwelling) in Capernaum, which they may have owned. In the socio-economic structure of the society of Galilee at the time, Simon was part of the small "middle class." He belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas the tetrarch, who lived in the new city of Tiberias a few miles down the western lakeside from Capernaum.

Prior to following Jesus of Nazareth, Simon belonged to the circle of John the Baptist's disciples (Jn 1:35-42). Evidently Simon bar-Jonah (Mt 16:17; Jn 1:42; 21:15-17) was a devout son of the covenant who was looking earnestly for the kingdom of God. When called by Jesus, he readily followed, relinquishing his work as a fisherman to become a "fisher of men" (Mk 1:17 and pars.). His name is regularly placed at the head of the list of the twelve chosen by Jesus. With James and John, Simon belonged to the circle closest to their Teacher. The Gospels usually portray him as the spokesman of the Twelve. Thus he comes to be identified in the Gospels for his recognition of Jesus as the Messiah (Mk 8:27-29 and pars.; Jn 6:67-69). However, during Jesus' presence with them on earth, he is primarily the representative and mouthpiece of the Twelve rather than their leader. After Jesus' ascension, he naturally assumes the roles of leader and spokesman in communicating Jesus' message to the people of Jerusalem.

Jesus gave Simon the surname *Peter,* "rock," for two reasons. First, in the passage of time, this rather impulsive and vacillating man would assume a rather more stable, rocklike character, though former weaknesses did reappear (Gal 2:11-14). Second, as one of the Twelve and as their confessing spokesman, he and they together historically became the foundation "rock" of the "new temple" that Jesus promised to build "in three days" after the destruction of the old temple.[2] Peter and the reconstituted twelve, as they confessed Jesus as the Christ, before and especially after his resurrection, were the "rock" on which the risen and exalted One would build his new community (Mt 16:16-18; Acts 2:14-42). Peter, as the apostle and evangelist for Judea, Samaria and Galilee, the historic land of Israel, became that "rock" of the new house of the Lord.

12.4. Peter, apostle to Israel

Paul himself provides a firsthand account of his second return visit to Jerusalem,

"after fourteen years," that is, in c. 47. (This calculation is based on the assumptions that Saul was converted in c. 34 and that Jews then counted part years as full years.) In his description of the visit, he reveals crucial information about Peter (Gal 2:7-9).

Saul traveled "with" Barnabas to Jerusalem, that is, as junior to him in their ministry association. There he sought the approval of the church leaders James, Cephas and John for the gospel he had been preaching thus far among the Gentiles. In the course of this consultation, the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church agreed that circumcision was not to be a necessary part of the gospel message to the Gentiles. Above all, they accepted Saul's proposition that the "truth of the gospel" would be compromised by any requirement that Gentiles should be circumcised. Saul's gospel to the Gentiles, free of the demands of circumcision, was acceptable to these leaders of the church in Israel.

> When they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles), . . . [they] gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. (Gal 2:7-9)

In this critical historical detail Paul reveals that "Peter had been entrusted [by God] with the gospel to the circumcised" and that God had "worked though Peter for the mission *[apostolē]* to the circumcised." We cannot easily overestimate the importance of these words about Peter. God had appointed Peter as the apostle to his circumcised people, within the land of Israel.

This is uniquely important information about earliest Christianity. Not from the Acts of the Apostles, which many discount historically for its redactional interests, but from Paul's own hand, we have evidence that Peter had been given the "apostolate" to the Jews and that he had been exercising that "mission" from its inception to the present moment, more than fourteen years later. Moreover, this is early detail, written within a year of the Jerusalem meeting according to one theory of the dating of Galatians, but no more than eight years later by another calculation.

How does the account of Peter in the early chapters of Acts stand against Paul's comment in Galatians? To be sure, it does not explain Peter's ministry to Samaritans or to the Gentile "godfearers" in Caesarea, as described in the book of Acts (Acts 8:14-25; 9:32—11:18; 15:7-11). Nonetheless, Paul's is an *incidental* reference, which certainly corresponds well enough with the Acts version of the ministry of Peter in the foundation of the community of believers in Jerusalem, at the heart of Israel. That Peter's later ministry carried him outside Jerusalem to non-Jews should not be regarded as unhistorical or contrary to Paul's terse remark.

12.5. A sketch of Peter's ministry

By means of our two sources, Paul's letter to the Galatians and various passages in the Acts, we have some idea of the activities and ministry of Peter in Palestine (33-47). In particular, we are able to pinpoint Peter's whereabouts at three moments—in 36, 43 (?) and 47. Thanks to Paul's references in the letter to the Galatians regarding the timing of his travels, we are able to locate Peter in Jerusalem c. 36 and again c. 47 (Gal 1:18-19; 2:1-10). The book of Acts records Peter's flight from Jerusalem (Acts 12:17) some time (late?) in the reign of King Herod Agrippa I (41-44), perhaps c. 43.

Moreover, passing references in Galatians and Acts give a good indication of Peter's relationship with the Jerusalem church. Clearly Peter was the leader of the church in Jerusalem from Pentecost in 33 until his flight from the city in 43 (?) (Gal 1:18; Acts 1—5, 8—11; Acts 12:17). Within that decade Peter was initially located solely in Jerusalem. After the expulsion of the Hellenists through Saul's persecution in c. 34, he also traveled widely throughout the land of Israel—Samaria, Judea and Galilee (Acts 8—11).

It is not known where Peter went during his exile from Jerusalem following Agrippa's persecution of the church in 43 (?). Perhaps his homeland in Galilee provided a place of refuge for two or three years. After his return to Jerusalem in 45 (?), it is evident that James, the brother of the Lord, was the senior leader. Peter joined John and James to form a triumvirate, with James as the most senior (Gal 2:7-9; cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13).

Thus Peter's ministry from 33 to 47 falls into three parts: (1) formation of the Christian community in Jerusalem 33-34, (2) travels in Samaria, Judea and Galilee 34-43 (?) (3) and flight from Jerusalem in 43 (?) until his return in 47 (?).

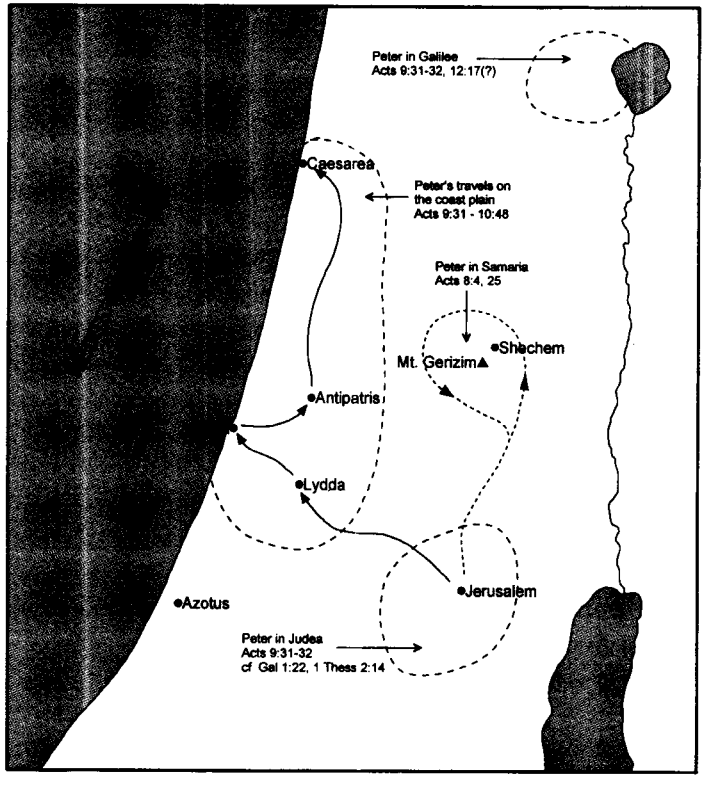
12.5.1. In Jerusalem from Pentecost to Saul's persecution (33-34). The book of Acts indicates that Peter became the leader of the earliest community from the time Jesus was "taken from their sight" (Acts 1:11) since Peter's name appears first in the list of eleven apostles that follows. Shortly after Pentecost, Peter presided when a twelfth apostle was appointed. At the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost and on subsequent public occasions, it was Peter who spoke to the assembled crowds. The temple hierarchy identified Peter for arrest, whether with John or with other apostles (Acts 4:3-22; 5:17-40; cf. Acts 5:29). When Ananias and Sapphira sinned, it was Peter who disciplined them. During Jesus' ministry Peter was not so much the leader of the Twelve as their spokesman. Following Jesus' exaltation, however, he became the spokesman *and* leader of the community, at least for as long as it remained a unified community.

Within a year or so of the first Easter, the hitherto united community effectively divided into subgroups of Hebrews and Hellenists. As already noted, the growth in the number of the believers and the logistical problems of providing alms for the constituent groups of widows caused this separation.[3] Stephen became the

leader of the Hellenists, but Peter continued to be the head of the Hebrew faction.

When Saul's persecution erupted in Jerusalem, the believers, both Hellenists and Hebrews, were driven from the holy city, "except the apostles," as the book of Acts pointedly states (Acts 8:1).[4] Various explanations have been offered for their stubbornly remaining in Jerusalem. The most probable, in our view, is that they saw Jerusalem as the center of God's end-time purposes and themselves as the foundation "Twelve" of the messianic community, the "new temple" of God. According to their understanding, the diaspora would come to them and be built upon them. Perhaps, too, even the Gentiles would come to them. Whereas the Hellenists, as represented by Stephen, foresaw the divine plan being fulfilled in the diaspora, *away* from Jerusalem and its temple,[5] the Twelve held the opposite opinion. Perhaps, then, Saul's persecution fell less heavily on them than upon the more radical Hellenists. Whatever the explanation, Peter remained in Jerusalem during Saul's onslaught upon the wider community of faith.

12.5.2. Travels in the land of Israel (c. 34-43). When the Hellenist Philip began to journey outside Jerusalem preaching the word of God, the apostles were forced



Map 15. Peter's mission to the circumcised

to reconsider their opinion that the holy city was the epicenter of God end-time plans. Peter (and John) felt compelled to follow in Philip's footsteps.

a. Samaria. Following the expulsion of believers from Jerusalem, Philip took the message of the Christ to "a city of Samaria," in all probability Shechem (Acts 8:4-5).[6] The Acts narrative seems to suggest that Hellenized Samaritans were the target of this ministry. Because these people "received the word of God" and were baptized, the apostles sent their leader, Peter, with a senior apostle, John, to the Samaritans. The book of Acts describes their ministry in "pastoral" terms; no evangelistic motive for the visit is given. To be sure, their journey to Samaria proved to be "pastoral," confirming and consolidating the work of Philip. But their mission most probably was also investigative, perhaps inspired by doubt that God's purposes could extend beyond Jerusalem to half-Jews, the Samaritans.

Doubtless to their surprise, Peter and John witnessed the coming of the Spirit to the Samaritans. This appears to have been signified by some unmistakable ecstatic manifestation, as it had been in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The unusual delay in the coming of the Spirit *after* the welcoming of the word and baptism in their case unambiguously showed the apostles that God was active outside the holy city and with people who were not the pure heritage of Israel.

Thus convinced, Peter and John proceeded to preach the gospel among the villages of the Samaritans (Acts 8:25). These were probably ethnic Samaritans. However, there is reason to believe that there were also Jewish believers living in Samaria and establishing churches. The book of Acts speaks of Jerusalem church members who were scattered in Samaria (Acts 8:1). These outflung members of the Jerusalem church took root in Samaria, where they were visited by Peter (Acts 9:31-32). Because of Saul's persecution, Christianity took root in Samaria, among Hellenized and ethnic Samaritans and also among displaced Jews from Jerusalem who had settled there (cf. Acts 15:3).

b. Judea. Saul's persecutions also scattered Hebrew believers from Jerusalem to wider Judea (Acts 8:1). Acts seems to indicate that not all returned to Jerusalem after the cessation of persecution. Instead, churches were established and grew through the efforts of these dispersed Jerusalemites (Acts 9:31).

It is also probable that, as Peter and John visited Samaria to confirm and consolidate (as well as check on!) these new churches, they traveled throughout Judea for the same purposes. While Peter would have visited the churches primarily with a pastoral intention, it is almost certain that he would also have engaged in evangelism, as he had done in Samaria (Acts 8:25).

It is, indeed, possible that John accompanied Peter in this ministry, as he had during the evangelization of the Samaritans. You will recall that John had been a partner with Peter in their fishing cooperative. The Synoptics describe John—with Peter and James Zebedee—as one of Jesus' inner circle of three who were present

with the Teacher at critical moments (Mk 1:29; 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:3 and pars.). Peter and the "Beloved Disciple," traditionally identified as John Zebedee,[7] are often coupled together in the narrative of the Fourth Gospel (Jn 13:23-24; 18:15 [?]; 20:2; 21:20). Paul brackets John with Cephas in their ministry to the circumcised (Gal 2:9), and the book of Acts connects John with Peter in the initial ministry in Jerusalem (as well as to the Samaritans). It is quite likely that John worked alongside Peter throughout his decade of ministry in Judea, Samaria and Galilee.

Scattered data in Paul's letters lead to the conclusion that messianic assemblies in Judea soon arose alongside the various communities in Jerusalem. In Galatians Paul speaks of "churches of Christ in Judea" who did not know Saul the persecutor "by sight" but who were hearing that Saul was now preaching the faith that he had sought formerly to destroy (Gal 1:22-23). When and from whom did these Jews of Judea "hear" this? Most likely this became known initially from Saul's preaching of the Son of God in Damascus soon after the Lord appeared to him en route there, that is, in c. 34. Fugitive Hellenist Jewish believers may have listened in awe as they heard the persecutor preaching that the Christ was Jesus (Acts 9:22). Thereafter, the report would have quickly come back to Jerusalem, reaching the ears of the apostles, who then passed on the report to these Judean churches.

This chronology can be confirmed by Paul's reference in 1 Thessalonians 2:14 to the Jews' persecution of "the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in *Judea.*" By this reconstruction from the primary and passing references in Pauline letters, it appears that these assemblies of the Messiah had come into existence in Judea before Saul was driven out of Jerusalem upon his first return visit in c. 36 (Acts 9:30).

c. Host to the persecutor, Saul (c. 36). Paul himself gives us critical details about Peter in Jerusalem. The persecutor, who is now himself a preacher of the faith he previously sought to destroy, returned to the holy city "after three years." That is, three years had passed since the Lord's momentus appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus. Based on the view that Saul was converted in 34, this first return visit to Jerusalem occurred in 36. At the human level, we can only guess how awkward this meeting must have been between the leader of the persecuted church and the persecutor who had been responsible for so much death and suffering.

> Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. (Gal 1:18-19; cf. Acts 9:26-29)[8]

Several observations can be made. First, it seems that Cephas was preeminent in Jerusalem among the apostles. Second, this is the first mention that James, the brother of Jesus, is now called an "apostle" and that he appears to be second only to Cephas. Whereas Cephas was prepared to minister to Samaritans, it seems likely

that even then James led a more conservative faction of Jewish believers. After Cephas fled from Agrippa in 43 (?), James became the senior "pillar" of the Jerusalem church. Third, by his word *visit,* which more precisely means "become acquainted with,"[9] Saul was deferring to the authority of Cephas, the apostolic leader in Jerusalem. We are not told the details of Saul's conversations with Cephas, though it is reasonable to think that he sought historical information about the One who had appeared to him near Damascus. Fifteen days at Cephas's side, along with opportunity to meet James, provided Saul with ample opportunity to learn about Jesus, his life, teachings, deeds and death and, in particular, his resurrection appearance to Cephas (1 Cor 15:5). Moreover, these meetings also allowed Saul to learn about Cephas and James's ministry in the early church.

d. Also Galilee. A brief reference in the Acts is of great importance regarding our understanding of Peter's ministry in the period after the cessation of Saul's persecutions. Chronologically, this comment belongs to the time after Saul's return visit to Jerusalem in c. 36, after which Peter resumed his missionary journeys outside Jerusalem.

> So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up. . . . Now as Peter went here and there among them all. (Acts 9:31, 32)

The "church" is the church of Jerusalem, which had been scattered (Acts 8:1) throughout the land of Israel—Judea, Galilee and Samaria—and which had taken root in those regions by 36, when Peter began again to travel "among them *all.*" Of great significance is the reference to Galilee, the first and only narrative reference to that region in the Acts of the Apostles. Dispersed Jerusalemites settled in Galilee and, along with those previously ministered to by Jesus, formed churches.[10] Yet, this is the only reference that tells us Peter visited Galilee in the course of his ministry travels. Peter's role was most likely primarily pastoral, though he doubtless also engaged in evangelism.

This brief notice in the book of Acts corresponds with and confirms in a striking way Paul's comment in the letter to the Galatians that "Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to . . . the mission to the circumcised" (Gal 2:7-8). Paul supplies the overview, and Acts gives the details, though incidentally. God gave Peter the gospel for and the apostolate for the circumcised, and he exercised that ministry from 33 to 43 (?) in Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea and *Galilee.*

e. The coastal plain. Approximately seven years elapsed between Saul's visit to Cephas (c. 36) and the apostle's flight from the murderous King Agrippa (43?). During this period he traveled throughout Judea, Samaria and Galilee, visiting the churches (Acts 9:32). In narrating Peter's ministry during these years, Luke is most concerned to show how the gospel reached the Gentiles at Caesarea, in the persons of the Roman centurion, Cornelius, and his family (Acts 15:7-11). Luke narrates his history in the two-volume work, Luke-Acts, from his overriding concern to

show how the salvation of God came from Israel to the Gentiles. The result is a narrative that is, historically, somewhat incomplete; Peter's evangelism throughout Judea, Samaria and Galilee was more extensive than the book of Acts, on first impression, suggests.

Thus, Peter came to Lydda on the coastal plain to minister to believers. His healing of Aeneas brought news of his presence to Joppa on the coast, where he was summoned to minister to the deceased widow (?) Tabitha/Dorcas. At Joppa he stayed with Simon the tanner, from where, in a series of supernatural events, Peter made his way to the house of the Gentile Cornelius. Although Acts makes it clear that Peter was involved in extensive ministry at Lydda and Joppa, it describes only those events that, like steppingstones, brought Peter to the household of Cornelius in Caesarea. The climax of these miraculous episodes in Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea was the ecstatically manifested coming of the Spirit upon the Gentiles in Caesarea. Peter now became convinced that Jerusalem and its temple were not God's eschatological end point; *Gentiles*, Gentiles *outside Jerusalem*, were also included in the divine plan.

From Luke's perspective, Peter's ministry to the Gentiles, climaxed by the coming of the Spirit, was the acme and effective conclusion of the first, Petrine, phase of the book of Acts. Thereafter, Peter more or less disappears from view. Luke has little further interest in him after he has brought the gospel to the Gentiles.

Historically speaking, it is probable that Philip evangelized the cities of Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea on the coastal plain ahead of Peter, as was also the case in Samaria. These are known to have been Hellenized, bilingual areas, appropriate to the cultural and linguistic background of Philip the Hellenist Jew. It may not be coincidental that Aeneas, Dorcas and Simon, believers from Lydda and Joppa, respectively, had Greek names. Certainly Caesarea was a predominantly Gentile city, where Greek was the major language, in all likelihood even the language of the Jews living there.

Peter was equipped, linguistically, for this ministry in Hellenized regions. As already noted, his original name was the Greek *Simon*, and he came from Bethsaida in Gaulanitis, a Hellenized region. To be sure, Simon Peter was no Hellenist as Stephen, Philip and the others were. Nonetheless, he could understand and speak Greek.

Back in Jerusalem, Peter found himself criticized by "the circumcision party" (Acts 11:2), evidently a faction among the believers in Jerusalem who resisted ministry to Gentiles, except perhaps on the basis of their prior circumcision. In the late forties such a group was in evidence, associated with Pharisees who had become believers (Acts 15:1, 5; cf. Gal 2:4-5; 2:12). But Acts indicates that such a group was in existence by the late thirties. Whereas Peter (and John?) was able to offer a circumcision-free gospel, initially for Samaritans and now also for Gentiles, "the

circumcision party" was opposed to the idea. It is likely that they were identified with James, the brother of the Lord, whose emerging prominence could be noticed at Saul's visit to Jerusalem in c. 36. James, however, did not reciprocally identify with them. His own position lay somewhere between "the circumcision party," who required circumcision of Gentiles, and Peter, who demanded no circumcision. James was content to require some dietary concessions and moral obligations from the Gentile converts, for the sake of fraternal relations with the Jews (Acts 15:19-21).

12.5.3. Peter, after his flight from Jerusalem (c. 43-47). During King Herod Agrippa's persecution of the church 43 (?), Peter was forced to flee from Jerusalem until the death of the king in 44. During his absence, however, James emerged as leader of the church in Jerusalem. When Peter returned to the city, he became the second "pillar" in the church.

a. Peter's flight from Herod Agrippa I (c. 43 [?]). After suffering Roman rule in Judea from 6 to 41, the Jews were again granted an indigenous client king. Herod Agrippa was grandson of Herod the king, but through that king's union with the Hasmonaean Mariamne.[11] Herod had killed both Mariamne and her son Aristobulus, Agrippa's father. Agrippa's mother, Berenice, fearing for her children, took them to Rome, where they were brought up as Gentiles. Agrippa's boyhood friends included Caligula and Claudius, who were destined to become emperors of Rome. Caligula appointed Agrippa king of Gaulanitis in 37 and of Galilee in 39. At the time of Caligula's assassination, Agrippa, who was then in Rome, persuaded Claudius to accept the imperial purple.[12] Upon his accession in 41, Claudius added Judea to Agrippa's kingdom.[13]

Claudius may not have rewarded Agrippa merely to repay a favor to a friend. When Tiberius died in 37, the Jews worldwide lost an emperor who was broadly benign toward them. Under Caligula (37-41), however, that situation was dramatically reversed. Through Caligula's policies and actions, Israel had been brought to the brink of war with Rome.[14] Caligula had permitted rampant anti-Semitism in Alexandria, where there was a large Jewish community, leading to serious assaults of people and property. Further, Caligula sought to punish the people of Israel for his perception of their disrespect for him by proposing the desecration of the holy temple in Jerusalem. He ordered the construction of a statue of himself, to be erected in the holy of holies. Had this plan come to pass, a revolt against Rome would have ensued in Israel, with the possibility of worldwide conflict between the millions of Jews in the diaspora in an uprising against the Roman empire. Various circumstances, especially Agrippa's intercessions with Caligula, deflected his action against the temple. From Claudius's perspective Agrippa was a suitable client king over this volatile people, especially in the light of the explosive circumstances of the times.

Thus Peter's baptism of *Gentiles* in Caesarea in the late thirties (?) coincided

with Caligula's provocation of the Jews in Alexandria and Palestine. This was a crisis of fierce religious nationalism unparalleled since Antiochus's assault on Judaism two centuries earlier, which led to the Maccabean revolt.[15] The church in Jerusalem and its leaders were easily seen as pro-Gentile and therefore disloyal to the nation and her covenant Lord. Peter's acceptance of Samaritans and Gentiles as members of the people of God could be seen in some ways as comparable to Caligula's threats against the holy sanctuary of the Lord.

Josephus gives an extensive account of Agrippa's life before his first dramatic acquisition of power in 37.[16] According to Josephus, Agrippa's years spent in the east from 23 to 37 produced a disastrous sequence of misadventures. Agrippa emerges from the records as impulsive, a wastrel and a rogue.[17] Although probably a Gentile at heart,[18] Agrippa effectively passed himself off as an observant Jew.

> He loved to live continually in Jerusalem, and was exactly careful in the observance of the laws of his country. He therefore kept himself entirely pure: nor did any day pass over his head without its appointed sacrifice.[19]

Consistent with his (newfound?) love of his nation and her religion, Agrippa opportunistically and ostentatiously persecuted a minority group who were easily seen as traitors to the nation's holy cause. Thus the king "laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church," including James Zebedee, who was executed. Peter, too, was arrested: "When he saw that it pleased the Jews, [Agrippa] proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of unleavened bread" (Acts 12:2).

Peter, however, escaped and went to the house of Mary, mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12-17). It was a house large enough to accommodate those who met there to pray for Peter, and it was wealthy enough to support a maid. As suggested earlier, this may have been the house in which the "upper room" was located, which became the center of meeting for the Galilean believers who had migrated to Jerusalem.[20]

Peter was not able to remain there. After recounting his miraculous release to those present and requesting that this account be passed on to "James and to the brethren," he departed (Acts 12:17). These "brethren" we take to be the brothers of the Lord, like James, who were by now a separate faction, not meeting with those who gathered at the house of Mary. The brief reference in the book of Acts suggests that by the early forties the wider community of faith in Jerusalem were divided into several subgroups.

Peter then fled from Jerusalem to "another place." But to which place? It cannot have been too far removed;[21] Peter had returned to Jerusalem by c. 47 (Gal 2:7-9). Caesarea has been suggested, in view of later traditions associating that city with Peter. In our view, however, Galilee is a more likely place of refuge. Galilee was a familiar environment. Family and friends (probably) still lived there, and work

would have been available for a fisherman.

b. Peter's return to Jerusalem (c. 45-47). Peter probably stayed away from Jerusalem until it was safe to return. The death of Agrippa in 44, powerfully described by both Josephus[22] and Luke (Acts 12:20-23), provided just that opportunity to come back to the holy city.

A window into the Jerusalem church and Peter's new place in its structures is afforded by Paul's account of his second visit to Jerusalem. This was "after fourteen years," which we take to mean fourteen years after his encounter with the Lord on the Damascus road in c. 34, making the date of this journey c. 47. Paul made this journey from Antioch in Syria, led by Barnabas and accompanied by Titus. A private meeting was held with those "of repute," the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church, James, Peter and John (Gal 2:2, 6, 9). Present also were "false brethren" (Gal 2:4), probably men from "the circumcision party" noted above. They insisted that Titus, a Gentile, submit to circumcision. In this they were opposed by Paul and unsupported by James, Cephas and John. Essentially, the delegates from Antioch and the Jerusalem "pillars" were agreed that the circumcision-free gospel as preached by Paul was appropriate for the Gentiles.

> Those . . . who were of repute added nothing to me; but on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles), and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. (Gal 2:6-9)

Several things should be noted. First, the Jerusalem church now had two distinct factions, one led by James, the other by Cephas with John. (Peter and John are regularly bracketed together [Acts 3:1, 3, 4, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14];[23] they probably did not represent separate factions.) Whereas James is identified with conservative Judaism, Peter (and John?) was prepared to preach to the Gentiles, without the requirements of circumcision.

Second, James now had the preeminence in the Jerusalem hierarchy; Peter has lost that position, probably because he had been forced to flee from the city during Agrippa's persecutions. At the time of Saul's second visit c. 47, James was the first among three pillars. By the time of the Jerusalem Council c. 49, James had become the president of the council, sole leader of the church. He remained in that position until his martyrdom in 62.

Third, a formal agreement was struck that the ministry of Barnabas and Paul was to "go" to the Gentiles and the ministry of James, Cephas and John was "to" the circumcised. There is no verb *go* in Paul's original words; the respective missions

were to be ethnic rather than geographic. Nonetheless, *going* "to" those ethnicities is implied in the agreement.

The consequences of this momentus agreement for Paul in his various missionary journeys are well documented in the book of Acts and in his own letters. We have no certain knowledge that James traveled outside Jerusalem,[24] though it is probable that he now came to exercise a primacy over the Aramaic-speaking churches in Judea, Samaria and Galilee. Peter and (almost certainly) John did travel outside the land of Israel. Their ministry was directed toward Jews of the diaspora; they followed in the footsteps first taken by the scattered Hellenists. In time, the ministries of Peter and John would also take them to the Gentiles.

Peter, who had ministered to Samaritans and baptized Gentiles in Caesarea, was no longer the clear leader in Jerusalem or in Judea. His work in Jerusalem and Judea, which had begun in 33, was completed c. 47. He must soon move to other places, farther afield.

12.6. Summary

Simon surnamed Cephas/Peter/"rock" was confessor to Jesus' messiahship on behalf of the Twelve; he became their spokesman and leader after the risen Lord was "removed from their sight" at his ascension. Although inclined to remain in Jerusalem during the believers' flight from the city during Saul's onslaught, he did travel to Samaria, witnessing the Spirit's coming to those people. Peter was apostle and evangelist of the land of Israel-Judea, Samaria and Galilee. The churches of Judea, which are specifically noted in the letters of Paul, were almost certainly in existence by 36; one can reasonably infer that churches existed in Samaria and Galilee by the same time. Thus, by his witness to the risen Christ, Peter became—historically—the "rock" on which the church of Jesus Christ would be built. This is a matter of record.

It appears that Peter came to accept Stephen's worldview, that the "new temple" of God would not be located in the holy city, but would result from the ingathering of believers from *outside* as well as inside Jerusalem. Peter went beyond Stephen and the Hellenists. He was the first to bring the message of the Christ to Gentiles (Acts 15:7).

At the same time, Peter's openness to ministry to Samaritans and Gentiles brought him into danger from an opportunistic King Herod Agrippa, who persecuted the church in Jerusalem in the wake of the massive unrest following Caligula's anti-Semitism in 37-41. Peter's "liberalism" also led to a decline in local support from Jewish believers in Jerusalem, while actually adding to the stature of the more conservative James. Peter's descent effected James's ascent.

The book of Acts devotes much of it first dozen chapters to Peter's words and works. While the narrative recounts historical material related to Peter, the reader senses that Luke is particularly interested in Peter because of his role as the instrument of salvation for the first Gentiles. Once the story reaches that critical

milestone, however, Luke says little more about Peter. He turns his attention to Paul and his journeys as he brings the word to the uncircumcised, and he traces Paul's career until his arrival in the world center of the Gentiles, Rome.

Peter himself remains somewhat undefined, humanly speaking. We see little of his personal character during these years. He wrote no surviving letter contemporary with these years that would give us any idea of his personal attitude and feelings. Yet his great achievement emerges with careful reading of the texts, fragmentary as they are. In the decade 33-43 (?) especially, Simon surnamed Cephas/Peter bore witness to the Christ in Jerusalem and established the faith of Jesus the Christ in the land of Israel, in Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea and Galilee.

Further reading

Barnett, Paul W. "Agrippa the Elder." In *God Who Is Rich in Mercy,* pp. 123-37. Edited by Peter T. O'Brien and David G. Peterson. Sydney: Lancer, 1986.

Barrett, Anthony A. *Caligula: The Corruption of Power,* pp. 182-91. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989.

Donfried, Karl P. "Peter." *ABD,* 5:251-63.

Schwartz, Daniel R. *Agrippa I: The Last King of Judea.* Tübingen: Mohr, 1990.

Thiede, Carsten P. *Simon Peter.* Exeter: Paternoster, 1986.

Notes

[1]F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), passes over Peter's contribution in these early years with little comment.
[2]See §8.6.2 and 8.9. *Theologically* Jesus Christ is the foundation of the new temple; only in a *historical* sense is Peter/the Twelve that "rock" (cf. 1 Cor 3:11).
[3]See §10.6; 11.1-2.
[4]See §11.5-6.
[5]See §11.3-4.
[6]See F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), p. 216.
[7]This disciple is one of the seven whom Jesus met at the Sea of Galilee after the resurrection (Jn 21:2). We may eliminate Simon Peter, unbelieving Thomas and cynical Nathaniel, leaving two unnamed disciples and the sons of Zebedee. Given Jesus' intimacy with this disciple (Jn 13:23, 25; 19:26) and the assertion that he is the author of this Gospel (Jn 21:24), it is most likely John Zebedee.
[8]There are difficulties reconciling these two accounts of Saul's visit to Jerusalem; see Martin Hengel and Anna Marie Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM Press, 1997), pp. 132-50.
[9]In a strict classical understanding, the verb *historelsai* meant "to investigate, inquire of." See Friedrich Büschel, *TDNT,* 3:391-96. However, in Paul's day it also carried the nuance "to become acquainted with [someone]," as in Josephus, *J.W.* 6.81.
[10]See §17.2.4.
[11]See §4.2.2..
[12]Josephus *Ant.* 19.238; cf. *J.W.* 2.204-14.
[13]Josephus *Ant.* 19.274; cf. *J.W.* 2.214-16.
[14]See Anthony A. Barrett, *Caligula: The Corruption of Power* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 182-91.
[15]See §3.4-5.
[16]Josephus *Ant.* 18.129—20.1.
[17]See Paul W. Barnett, "Agrippa the Elder," in *God Who Is Rich in Mercy,* ed. Peter T. O'Brien and David G. Peterson (Sydney: Lancer, 1986), pp. 123-37.
[18]Josephus *Ant.* 19.335-37.
[19]Ibid., 19.331.
[20]See §10.3.
[21]See §17.2.4.
[22]Josephus *Ant.* 19.346-50.
[23]See §15.1.
[24]It is by no means certain that "brothers of the Lord" who were "accompanied by a wife" actually traveled to Corinth as it states in 1 Corinthians 9:5. Paul may have been referring to their known travels in Palestine.

13

The Apostolate of Saul in the "Unknown Years" (c. 34-47)

13.1. Anomaly in Acts

There is a striking anomaly in the Acts of the Apostles in regard to the mission of the apostle Paul. The book of Acts devotes a mere sixteen verses to the first fourteen years of Paul's ministry (Acts 9:19-30; 11:25-26, 30; 12:25),[1] but the next ten years are narrated in sixteen chapters! What is the explanation for this uneven allocation of narrative space?

It cannot be accounted for by the author's lack of access to source material; Luke was a traveling companion of the apostle with as much opportunity to know about the early period as the late period. The answer appears to be that the author of Acts regards Paul's ministry westward to the Gentiles and toward Rome and away from Israel as having special importance. As we read the few verses scattered across three chapters covering the earlier, "unknown years,"[2] we easily form the impression that Saul, as he was still called, was not preaching to Gentiles in any deliberate way. Acts appears to convey the idea that Paul only really began his ministry to the Gentiles in Acts 13, that is, in c. 47.

This, however, is different from Paul's own account of his mission to the Gentiles, which he claims to have pursued from the time of his conversion. In his letter to the Galatians, he declares that "[God] was pleased to reveal his Son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Gal 1:16). Galatians implies that Paul began that ministry *immediately*. When he came for his second visit to Jerusalem (c. 47) the leaders of the church, James, Cephas and John, recognized Paul's God-given apostolate to the Gentiles: "They saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised (for . . . [God] worked through me . . . for

[the apostolate] for the Gentiles" (Gal 2:7-8). The drift of Paul's argument in Galatians is clear. He had exercised an apostolate to the Gentiles, preaching a circumcision-free gospel to them, from the time of his conversion, and the Jerusalem apostles recognized it.

Moreover, in another passage Paul reveals where the epicenter of his ministry was located from his perspective.

> The grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles . . . from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached th gospel of Christ. (Rom 15:15-16, 19)

By "Jerusalem" Paul probably included Damascus and "Arabia" in his thinking. Like Luke, Paul also saw the Roman west as his ultimate destination. One day Paul may have been hoping to write, "from Jerusalem and as far round as *Spain*." But unlike Luke, for whom the effective starting point for the westward movement was Antioch, Paul saw Jerusalem as that point of departure.[3]

How then are we able to account for the rather different perspectives of Saul's ministry found in the Acts of the Apostles as noted above? Here we offer two suggestions. The first is that the author of Acts was convinced that Paul's mission to the Gentiles only really began when he moved for the first time to the west, in the direction of the world center of the Gentiles, Rome. This emerges in his narrative near the beginning of the second part of Acts when the Jews of the synagogue in the Roman city of Antioch of Pisidia reject the message of Paul and Barnabas. Only then do they say, "we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). When Paul finally arrives in Rome, the author makes it clear that the future lay with the Gentiles and not the Jews (Acts 28:25-28).[4] In short, the book of Acts identifies Paul's true destiny in the mission to take the word of God to the Gentile peoples of the Gentile world to the west. Consequently, the author allocates greater space to tell this story and abbreviates the story of Saul's many years in Arabia, Damascus, Syria and Cilicia and Antioch in Syria.

A second and related reason may be found in the proceedings of that meeting in Jerusalem c. 47 where the "pillar" apostles of the Jerusalem gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that "[they] should go to the Gentiles" (Gal 2:9). Did a new sense of urgency and direction seize Saul at that time? Soon afterwards, after fasting, the prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch "released" Barnabas and Saul for their missionary journey westward. Did the meeting in Jerusalem prove to be a far more significant catalyst than Paul's brief account might suggest?

It is likely that the briefer narratives for Saul's first fourteen years and the disproportionately longer narratives for the succeeding ten years are no accident; the lesser detail for the one and greater detail for the other may reflect Luke's own view that God's future lay not with Israel but in the west, with the Gentiles. This

theological understanding was not an artificial construct. It was forged from the realities of Paul's own experience in ministry, as observed, reflected upon and finally narrated by the author of the book of Acts. Israel rejected Paul and his message, but the Gentiles welcomed him.

Nonetheless, it is important not to minimize Saul's activities during the "unknown years." This was a significant expanse of time and, as the next section will indicate, his travels were extensive, with concentrated periods of ministry in Damascus, Arabia, Syria-Cilicia and Antioch in Syria. Here Paul's list of sufferings in 2 Corinthians provides a window through which we may glimpse something of Saul's early years of ministry. His "five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one" (2 Cor 11:24) finds no echo in the book of Acts or in his own letters. These synagogue beatings, or some of them, most probably occurred within the "years of silence" of the book of Acts. They arose in reaction to his preaching of the Messiah Jesus in the synagogues; the former persecutor is now the persecuted. His escape from Damascus "down" the wall when the gates of Damascus were guarded by Aretas's ethnarch precedes his experience when he was caught "up" to Paradise (2 Cor 11:32-33; 12:3). Both events belong to the earlier period of his ministry, the first in Damascus and the other apparently in his native Cilicia.

These references to beatings and spiritual rapture are given by Paul as evidence of his genuineness as a minister of the crucified One. In 2 Corinthians, his most powerful personal apologia, it is noteworthy that he includes details from a period that the book of Acts passes over. But clearly it was important to Paul because it was no less part of his apostolate. This is precisely what he affirms in his account of the meeting with James, Cephas and John in c. 47 in respect to his ministry during the fourteen years following his conversion.

13.2. Dovetailing the details for the unknown years

Surprisingly, Paul's own letters, which are not narratives, contain more geographic details and time notes for this period than the self-consciously historical Acts of the Apostles. The first two chapters of Galatians review fourteen years of Paul's life, beginning with his persecutions through to his second return visit to Jerusalem. Galatians mentions in sequence the following locations: Damascus, Arabia, Damascus, Jerusalem, Syria and Cilicia and Jerusalem. In 2 Corinthians he describes his ignominious escape from Damascus (2 Cor 11:32-33). The details of Paul's earlier period of ministry are confined to these two letters.

When we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, we are able to place the geographic references in parallel with the sequence in Paul's letters (see table 9). Comparison of the two source blocks reveals the following omissions and discrepancies: (1) Acts makes no reference to Saul's ministry in Arabia. (2) Quite serious is the discrepancy between the two accounts of his earlier visit to Jerusalem. According

Paul's Sequence	Acts Sequence
"I persecuted the church of God"	Saul ravaged the church [in Jerusalem]
"[God] revealed his Son in me"	A light from heaven . . . a voice
Damascus	Damascus
Arabia	
Damascus	
Jerusalem	Jerusalem
Syria-Cilicia	Tarsus
[Antioch]	Antioch
Jerusalem	Jerusalem

Table 9. The "unknown years" in Acts and Paul's letters

to Paul, he saw "none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother" (Gal 1:18-19), whereas Acts states that "Barnabas . . . brought him to [all] the apostles" (Acts 9:27). Nonetheless, it is possible to account for the contradiction. Galatians emphasizes Paul's private meetings, and Acts emphasizes public meetings with the Jerusalem apostles.[5] (3) Paul's writing in Galatians 2:1 does not indicate specifically that he and Barnabas came to Jerusalem from Antioch, though this is a perfectly reasonable assumption. (4) There is debate whether Paul's second return visit to the holy city referred to in Galatians 2:1-10 corresponds with the Acts account when Barnabas and Saul brought famine relief from Antioch or with the later narrative of the meeting of the Jerusalem Council (Gal 2:1; cf. Acts 11:27-30; 15:1-6).

Despite these awkward conjunctions, there is remarkable agreement in the overall sequence in the two sources, beginning with Saul's persecution of the church through his many years of ministry punctuated by meetings with leaders of the mother church. Paul's time notes, "then after three years" (Gal 1:18), "then after fourteen years" (Gal 2:1) and his pin-pointed "at Damascus, the governor under King Aretas" (2 Cor 11:32) provide us with an impressive time frame in which to locate the events so briefly described or referred to. By contrast, Acts tells us relatively little about the passage of time, confining its references to Barnabas and Saul's "whole year" ministering in Antioch and to the famine "in the days of Claudius" (Acts 11:26, 28).

13.3. Ministry in the "unknown years"

We piece together scraps of incidental geographical details with some time notes in order to have some idea of Saul's ministry in the next fourteen years, in Damascus, in Arabia, in Tarsus and in Antioch. These were old settlements, some going back thousands of years. Each of them, however, had been Hellenized and, subsequently, in one way or another Romanized. Culturally they were Greek and, with the exception of "Arabia" (= Nabataea), which was only peripherally influenced by Roman, each place was now within the orbit of the Roman provincial system.

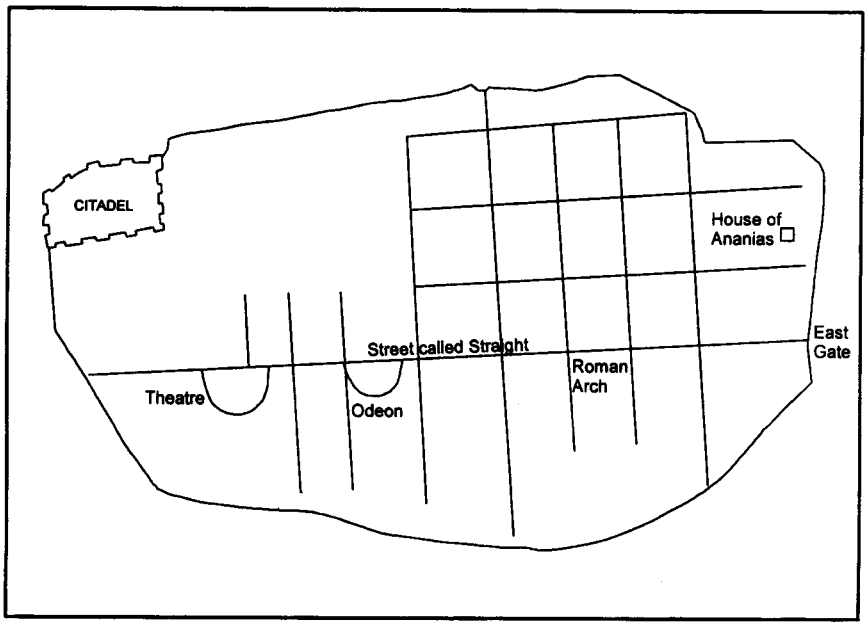
To our knowledge Saul was the pioneer minister in "Arabia" and Tarsus. There

were already believers in Damascus and Antioch when he arrived in those places. However, we know of no church at this time among the Nabataeans or in Damascus. Only in Tarsus/Syria-Cilicia did Paul establish churches during these years of obscurity (Acts 15:23; 16:4). The church in Antioch was established by dispersed Hellenists.

Saul appears to have worked alone in these regions, unlike in his later journeys when he was always associated with colleagues. No letter written by Saul survives these years, presumably because he did not develop this manner of "distance" ministry until later. We assume that he supported himself in his trade as tent-maker/leatherworker during these lonely years.

13.3.1. Damascus (c. 34). Saul's onslaught on the church in Jerusalem scattered believers throughout the land of Israel (Judea, Samaria and Galilee) and also beyond her borders. Some made their way to Damascus, one the cities close to the borders of Israel.

Damascus was one of the major "gates" to the Arabian desert. It was located on the fringe between the fertile belt and the desert. An ancient settlement, Damascus passed among many hands, including those of the Hittites, the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Persians. Damascus fell to the Macedonians following Alexander's campaigns, and the city was controlled first by the Ptolemies and then by the Seleucids. Damascus was refounded along Hellenistic lines, on a square grid according to the planning theories of Hippodamus of Miletus. The city had well-established Greek institutions of senate house, gymnasia, law courts and philosophic schools.



Map 16. Damascus

Under the Roman settlement of the east following Pompey's conquests in 66 B.C. Damascus became an autonomous city state, one of the cities of the league known as the Decapolis ("ten cities"). One of her famous sons was Nicolaus of Damascus, who became court historian of Herod the Great. Josephus depended heavily on this now-lost history for his account of Herod's career. After the death of Herod, Nicolaus joined the court of Augustus himself.

Damascus had a large Jewish population, mainly Greek-speaking, who were distributed among a number of synagogues.[6] As a Greek city just beyond the borders of Israel and only 150 miles from Jerusalem, Damascus was a logical place to which Hellenist Jewish believers might flee.

Saul was traveling to Damascus to capture and bring back to Jerusalem believers who had been displaced by his persecutions; it does not appear that he sought to arrest indigenous Damascene disciples (see Acts 22:5; 26:11-12).[7] He was armed with letters from the high priest in Jerusalem that were probably directed to the leaders of the synagogue communities, perhaps including an official Josephus refers to elsewhere as "chief magistrate of the Jews."[8] It is probable that these leaders had prior warning of Saul's mission to root out the seeds of the schismatic messianic sect that had been scattered from Jerusalem.

However, Saul did not arrive in Damascus as he had left Jerusalem. Humbled, the blinded persecutor was led into the city to the house of one Judas on the street called Straight (due to the Hippodamian[9] grid plan). The street called Straight is still a main thoroughfare in Damascus.[10] There he was found by a disciple named Ananias, "a devout man according to the law" who was highly regarded within the Jewish community in Damascus (Acts 22:12). Ananias himself was not one of the fugitives; he had only heard of the persecutions of Saul in Jerusalem (Acts 9:13-14). Upon regaining his sight it appears that Saul accompanied Ananias to a meeting of other disciples in Damascus, where he was baptized (Acts 22:16).

It is likely that Saul was instructed in the teachings of the faith of Jesus beforehand. He had seen the Lord and heard his voice (1 Cor 9:1; Acts 9:4; 22:14). That was an overpowering experience that reshaped Saul's life and set him in a diametrically different direction, but he must also be catechized prior to baptism. Perhaps Paul was reflecting on his own baptism when he wrote later: "all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus . . . have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed" (Rom 6:3, 17). Catechesis and baptism were connected.

This bears on the critical question of the place and the time Saul "received" the "traditions" he was later to "deliver" to the churches brought into existence through his preaching (1 Cor 11:2; 15:3). Paul reminded the Corinthians of the message of Christ's death for sin, his burial, his resurrection on the third day and his appearances to various witnesses. This body of teaching he "received," he affirms, "as of first importance" (1 Cor 15:3). But these latter words

(en prōtois) could equally be understood as "at first," that is, in Damascus. By whom and so early, historically, could Saul have been taught these apostolic (1 Cor 15:11) beliefs? Since there were disciples in Damascus who had fled from the Jerusalem church where the earliest creeds and liturgies were formulated, there is no problem explaining how Saul came to learn these doctrines. The fugitive disciples "received" the catechesis from the apostles in Jerusalem, and these disciples in turn "delivered" them to Saul in Damascus.

Saul went immediately to the synagogues of Damascus, not to extradite runaway believers but to preach "the Son of God" and to argue that "Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 9:20, 22). Something dramatic had happened between Jerusalem and Damascus. We can only imagine the shock and surprise of the synagogue leadership, on one hand, and of the fugitive believers, on the other, when they heard him preach. But was he genuine? Perhaps this was a clever ploy to entrap the fugitives. The hostile reception from the Jewish community soon demonstrated his sincerity. It is likely that some of his synagogue beatings, referred to above,[11] fell upon Paul in Damascus. Almost immediately he must leave Damascus on pain of death.

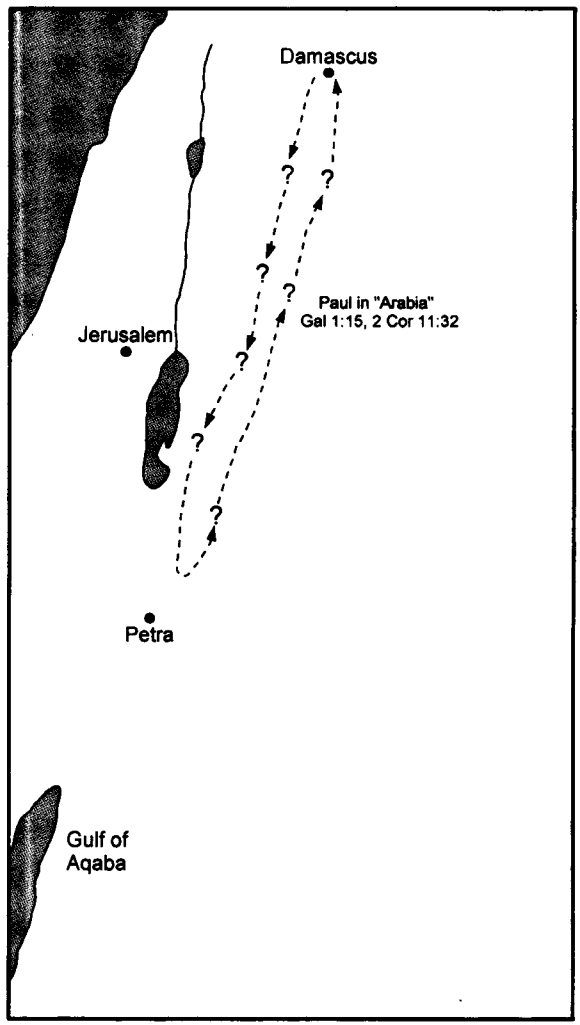
What he preached must have borne a close similarity to what he was taught at the time of his baptism. The fugitive believers from Jerusalem soon sent back to Jerusalem the astonishing message that "[Saul] is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy" (Gal 1:23).

Historically, this is a momentous occasion. It was at Damascus that the gospel was first proclaimed outside the land of Israel, and not by one of the Twelve, or even by one of the Seven, but by the converted persecutor, Saul the Pharisee.

Acts gives the clear impression that Saul then traveled to Jerusalem. His own letters indicate that he "went away into Arabia," from which he was to return later to Damascus (Gal 1:17; cf. 2 Cor 11:32-33).

13.3.2. "Away into Arabia." By "Arabia" (Gal 1:17), Paul means the desert kingdom of Nabataea on the Arabian plateau east of Peraea. In the previous century the former nomads of this region had become a sedentary nation. Based on their learned ability to dam, channel and even mine water, they established a series of settlements, notably their capital, the rock-city Petra, to the south. The Nabataeans devised ingenious agricultural methods involving terracing and deep cultivation using iron, rather than wooden, ploughs. Although they continued to herd sheep and goats, the Nabataean economy came to depend mainly on trading with the passing desert caravans. Along with the people of Israel and the Idumaeans, the Nabataeans were deeply influenced by Hellenism. Their interest in Hellenistic culture and customs may be seen in the remains of their architecure, especially at Petra. The Nabataeans retained their native tongue, which, however, they began to transcribe in Greek script. Greek language was also used among the Nabataeans. Though not yet a province, Nabataea was within the sphere of Roman influence.

The Nabataeans had dynastic connections with the Idumaean Herods. Herod's



Map 17. Arabia

mother, Cypros, was from an aristocratic Nabataean family in Petra. Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C., who was son of Herod the King, had married the daughter of Aretas IV, Nabataea's most famous king (9 B.C.-A.D. 40). By this means Herod Antipas secured a friendly neighbor on his eastern frontier. This situation, however, changed dramatically in the middle twenties when the Nabataean princess fled back to Petra in the face of Antipas's interest in Herodias, whom he subsequently married. Antipas now faced an implacable enemy who bided his time to inflict vengeance for humiliating the royal house of the Nabataeans. Simmering hostility erupted into clashes between 34 and 36,[12] and

these erupted into open war in 37 when the Nabataeans decimated the army of the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.

The extent of Saul's activities in "Arabia" is not known, though they probably occupied most of the time between his conversion and brief foray into the synagogues of Damascus in c. 34 and his brief return visit prior to his journey back to Jerusalem c. 36. To whom did Saul preach in Nabataea c. 34-36? Do his words "he went away into Arabia" imply that he traveled as far south of Damascus as Petra?

The only light thrown on this obscure period in his life is Paul's own comment that Aretas, king of the Nabataeans, sought to seize him when he returned to Damascus (2 Cor 11:32-33). This suggests that his missionary activities in Nabataea had come adversely to the attention of the king. While we may reasonably assume that, as in Damascus, Saul preached to Jews in the Nabataean synagogues (which were probably Greek-speaking[13]), Aretas's hostility toward him implies that he had also evangelized indigenous Nabataeans.

Thus although the Acts of the Apostles passes by this ministry in complete silence, it may be that, historically, Saul's initial preaching to Gentiles occurred at this time. That Paul's statement "[God] was pleased to reveal his Son in me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles" is followed immediately by "I went away into Arabia" supports this suggestion (Gal 1:16-17). The book of Acts ignores the Nabataean ministry because it was not a steppingstone to the apostle's great westward movement toward Rome, world capital of the Gentiles. Antioch in Syria will prove to be such a steppingstone, but "Arabia" and his own native "Syria and Cilicia" are not. So the Acts omits the first from the narrative and says next to nothing about the second.

The likely years of Saul's visit to Nabataea (c. 34-36), with rising hostility between Nabataeans and Jews over Antipas's treatment of the Nabataean princess, were probably difficult for a Jew like Paul traveling in that kingdom. The darkening war clouds may have shortened Saul's ministry in "Arabia." However, he did not return to the safety of Israel. Rather, he "returned to Damascus" (Gal 1:17), in spite of the danger that awaited him (Acts 9:23; 2 Cor 11:32-33).

13.3.3. Return to and flight from Damascus. There were Jewish disciples in the city, indigenous Damascenes like Ananias as well as fugitive Hellenist Jewish Christians from Jerusalem. These may have continued as members of the synagogues, as well as meeting separately with fellow believers. We may reasonably conjecture that Paul returned to Damascus to encourage the disciples in Damascus. Nonetheless, we have no knowledge of a discrete Christian assembly in Damascus at that time.

However, it was not possible to stay long in Damascus, as Paul himself explains.

> At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands. (2 Cor 11:32-33)

In the previous century until the end of the reign of Aretas III (c. 85-72 B.C.) Damascus had been part of the Nabataean kingdom, but from Pompey's coming in 63 B.C. Damascus appears to have been an independent city-state. This is obliquely confirmed by Paul's words in Galatians 1:17, "I returned [from Arabia] *to* Damascus" and to his references, as above, to "the *city* of the Damascenes," implying a city-state. How, then, do we explain an ethnarch/governor of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans, in a city that was not part of his realm? At that time it was not uncommon for concentrations of nationals domiciled in cities foreign to them to have an ethnarch appointed as a leader of their community, as for example over the large Jewish community in Alexandria.[14] According to Strabo, an ethnarch "governs the nation, and distributes justice to them and takes care of their contracts and of laws pertaining to them, as if he were the ruler of a free republic."[15] Aretas' "ethnarch" in Damascus may have had jurisdiction over Nabataeans within the city.

Since Paul had been "away in Arabia," it is reasonable to suppose that the orders to seize him came from Aretas, king of the Nabataeans. To that end the gates of the city were effectively guarded, allowing no passage through them. Paul climbed through a window in the exterior of the city wall to be lowered in a flexible basket usually used for hauling up merchandise. The passive "lowered" points to fellow believers ("his disciples" [Acts 9:25]) who helped Paul escape from the city.

The book of Acts states that it was the Jews of Damascus who guarded the city gates in order to apprehend Saul, but there is no necessary contradiction. Based on earlier hostility to Saul from the synagogues, it is by no means unlikely that the Nabataeans and the Jews found a community of interest in the capture of this messianic agitator.

13.3.4. Saul's first return visit to Jerusalem. A return visit to Jerusalem was not an urgent priority. There were at least two earlier opportunities to come back to Jerusalem, his city of adoption. Had he wished to, Saul could have returned either after his first withdrawal from Damascus or when he decided to leave Nabataea. We are fortunate to have two independent accounts although, unfortunately, they do not entirely agree.

> Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. (Gal 1:18-19)

> And when he had come to Jerusalem he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and [Saul] declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him. (Acts 9:26-27)

Both accounts agree that on leaving Damascus he came to Jerusalem where he met apostles. The difficulty is that Acts points to a meeting with the apostles,

implying *all* the apostles, whereas Paul himself declares on oath that he saw only Cephas and James.

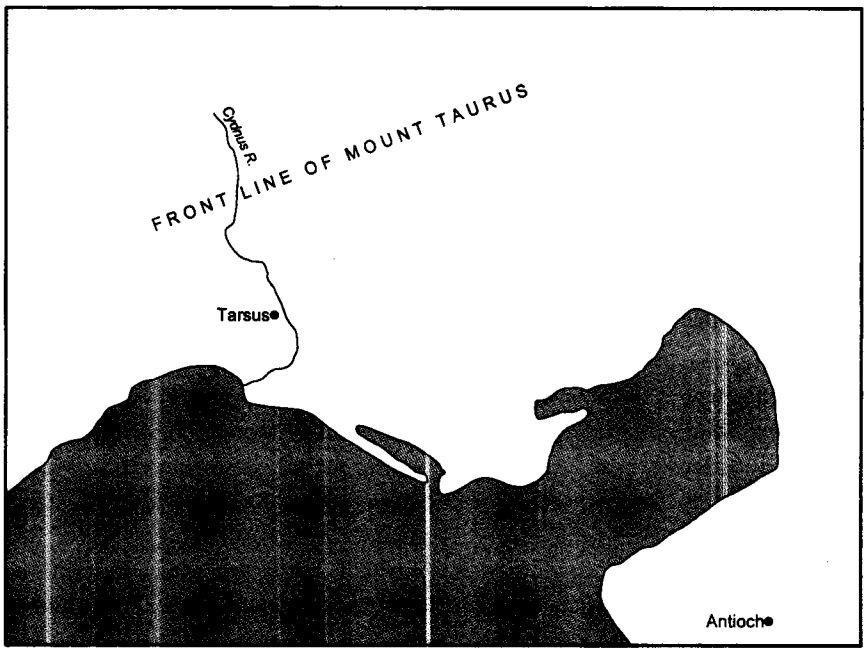
Saul is unlikely to have simply presented himself to the Christian community in Jerusalem whom he had recently been attacking, some of whose members he had killed. More probably he slipped quietly into Jerusalem, perhaps staying at first with relatives there. (We know of a nephew who later saved his life in Jerusalem [Acts 22:16-22].) Only then is it likely that the persecutor would have cautiously approached the believers in the holy city and been taken by Barnabas to tell the apostles of his encounter with the Lord on the way to Damascus.

Perhaps it was subsequent to such a meeting that he was invited to stay with Cephas, who may have introduced him to James. The discrepancy between the two passages would be mollified if it were allowed that the meeting with these apostles was in *private* and, therefore, of a different order from his meeting with the other apostles. After all, Cephas was leader of the Jerusalem church, and James may have been an emerging leader in a conservative subgroup within the wider community.

Paul's meeting with Cephas in c. 36 provided the former persecutor with an opportunity to learn about the historical Jesus, his words and works. Paul's letters, written in the late 40s, are marked by references to "the word of the Lord [Jesus]" and to allusions to the character and teachings of Jesus.[16] From whom did Paul learn these things, except from Peter in Jerusalem, where these teachings were being collected? We have already noted that he received the formal baptismal catechesis at Damascus from those who were fugitives from Jerusalem. Paul himself was to "deliver" to others the liturgical and credal teaching he had "received" at that time. But it was probably in Jerusalem, from the lips of Peter, that Paul was instructed in a more comprehensive way about Jesus.

The Acts account states that Saul "went in and out among them at Jerusalem," that is, among the apostles. He "went in" among the apostles for fellowship and support, but he "went out," as the text of Acts proceeds to say, "preaching boldly in the name of the Lord." Further elaboration reveals "he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists; but they were seeking to kill him" (Acts 9:28-29). Saul, the persecutor become preacher, went to the synagogues of Greek-speaking Jews in Jerusalem, as Stephen had done.[17] The former synagogue teacher with Greek Bible in hand preached the fulfillment of the promises of God in the Messiah, Jesus. Like Stephen he aroused the dangerous hostility of his audience. Once again, though not for the last time, this preacher must leave town for his own safety.

These Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews though, unlike those previously referred to, they did not welcome the preaching of the Messiah, Jesus. As noted earlier, there was a significant community of Hellenists in Jerusalem, only some of whom responded positively to the preaching.[18] As a Jew whose first language was Greek, Saul himself had been part of their community. Doubtless Saul was ex-



Map 18. Tarsus in Cilicia

tremely well known within this group in Jerusalem as a synagogue teacher. In the coming years those who dogged Paul's tracks among the Gentiles, and who sought to overturn his teachings, were probably drawn from this community of Greek-speaking Jews, some of whom were believers, others not. Those Jews who came to Corinth in the midfifties to subvert Paul's ministry must have been fluent in Greek, for they were superior rhetoricians (2 Cor 10:10; 11:5-6). Jews whose first language was Aramaic simply could not have made themselves so well understood in the Greek world that Paul the apostle would visit.

13.3.5. Flight from Jerusalem to Syria-Cilicia/Tarsus. Saul now withdrew altogether from Palestine. Again, his own account may be put in parallel with that of the Acts of the Apostles.

> Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. (Gal 1:21)

> And when the brethren knew it [that the Hellenists were seeking to kill him], they [the brethren] brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him off to Tarsus. (Acts 9:30)

Although the account in the Acts of the Apostles is longer, the two accounts do agree on the facts. Acts, however, hints at the reason for his journey. It was to get this stormy preacher away from danger—for his own sake and perhaps also for

the peace of his companions in Jerusalem. A logical place for him to go was his home province of Cilicia, his city of origin, Tarsus. This suggests that his family remained resident in that city.

a. Tarsus in Cilicia. Various descriptions of Tarsus have survived from those times. Paul himself described Tarsus as "no mean city" (Acts 21:39). Strabo, a noted traveler, wrote at length about Tarsus.

> Tarsus lies in a plain . . . and it is intersected by the Cydnus River [whose] source is not very far away and its stream passes through a deep ravine and then empties immediately into the city; its discharge is both cold and swift.[19]

The fertile plain of Cilicia is hemmed in by the Mediterranean to the south and the Taurus mountains, which encircle the region on the north and west where they come down to the sea. The great trade route from the east crosses eastern Cilicia through Tarsus before striking north through the "Cilician Gates," the main access through the Taurus range. The city of Tarsus is located about ten miles from the coast.

Tarsus had been settled for more than a thousand years at the time of Saul's birth. Originally Hittite but more recently Persian, Tarsus had been refounded as a Greek city following Alexander's conquests of that region; Alexander won the great battle of Issus at the gateway to Syria in 333 B.C. Alexander was no mere conqueror. The Macedonian king sought to plant Hellenism wherever he conquered. In some places he founded new cities, like Antioch or Alexandria; in others he took over existing settlements, like Tarsus.

> Alexander established more than seventy cities among savage tribes and sowed all Asia with Grecian magistracies and thus overcame its uncivilized and brutish manner of living. . . . [F]or by the founding of cities in these places savagery was extinguished and, the worst element gaining familiarity with the better, changed under its influence.[20]

As part of the Seleucid kingdom, whose capital was Antioch in Syria, Tarsus became a noted Hellenistic city with a reputation for scholarship. Strabo commented that Tarsus was famous for various schools of rhetoric, in particular for the teaching of Stoic philosophy.[21] Although its academic standards were high, Tarsus did not attract outsiders for study, and local people of means went to Alexandria or Athens to complete their education. Saul's competence as a writer of Greek, his first language, probably owed much to the standards of literacy current in Tarsus through long-established schools of rhetoric.

More recently the Romans had expanded their empire eastward under the leadership of Pompey. In 67 B.C. Cilicia had been annexed as a Roman province. Dio Chrysostom described the political significance of Tarsus: "[Tarsus is] the greatest of all the cities of Cilicia and a metropolis from the start [i.e., when Cilicia was made a Roman province]."[22]

Tarsus experienced a crisis during the Roman civil war. In 43 B.C. Cassius, one of Julius Caesar's murderers, captured the city and extracted crushing levies from the people. Large numbers of Tarsians were sold off as slaves. In 42 B.C. Octavian and Mark Antony rescued Tarsus, overwhelming Brutus and Cassius at the battle of Philippi in Macedonia. Because the people of Tarsus were known to have supported Octavian (later called by his title, Augustus), he rewarded them by offering tax exemptions, by enlarging the territory of their city to make it coterminous with Cilicia and by bestowing on it the status of "free city." These measures led to the city's burgeoning prosperity so that it soon was second in that region only to Antioch of Syria. In 25 B.C. eastern Cilicia was joined administratively to Syria to create the province of "Syria and Cilicia," the title Paul correctly uses to refer to it (Gal 1:21).

From early in the second century B.C. large numbers of Jews settled in Cilicia, where they are known to have been powerful and influential. It is likely that Antiochus IV displayed hostility toward Jews in other parts of his empire, including a region like Cilicia that was so close to Antioch, as he had toward the Jews in Judea.[23] Numbers of Jews appear to have succumbed to syncretism under the pressure of Antiochus's aggressive Hellenism. Others were seduced by the gentle influences of Greek culture—the theater, the gymnasia, the games and the philosophic academies. Therefore, those Jews who retained intact their integrity under the covenant must have exercised considerable determination to do so. Saul's strict Jewish upbringing, as described below, suggests that his antecedents were among those who remained distinctly Jewish despite the powerful influence of Hellenism.

b. Saul's life in Tarsus as a preparation for apostleship. Saul's was a prominent family in Tarsus. Paul reveals that he was "a *citizen* of Tarsus," meaning that his parents also must have been "citizens" of the city (Acts 21:39). Substantial wealth, property worth five hundred drachmae (equivalent to two years' wages), was required to qualify for enrollment as a citizen of Tarsus.[24] Tarsus appears to have been unusual in this regard. Full citizenship on an individual basis was typically disallowed to Jews living in Greek cities; Jews only enjoyed concessions on a corporate basis, in order to practice freely their ancestral religion. Citizenship of a Gentile city typically involved participation in idolatrous sacrifices. It has been plausibly suggested, but without proof, that Jewish citizens of Tarsus formed a discrete group (a *phylē* or "tribe") that was relieved of religious obligations that would otherwise have applied. In Romans 16:7-21 Paul refers by name to a six fellow believers whom he called "kinsmen." These are unlikely to have been blood relatives of Paul; we do not know of any of Paul's family members who converted to Christianity. They were more probably fellow tribe members from Tarsus who may have enjoyed citizenship in the city following Augustus's benefactions after 42 B.C.[25]

More significantly, however, Saul was a *Roman* citizen, a highly privileged status into which he was "born" (Acts 22:28). This means his father before him must

have been a Roman citizen. Roman citizenship in provincial cities was limited to the wealthiest and most distinguished local citizens.[26] Perhaps Saul's father or grandfather had been rewarded with Roman citizenship when Augustus bestowed many benefits upon the city. Paul's trade as a leather worker/tentmaker[27] may have been the family business, which evidently had brought them wealth and influence. Whatever the circumstances, the Jewish Saul, like his father before him, had been both a citizen of the Greek city of Tarsus and a Roman citizen. Saul therefore belonged to the social elite of Cilicia.

Paul himself at many points reveals the mind of a Roman. The believers' citizenship *(politeuma),* he pointedly observed to the people of the Roman colony of Philippi, is in heaven. In his letters Paul refers not to generalized geographical regions but to *Roman* provinces—Judea, Syria-Cilicia, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, Illyricum. He appears to have favored Roman colonies as centers for ministry, for example, Tarsus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Troas and Philippi, as well as capitals of Roman provinces like Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Thessalonica, Corinth and Ephesus. His objective as a Roman citizen to preach the gospel to Rome and to lay the apostolic foundation there is quite understandable (Rom 1:10-13; 15:23-24; Acts 19:21).

Tarsus's long history as a Hellenistic city with a strong rhetorical tradition makes it likely that Saul had received a good education in Greek language. Although his Jewish home life would have shielded him from overtly Hellenistic thought and practice, his very residence in such a city required a certain level of expertise in Greek speech and reading. This remains true despite the probability that such Greek education was probably confined to the elementary level, which may have been home taught, and restricted to forms acceptable to a Jew. His writings betray no echoes of Homer or Plato and little sophistication in the Greek rhetorical forms that we would expect had he attended one of the philosophical schools in Tarsus. Rather, his writings are permeated with the language and ideas of the Greek Bible, the Septuagint.

Saul's family in Tarsus were diaspora Jews, but of strict temper. His letters reveal him to have been "a Hebrew," "an Israelite," "a descendant of Abraham," a member "of the tribe of Benjamin" who had been "circumcised on the eighth day." The son of this family was given the name of his forebear from that tribe, the first king of Israel. Wealthy Jews often assimilated the cultural expressions of a Hellenist city like Tarsus, but not the family of Saul in Tarsus. Doubtless with the encouragement of his family, he left Tarsus in his "youth"[28] to complete his Torah education in Jerusalem. Consistent with his pure lineage and strict upbringing in Tarsus, in Jerusalem Saul became a Pharisee (Acts 26:4), a disciple of the great rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; cf. 5:34-40). As a mark of his "zeal" for Yahweh he had been "a persecutor of the church" (Phil 3:6; Gal 1:13, 23; cf. 1 Cor 15:9). His life in Jerusalem was a natural continuation of his beginnings in Tarsus.

The knowledge of the Septuagint displayed within Paul's letters reveals a high level of scribal competence. Most probably this young rabbi became an accomplished teacher of the Septuagint within the Hellenist synagogues of Jerusalem. The Acts of the Apostles often portrays him as a teacher and disputer in synagogues of the diaspora, but in regard to the Messiah, Jesus. These descriptions are quite consistent with an early career as a scribe of the Greek Bible. His Christian writings, which are saturated with the text of the Septuagint and which are so didactically argued, support the proposition that Saul was an experienced teacher at the time of his conversion.[29]

Saul's background in Tarsus uniquely equipped him for the work to which God had called him. Few others in the world at that time could have been what this man was. Saul was a devout Jew by family upbringing in Tarsus and rabbinic training in Jerusalem, a member of the Hellenistic world who was fluent in *koinē* Greek, both spoken and written, and a citizen of both Tarsus and Rome. Perhaps it was with all this in mind that he reflected that "God had set [him] apart before [he] was born" (Gal 1:15). Luke certainly had a similar perception, expressed in the words of the Lord to Ananias, the Damascene disciple: "He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

If his family was still domiciled in Tarsus, as is likely, Saul must have visited them. But now he was a preacher of the crucified Messiah, Jesus. Something of the reaction of his family may be discerned in his words, "For [Christ's] sake I have suffered the loss of all things" (Phil 3:8). In all probability Saul's family disowned and disinherited him.

c. Saul's ministry in Tarsus. The greater part of Saul's "unknown years" was spent in Tarsus and Cilicia. He appears to have arrived in 36 or 37 and to have remained there until he went to Antioch in Syria in the early to midforties, that is, a period of seven or eight years. Our information is limited to incidental mention by Paul and by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. At his second visit to Jerusalem (c. 47) Paul laid before the leaders of the church "the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles" (Gal 2:2), which must have included his recent preaching of the circumcision-free gospel to Gentiles in Cilicia. The only reference in Acts is to the Jerusalem Council c. 49, which sent a letter to "the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." (Acts 15:23). "Brethren" of "the Gentiles" from "Cilicia" doubtless owed their conversion to Saul of Tarsus; we know of no one else preaching in Cilicia at that time.

As noted previously, there was a large and influential Jewish community in Cilicia. Surviving epigraphic evidence suggests that many God-fearers attached themselves to the synagogues of Cilicia at that time.[30] It is probable that Saul preached in the synagogues in Cilicia and that the Jewish members in general rejected his preaching of the Christ crucified and risen, but numbers of God-fearers

received his message. This was to be the pattern elsewhere in Paul's missionary journeys through the provinces of Asia Minor and Greece as recorded in the book of Acts. Various synagogue beatings, which he attests in 2 Corinthians, written in c. 56, but which find no reference in the Acts of the Apostles, probably occurred during these years of ministry in Tarsus and its surrounding towns (2 Cor 11:24). Was Paul punished by the Jews for his successful ministry to these Gentiles? Further, the ecstatic vision that took him "up" to Paradise almost certainly happened during his Tarsus years (2 Cor 13:3).[31]

Saul may have thought he had been forgotten by the Jerusalem church and its leaders, but one day, most probably without warning, Barnabas arrived. He had been sent to Antioch to visit the new church that had emerged in recent times, and he had come to bring Saul back with him to assist him in ministry. Saul was being brought one steppingstone closer to the point of launching the great westward mission to win the Gentiles for the Christ of Israel.

13.3.6. Saul in Antioch. During the middle to late thirties, a church was established in Antioch. Saul came to attach himself to this church as one of the leaders. From here, with Barnabas, he would be sent forth westward toward the Roman world.

a. Antioch the city. Antioch was a new city founded according to Hellenistic principles in 300 B.C. following Alexander's conquests. Located on the Orontes River about fifteen miles from the sea and in a large fertile plain, Antioch became the capital of the Seleucid empire. At its height Antioch is estimated to have had a population of about three hundred thousand.[32] Like a number of new cities of the Hellenistic kingdoms, Antioch was laid out on a grid following the town planning model of Hippodamus of Miletus.

Pompey captured Antioch in 66 B.C., making it capital of the province of Syria. So began Antioch's history as a great Roman city. It benefited from considerable extension and beautification after that time. As the empire's frontier to the east, where formidable enemies like the Parthians were to be found, Antioch became a major military outpost. Judea, too, came under Antioch's administrative supervision and military protection. After the death of Herod in 4 B.C. and at the outbreak of insurgency in A.D. 66 the legions were marched south from Antioch to restore peace to Judea. No less than four legions were based in Antioch along with many auxiliary units.[33] By New Testament times Antioch was the third largest city in the empire, after Rome and Alexandria.

Greek-Jewish relations had a troubled history in Antioch as in other major Greek cities in the east. In 175 B.C. the Seleucid king, Antiochus "Epiphanes," attempted forcibly to Hellenize Jerusalem and Judea, leading to the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt and the eventual loss of Judea from the Greco-Syrian kingdom.[34] Moreover, from Antioch's inception Jews formed a significant proportion of its population; the numbers have been estimated as high as fifty thousand. There was

an ongoing dispute with the Greek community over Jewish citizenship rights. The available evidence suggests that, as in most other places, Jews enjoyed a corporate, but not an individual, citizenship, allowing them to pursue their religion unhindered.[35] However, Jews periodically agitated for individual citizenship rights, leading to serious tension between the two communities. Ironically these Jews, mostly wealthy citizens, agitated to gain access to the gymnasium and the athletic contests, which involved idolatrous worship and naked competition and spelled the end of Jewish covenantal distinctives. By a continuing process some Jews were slipping into Hellenism.

At the same time, strictly observant Jews held a certain attraction for numbers of Gentiles because of the monotheism of the covenant of Israel and the superior ethical and family values practiced by Jews. Josephus commented that "through their worship [the Jews] attracted a large number of Greeks and in a way made them part of themselves."[36]

Some of these were God-fearers, who remained on the fringe of the synagogues.[37] Others, however, became proselytes accepting baptism and circumcision as members of the covenant people. Nicolaus the "proselyte of Antioch" was one of the seven almoners chosen to serve the widows of the Hellenist community in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). It is reasonable to believe that Nicolaus returned to Antioch following the scattering of the Hellenists during Saul's onslaught.

Antioch was a city of exceedingly mixed population, composed of native Syrians, Jews, Greeks and Romans. Doubtless this diversity was reflected in the "mix" of the community of believers that emerged in the thirties.

b. The crisis under Caligula and the rise of Christianity in Antioch. The turbulent principate of Caligula coincided with the rise of Christianity in Antioch. The furor among Jews created by his policies threatened to erupt into open war in the Greek cities of the eastern Mediterranean. Simmering hostility in Alexandria broke out into a bloody pogrom against Jews following the Greek mob's mockery of Herod Agrippa as he passed through the city in 38. Jews in Alexandria were herded into one quarter of the city, the first ghetto in history. Soon afterwards Jews in Judea demolished an altar to Caligula in the coastal town of Jamnia, an altar built by the Greek citizens to celebrate his recent victories in Germany. The emperor responded with the awesome directive that a statue of himself in the guise of Jupiter be erected in the temple in Jerusalem. In effect, Caligula was seeking to convert the holy sanctuary into an imperial shrine. The situation in Israel, but also in the Greek cities with large Jewish communities, became acute. Jews in Palestine were on the brink of war with Rome. Inflamed over the Jew's citizenship demands, the Greeks in Caesarea, Damascus and Antioch were poised to attack the Jews as they had done in Alexandria. Significantly, Antioch held Caligula and his father Germanicus, who had died in the city, in particular honor. There are medieval accounts of a Greek assault of Jews in Antioch, including the burning of their major synagogue.[38]

For their part, Jews in these cities were ready for conflict. At the death of Caligula

in 41, Jews took up arms in Alexandria against their persecutors. In Antioch in the sixties the Jews planned to burn the whole city and were severely punished when the conspiracy was revealed. The crisis under Caligula must not be underestimated. It revealed how profound and extensive was the antipathy between Jews and Greeks in the Gentile cities of the eastern Mediterranean. Twenty-five years later, in 66, hostility between Jews and Greek broke out again in Caesarea Maritima in Judea. The war between Rome and the Jews would follow as the Roman legions marched into Judea, encircling the holy city and then destroying the sacred shine before desecrating its holy place in 70.

Clearly, then, cities like Antioch in the late thirties and early forties witnessed severe hostility between Greeks and Jews. It is against this background that we must understand how alarmed the Greeks and Romans of Antioch must have been hearing the reports that a Messiah/Christ of Israel was being proclaimed in the synagogues by recently arrived Jews. Jews everywhere could be united under this leader, who might even rival the emperor himself. This explains why these preachers and their supporters were called *Christianoi,* adherents of the Christ. At the same time we can only reflect on the turmoil within the synagogues of Antioch in the knowledge that these preachers, fellow Jews as they were, were treacherously offering the salvation of the God of Israel to *Greeks!* We cannot easily imagine how the arrival of these Christian preachers must have inflamed the city.

c. "Christians" in Antioch (Acts 11:19-21). According to the Acts of the Apostles, the message of the Christ of Israel came to Antioch in two waves. The first wave consisted of Hellenists displaced by Saul's assault, who apparently had remigrated to Antioch. There is no reason to doubt that this occurred after c. 34 as an immediate consequence of Saul's pogrom in Jerusalem. Some Hellenists went inland to Damascus, as already noted, perhaps with the intention of returning later to Jerusalem. Others traveled north along the coast, some settling in Phoenicia, others going offshore to Cyprus, others coming to rest in the great northern metropolis of Antioch (Acts 11:19). These, however, confined their preaching of the Christ to the Jews in the synagogues, probably with quite limited response.

A second wave, more closely identified as "men of Cyprus and Cyrene," came to Antioch later. These took the bold step of preaching the Christ to "Greeks," that is, to Gentiles. The date can only be conjectured, but it may have been by the late thirties. The impression created by the book of Acts is that the "great number that believed and turned to the Lord" were Gentiles. In this case it is quite possible these were, in the main, those God-fearers upon whom Josephus commented, as noted previously. If the later chapters of the Acts serve as a guide, it was not among the Jews, nor among outright pagans, but among the God-fearers that early Christianity chiefly took root.

Thus by the late thirties the preaching of these men, from both waves, came to

the attention of the authorities, leading them to call these men *Christianoi,* "Christians," adherents of the Christ.[39] This word, like *Hērōdianoi* and *Augustiani,* describes those who were followers of a noted ruler.

d. Ministers in Antioch. Thanks entirely to the Acts of the Apostles, we know how, in broad terms, the gospel came to the Syrian capital, the Roman sentinel to the east. Persecuted ones from Jerusalem—some completely unidentified, others defined at least as Cypriots and Cyreneans—brought the message of the Christ to Antioch.

However, the Acts does not mask the resistance of the Jerusalem church to the incorporation of Gentiles into the community of the Messiah. The apostles dispatched Peter and John to the Samaritans following Philip's visit. The apostles with the Jerusalem brotherhood expressed concern at the report that Peter had preached to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 8:14; 11:1). So, when the report of Gentiles becoming believers reached Jerusalem, they reacted characteristically, by sending someone to Antioch, both to investigate and to exercise prudent ministry while there. Barnabas was a trusted member of the Jerusalem church, a Greek-speaking Cypriot who would be welcomed in Antioch and a man of proven pastoral ability, in short, a suitable envoy from the mother church. Yet Barnabas was a Hebrew by sympathy rather than a Hellenist and well able to represent the concerns of the Jerusalem church.

Barnabas's role, however, proved to be not merely that of diplomatic emissary on a sensitive mission of inquiry. Barnabas was shaken by what he saw in Antioch so that immediately he threw himself into ministry in this growing community, which expanded as a consequence. No time note is given, but we suggest that Barnabas arrived in the early forties. In time Barnabas realized that the demands of the community were beyond his resources. Assistance was needed. So, having heard of Saul's presence and ministry, he set out for Tarsus. In c. 44 Barnabas found Saul in Tarsus and brought him to the metropolis where he, too, ministered, for "a whole year" according to Acts. Again, further growth is noted.

A few years later the Acts also gives us a window through which we see something of the internal life of the community of the *Christianoi* in Antioch. Warned by Agabus the prophet of impending famine in Judea, Barnabas and Saul had journeyed to Jerusalem in c. 47 with famine relief sent by members of the church of Antioch. Accompanying them was Titus, a "Greek," most probably a Gentile convert from Antioch (Gal 2:1-3; cf. Acts 11:27-29). While there they had met the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church who had agreed in a private meeting that Barnabas and Saul should take the gospel to the Gentiles. Upon their return to Antioch, in the light of this dramatic development in Jerusalem, the church worshiped the Lord and fasted, seeking the guidance of the Spirit (Acts 13:3).

The names of five persons from the church of Antioch are given: Barnabas, Symeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen from the court of Herod the

tetrarch, and Saul. Luke lists these five names as he had the twelve names of the original apostles and the seven leaders of the Jerusalem Hellenists earlier in the book of Acts (Acts 1:26; 6:5). The careful list of names may indicate the significance with which Luke viewed this church as the launching point for the westward mission to the Gentiles.

Simeon and Lucius have Gentile names—the first Greek, the second Roman—though both were probably Jews. "Symeon called Niger" implies a black man, or perhaps a man from North Africa, a place associated with black people. Lucius from Cyrene in North Africa may have been one of those who had been expelled from Jerusalem and who, according to Acts, first preached to Greeks in Antioch. There is no good reason to identify him with the Luke who became Paul's companion, the noted New Testament author (cf. Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Philem 24).

Another member of the five leaders was the Jew Manaen (Heb *Menachem*), the associate of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee (*syntrophos* could mean "boyhood friend" or "courtier").[40] Questions abound. How was he now a Christian? Did Joanna, wife of Chusa (steward of Antipas), provider for the Lord in Galilee and witness of the empty tomb, perhaps point Manaen to the Christ? Was Manaen a member of the early church in Jerusalem, only to be scattered with others to Antioch? Or, did he migrate to Syria after Antipas's exile in 39? Answers are not forthcoming; we may only conjecture. These three men, with Barnabas the leader (his name is given first) and Saul (whose name is given last), are called "prophets and teachers" in the church at Antioch.

Excursus 13A: Paul's mission strategy according to Rainer Riesner

Rainer Riesner has proposed a brilliant and dramatic interpretation of Paul's mission strategy.[41] In brief it may be stated as follows:

1. Paul saw his Damascus christophany in which he was commissioned to preach to the Gentiles as "a calling analogous to that of the Deutero-Isaianic servant of God," a thesis historically associated with Lucien Cerfaux.[42]

2. The geographic framework of Paul's mission was "influenced" by an Old Testament prophecy, Isaiah 66:18-21 (LXX).

> But I am coming to gather all the nations and tongues; they shall come and see my glory. I will set signs among them. Some of those who have escaped I will send to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud, Meshech and Tubal and Javan, to the farthest islands that have not heard my fame nor seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. They shall bring all your kindred from all the nations as an offering to Yahweh, on horses and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, just as the Israelites bring a grain offering in clean hands to the house of Yahweh. From these I will take priests and levites, says Yahweh.

According to Riesner, for Paul "Tarshish" was Tarsus, "Put" was Cilicia, "Lud" was Lydia (in Asia Minor), "Meshech" was Phrygia (or Cappadocia) and "Tubal" was Bithynia. "Javan" stands for the Greeks,[43] and "the farthest islands" represent the western extremities of the known world.

Paul's words in his letter to the Romans, "from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom 15:19), are seen to express his progress in fulfilling the Isaianic itinerary. This explains, in part, Riesner's concern in the early part of his book for a historically authentic sequence and chronology for New Testament history. The Pauline order of geographic mission needs to conform to the Isaianic sequence.

3. Paul's unusual cultic words in Romans that he is "a minister *[leitourgos]* of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service *[hierourgon]* of the gospel of God, so that the offering *[prosphora]* of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 15:16) are seen to make sense in terms of the Isaianic prophecy quoted above: "From these ['those who have escaped'] I will take priests and levites, says Yahweh."

How do we evaluate Riesner's hypothesis?

1. The first part of ***Paul's Early Period,*** which examines questions of chronology, must be reckoned one of the most thorough and detailed works devoted to this subject. The range of interraction with modern scholars and the depth of biblical and historical knowledge is remarkable.

2. However, Riesner's proposal that Paul understood his ministry as the Isaianic Servant of God is unconvincing.[44] At most, Paul is echoing the Isaianic language, but without an explicit theological identification with the Servant.[45] On the other hand, Paul is quite explicit that "Christ became a servant *[diakonos]* to the circumcised . . . in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (Rom 15:8-9). To be sure, Paul has a role, but it is as "a minister *[leitourgos]* of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles" (Rom 15:16). For Paul, Christ was the "servant."

3. Intriguing as the identification of Isaiah's itinerary is in terms of the sequence of Paul's journeys, major problems bar the way to its acceptance. First, the places found in Isaiah 66 can by no means be identified with certainity. Take only the first example, "Tarshish," which Riesner identifies as Tarsus and which is the critical first major location of Pauline ministry. There are other proposals for the identification of "Tarshish" (from Rhodes to Carthage), as well as the traditional view that Tarshish is Spain.[46] Second, if "Tubal" is Bithynia, why would Paul allow himself to be prevented from going there? Third, Riesner does not adequately find a place in Isaiah's list for Paul's lengthy stay in Asia. Fourth, he does not address Paul's passionate desire to come to Rome (Rom 1:8-14; 15:22-23; cf. Acts 19:21), which he was prevented from doing. Rome has no counterpart in Isaiah's list.

In our view, Paul chose certain Roman cities for ministry in order to reach Rome, which he was prevented from doing because of Claudius's decree in 49 banning Jews from the city. Hence, Paul concentrated on the Roman cities of Corinth and Ephesus awaiting a chance to visit Rome. When his opportunity came, following Claudius's death, he discovered "another" (Peter?) had arrived beforehand. Since Paul was a pioneer apostle who would not "build on another's foundation," he chose only to pass through Rome (Rom 15:20, 24, 28). The letter to the Romans must, therefore, take the place of what he might have accomplished in his ministry had he been able to be the pioneer apostle in the Eternal City.

Why did Paul pursue a westward course from Jerusalem, a course that would take him by way of the northern rather than the southern side of the Mediterranean? Why did Paul not spring from Damascus/Arabia either north to Mesopotamia or south to Egypt? After all, there were large communities of Jews in both these places from which ministry might be mounted to Gentiles? Why did Paul go from "Jerusalem in an arc to Illyricum," that is, via the north toward Rome?

Paul may have been influenced by the historical experience of the Jews rather than by Isaiah's program. Gentiles had impinged on Israel first under Alexander, then through Pompey's conquests and the subsequent provincialization under Augustus and Tiberius. Paul must have thought first of Greece and Rome when he was commissioned to preach to the Gentiles. After all, Paul was a *Greek* speaker who was a *Roman* citizen, enjoying the protection afforded by that much prized

citizenship. Furthermore, there were large communities of Jews thoughout the provinces to the north of the Mediterranean who might welcome the gospel. Furthermore, Greek-Jew relationships in Anatolia and Greece were not so volatile as, for example, in Egypt. By no means unimportant was the reality that there were also concentric circles of God-fearers attached to the synagogues in these northern provinces.

How, then, did Spain, rather than, for example, Gaul, come to be part of Paul's plans? Through the collection from the churches, Paul had secured the provinces of (southern) Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia in their fellowship with the mother church. Asia was important because it tied these provinces together and also tied them to Jerusalem. Hence, by 57 Paul could inform the Romans that he no longer had "any room for work in these regions" (Rom 15:23). If Rome was not a possible base for Paul, it would be logical for him to move west beyond the Roman capital. Because it was more significantly hellenized and contained greater concentration of Jews, Spain was to be preferred to Gaul.[47] Perhaps, too, Paul somehow saw Spain as the "Tarsish" or the "the farthest islands" mentioned in the prophetic tradition in Isaiah 66.

Excursus 13B: Jews, proselytes and God-fearers

The mission work of Saul/Paul as narrated in the book of Acts was deeply involved with Jews, proselytes (Acts 2:11; 6:5; 13:43) and God-fearers. Each of these classes is related in some specific way to Judaism. Definition of the first is straightforward.

A Jew was defined, in particular, in terms of racial descent; religious adherence was secondary. Paul's own self-descriptions convey what it meant to be a Jew in the first century:

> Are they Hebrews ? So am I. Are they Israelites ? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. (2 Cor 11:22)
>
> I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. (Rom 11:1)
>
> Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. (Phil 3:5)

Ethnic descent (through the mother),[48] along with circumcision for males, settled the matter of the identity of a Jew; both Paul and Luke refer to "those of the circumcision" (Gal 2:12; Col 4:11; Tit 1:10; Acts 10:45; 11:2).

A proselyte was a person of Gentile race who was converted to Judaism by means of circumcision (in the case of males) and baptism, who kept the law of Moses and who, as opportunity arose, offered sacrifice.[49] Nonetheless, a proselyte, while expected to observe the ordinances of Judaism, was regarded as inferior and lacked the full legal rights of Jews whether in Palestine or in the diaspora.[50]

Jesus' lament that the Pharisees "traverse the sea and the dry land to make a single proselyte" raises the question whether there was a Jewish mission to win proselytes at that time. This question has been the subject of extensive inquiry with a large body of literature.[51] While a majority of scholars have answered in the affirmative, some dispute this proposal, notably Johannes Munck, Scot McKnight and Martin Goodman.[52] Much depends on the definition of *mission* that is adopted. Difficulties immediately arise when we begin to ask whether such a "mission" must have been active and practical rather than passive and attitudinal, universally true of Jews rather than pursued by only some? Many of the differences between the scholars on this subject relate to the problem of defining a mission.[53]

So who is this "proselyte" whom the scribes and Pharisees have "made"? Three possibilities may be envisaged. One is that scribes and Pharisees traveled abroad to win converts for Judaism

from among outright Gentiles. A second is that they attempted to persuade synagogue-connected God-fearers to become full proselytes. A third is that they sought to bring Jews of the diaspora into the sect of the Pharisees.[54]

The answer to this question depends on Jesus' use of the word *proselyte.*[55] If he spoke of a proselyte in a metaphorical sense of *convert,* broadly understood, it would point to scribes and Pharisees converting fellow Jews to their sect. But while this word may have a nonliteral usage today, it is unlikely that *proselyte* was then used metaphorically, thus eliminating the third option. The first option may also be discarded. The transition from being an outright idolator to circumcised proselyte is too large a single step to be imaginable. The second option, that of winning a proselyte from among the God-fearers, is the only plausible understanding of Jesus' words. A straightforward reading indicates that scribes and Pharisees traveled beyond Palestine in their search for proselytes from among the existing pool of God-fearers and that their efforts were rewarded with some results but not with very great results.

It appears that Gentiles were attracted to Judaism passively, as it were, creating a class of Jewish "sympathizers" among the Gentiles. But evidence is lacking for a full-blooded Jewish mission to win proselytes from the Gentiles. There were exceptions, however. The royal family of Adiabene from Parthia converted to Judaism in the middle of the first century through direct Jewish influence.[56] Nicolaus, one of the seven "Hellenist" almoners, was a proselyte from Antioch, though we do not know the circumstances of his conversion to Judaism (Acts 6:5).

A God-fearer's decision to become a proselyte was no light thing. Three obstacles blocked the path. First, Gentiles universally disdained the Jewish people. At the time of his circumcision, the proselyte was warned of oppression by Gentiles ("Israel at the present time are persecuted and oppressed, despised harassed and overcome by afflictions"). Second, following his circumcision, an Israelite faced dire penalties from the synagogue for breaches of the law, for example, stoning for breaking the sabbath.[57] Third, submission to circumcision for adult males was a major deterrent because of the pain involved in the surgical process and the related problem of infection.

It is likely that many God-fearers worshiped in the pagan temples and also attended the imageless worship of the synagogue.[58] A decision to become a proselyte by submission to circumcision, with attendant rites of baptism, must surely have marked a moment of high moral seriousness. Thus the Mishnah distinguished between God-fearers, whom it called "proselytes of the gate," and genuine proselytes, whom it called "proselytes of righteousness."[59] "Righteous proselytes" were included among the pious of Israel in Benediction thirteen of the *Shemoneh 'Esreh.*

Who, then, were the God-fearers?[60] Scholars have faced two problems attempting to answer this question. One is that the book of Acts has no uniform mode of reference to these persons. They are spoken of as either those who "fear *[phoboumai]* God " (Acts 10:1-2; 10:22; 13:16; 13:26) or those who "worship *[sebomenoi]* God" (Acts 13:50; 16:14; 18:6-7; cf. Acts 13:43; 17:4; 17:17). Are these the same people?[61] Another difficulty has been that the epigraphic sources refer to *theosebēs,* which is not found in Acts and which could mean either a "worshiper of God" or simply a "pious" Jew. In view of these problems, the very existence of the God-fearers has been disputed.[62]

However, recent analysis of the third-century A.D. inscription at Aphrodisias has now put the question beyond reasonable doubt.[63] This inscription has a list of Jews in the synagogue and a *separate* list of *theosebeis,* "worshipers of God." Thus the numerous references to *theosebeis* in other inscriptions, which otherwise might have been understood as "pious" Jews, can now be identified as *Gentile* "worshipers of God," that is, as belonging to this class of person noted in the Acts of the Apostles.

It is clear, however, that there was no uniformity for this class. No less than seven categories have been noticed, from those Gentiles who had minimal interest in Judaism to those who were at the point of full conversion to Judaism.[64] Serious inconsistencies of behavior are either known

or suspected to have existed. Numbers of Gentiles are known to have attended the synagogue *and* participated in the imperial cult.[65] Cornelius, who is called "a devout man who feared God" (Acts 10:2), in the course of his duties as a centurion must also have worshiped the Roman gods. In view of the disparity and diversity within this class, it comes as no surprise that its members have been described differently, as "God-fearers," "God-worshipers" or "Jewish sympathizers."[66] But the existence of the God-fearers is now beyond doubt.

Gentile authors, although they did not use any of these terms, nonetheless appear to have described God-fearers. For example, Juvenal, the Roman satirist of the second century A.D., seems to describe such a person.

> [b]Some who have had a father who revere the Sabbath, worship nothing but the clouds, and the divinity of the heavens, and see no difference between eating swine's flesh, from which their father abstained and that of a man; and in time they take to circumcision. Having been wont to flout the laws of Rome, they learn to practice and revere the Jewish law.[67]

Juvenal is criticizing those God-fearer fathers whose sons follow their practices and who "in time take to circumcision," that is, become proselytes.

It is probable that when Saul/Paul was commissioned to preach to the Gentiles, this meant, in practical terms that he evangelized God-fearers associated with the synagogues of the diaspora. Possibly in Damascus and Arabia,[68] but almost certainly in Antioch in Syria where there was a significant group of God-fearers, Paul's ministry to Gentiles was exercised initially to these "sympathizers" of Judaism. When Paul sets out on his westward missionary journeys, the God-fearers find specific mention in the narrative of the book of Acts (Acts 13:50; 16:14; 18:6-7; cf. Acts 13:43; 17:4; 17:17). Once Paul had been excluded from a synagogue, however, his access to God-fearers probably ended.

Why were the God-fearers of interest to Paul? On one hand, Gentiles were, by religious culture, idolaters whose sexual practices were abhorrent to Jews; there was no meeting point between the two. On the other hand, God-fearers had moved toward the God of Israel and the ethics and, perhaps, the practices of the covenant people. Moreover, circumcision—a painful disincentive to conversion as a proselyte—was emphatically not required by Saul/Paul for adherence to Jesus the Christ. For a Gentile God-fearer, who was uncircumcised and who did not offer sacrifice in Jerusalem but who heard the law read in the synagogue and praised the God of Israel, it was not a huge step to move to the "synagogue" of Jesus the Christ. He was a second-class citizen in the one but an "equal" in the other, a full member of the covenant people of the Israel of God (Gal 6:16; Eph 2:11—3:6). It is likely that the Gentile members of the Pauline churches were to a significant degree composed of God-fearers.

However, where the synagogue leadership was influential over God-fearers, as apparently was true in Antioch in Pisidia, the very group Paul sought to win proved to be a source of strong opposition and hostility (Acts 13:50).[69] The Jews applied pressure on the God-fearer women of eminence, who in turn persuaded the local magistrates—among whom, we suppose, were their husbands—to attack the newly arrived preachers of the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth.

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Notes

[1]The fourteen years is based on Galatians 2:1.

[2]The evocative title of Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer's book *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM Press, 1997).

[3]From the perspective of Acts, Jerusalem was, indeed, the epicenter from which the witness to Christ would reach Rome. But according to Acts Peter's witness in Jerusalem, which reached to Cornelius the *Gentile,* was the beginning of that movement. Then Paul took that message and ministry from Antioch to Rome. In Paul's writings, however, Peter and Jerusalem played no such part; Cephas was the apostle to the circumcised. According to Paul the movement to the Gentiles began with Paul and was confined to him.

[4]See Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), pp. 42-46.

[5]See Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul,* pp. 133-42.

[6]According to Josephus *J.W.* 2.561, eighteen thousand Jews were massacred on one occasion in the gymnasium in Damascus in A.D. 66, though these numbers have been questioned.

[7]It is a matter of dispute whether the high priest's jurisdiction extended beyond the land of Israel. For discussion §11.7.

[8]Josephus *J.W.* 7.47 refers to the "chief magistrate *[archōn]* of the Jews in Antioch."

[9]Hippodamus of Miletus of the fifth century B.C. is credited with devising town planning based on a grid system, which became widely used in the Hellenistic kingdoms after Alexander the Great.

[10]F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Leicester: Apollos; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 237.

[11]See §13.1

[12]Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul,* p. 111.

[13]Cf. Ibid., p. 113.

[14]Josephus *Ant.* 14.117.

[15]Strabo *Geography* 17.798.

[16]See §10.9.

[17]See §11.2-3.

[18]See §11.1-2.

[19]Strabo *Geography* 14.5.12-13.

[20]Plutarch *Alexander* 328ff.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 37.7-8.

[23]See §3.4.

[24]Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 34.23.

[25]So William M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St Paul* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907), pp. 176-78.

[26]This view was classically expounded by Mommsen but is opposed by Martin Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1991), pp. 5, 14-15, who argues, but without real evidence, that Paul's antecedents were former slaves who, upon emancipation, were granted Roman citizenship.

[27]Tents were then made of leather. Tentmakers also worked in all manner of leather goods. See Barnett, "Tentmaking," *DPL*, pp. 925-27.

[28]Contra W. C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem: The City of Paul's Youth* (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 300-301.

[29]Hengel, *Pre-Christian Paul*, pp. 57-62.

[30]See further Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul*, pp. 158-67.

[31]By my calculation Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in A.D. 56, which means that his visionary experience occurred c. 43, which points to Tarsus as the location of that experience.

[32]Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul*, p. 186.

[33]Auxiliary units were locally recruited and trained; they served alongside the Roman legionaries.

[34]See §3.4-5.

[35]Josephus *J.W.* 7.43, perhaps for apologetic reasons, states that the Jews of Antioch enjoyed equal citizenship rights as did Jews in other Hellenistic cities. But Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians, written A.D. 41 after the troubles in the city, gives the clearer picture that this was not the case. Claudius describes Jews who agitated for equal individual citizenship rights as "fomenters of what is a general plague over the whole world."

[36]Josephus *J.W.* 7.45.

[37]See excursus 13B.

[38]See Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul*, pp. 183-91.

[39]See §2.2.2.

[40]See §6.5.2.

[41]Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998). Riesner points to various works in support of his hypothesis: Roger D. Aus, "Paul's Travel Plans to Spain and the 'Full Number of the Gentiles' of Rom. XI.25," *NovT* 21 (1979): 232-62; W. Paul Bowers, *Studies in Paul's Understanding of His Mission*, Ph.D. Diss., Cambridge University, 1976.

[42]Lucien Cerfaux, "Saint Paul et le 'serviteur de Dieu' d'Isie," *Recueil Lucien Cerfaux* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1954), 2:239-54.

[43]Adapting their Asia Minor name, Ionian.

[44]The critique of Lucien Cerfaux's thesis by Morna D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: SPCK, 1959), stands.

[45]Galatians 1:15 (Is 49:1); Romans 15:20-21 (Is 54:15); 2 Corinthians 6:2 (Is 49:8, where the prophet's words apply to the Corinthians, not to Paul).

[46]See Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, pp. 250-53, for details.

[47]Ibid., p. 304.

[48]See Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 5. Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 12-17.

[49]For discussion, see Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 320-34; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. and ed. by Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar. 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973), 3:150-76; Paul F. Stuehrenberg, "Proselyte," *ABD*, 5:503-5.

[50]Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, pp. 320-34.

[51]For a review of major views, see James Carleton Paget, "Jewish Proselytism at the Time of Christian Origins: Chimera or Reality?" *JSNT* 62 (1996): 65-103. Paget argues that there was such a mission, though he is careful to define the mission. Paget steers a middle course between the maximilists Georgi and Feldman and the minimalists McKnight and Goodman (p. 76).

[52]Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM, 1959); Scot McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[53]Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," p. 69, discusses the definitions of McKnight and Goodman.

[54]See, e.g., Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, pp. 69-74, and for a rebuttal of Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," pp. 96-97.

[55]See above, n. 49.

[56]Josephus *Ant.* 20.34-38.
[57]Babylonian Talmud *Yebamot* 47a, b.
[58]See, too, though from a later era, the comments of Tertullian *Ad Nat.* 1.13.3-4.
[59]For references and discussion, see Schürer, *History,* 3:171.
[60]See Levinskaya, *Book of Acts,* pp. 51-126; Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul,* pp. 61-80.
[61]For an affirmative answer, see Levinskaya, *Book of Acts,* pp. 53-54.
[62]For a review of opinions, see ibid., pp. 53-58.
[63]So ibid., pp. 70-80.
[64]See ibid., pp. 78-79.
[65]See ibid., pp. 123-24.
[66]See ibid., pp. 52-53.
[67]Juvenal 14.96 LCL.
[68]See Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul,* pp. 107-8.
[69]See Levinskaya, *Book of Acts,* pp. 123-24.

14

The Inclusion of the Gentiles (47-49)

14.1. Introduction

The next few years were critical for the future of Christianity. Was it to remain overwhelmingly Jewish, with only isolated Gentiles acknowledging the Christ of Israel? That may have been acceptable for liberal-minded Jewish Christians. But what if Gentiles came to believe in Christ in significant numbers, especially at a time when Jewish relations with the Gentiles in the empire had begun seriously to deteriorate?

It was one thing for the leaders of the Jerusalem church to agree that Barnabas and Saul should "go" to the uncircumcised with a circumcision-free gospel. It was quite another for them to go intentionally to win adherents from the Gentile world where more Gentiles accepted their message than did the members of the synagogues, who proved to be resistant.

14.2. Chronology

The chronology of the constituent elements in this crisis are disputed because of the uncertainty of the sequence Paul's letters and because of doubts regarding the historical reliability of the Acts of the Apostles.[1]

The crisis was provoked by Paul's mission westward from Antioch to Cyprus and the cities of southern Galatia. Paul's missionary activity attracted opposition from two quarters. In the aftermath of his visit to Galatia, upheaval occurred within the newly formed churches over the question of the circumcision of Gentile members. At the time the reports were coming from the Galatian churches, some

members of the Jerusalem community arrived in Syrian Antioch demanding that Jewish believers eat separately from Gentiles (Gal 1:6-7; 2:11-13). As far as we can tell, the chronology of the events was as displayed in table 10.

c. 47 Jerusalem "pillars" agree that Barnabas and Saul should go to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7-9).
At Antioch the church releases Barnabas and Saul for mission work to the west, beginning at Cyprus (Acts 13:1-3).
Paul visits Cyprus and various cities in the Roman province of Galatia (Acts 13-14).

Back in Antioch two negative developments occur:
1. Reports arrive of disturbances in the Galatian churches (Gal 1:6-9), and
2. Members of the church in Jerusalem arrive, insisting that Jews eat separately from Gentiles (Gal 2:11-14).
Paul writes the letter to the Galatians.

c. 49 Paul travels to Jerusalem to attend the meeting that affirms the terms on which the Gentiles are to be included (Acts 15:1-3).

Table 10. Chronology of Gentile crisis

14.3. Mission from Antioch

We can only conjecture why Barnabas and Saul set out for the places they visited in the "first missionary journey" (see Acts 13:1—14:28). Was Cyprus the first port of call because it was Barnabas's homeland and close at hand to Antioch? Were there disciples on the island who may have given hospitality to the missionaries? Or, with greater probability, were Cyprus and the cities of Galatia favored by a visit because they were *Roman* settlements where a Roman citizen might find protection from synagogue beatings such as Saul had suffered during the "unknown years"?

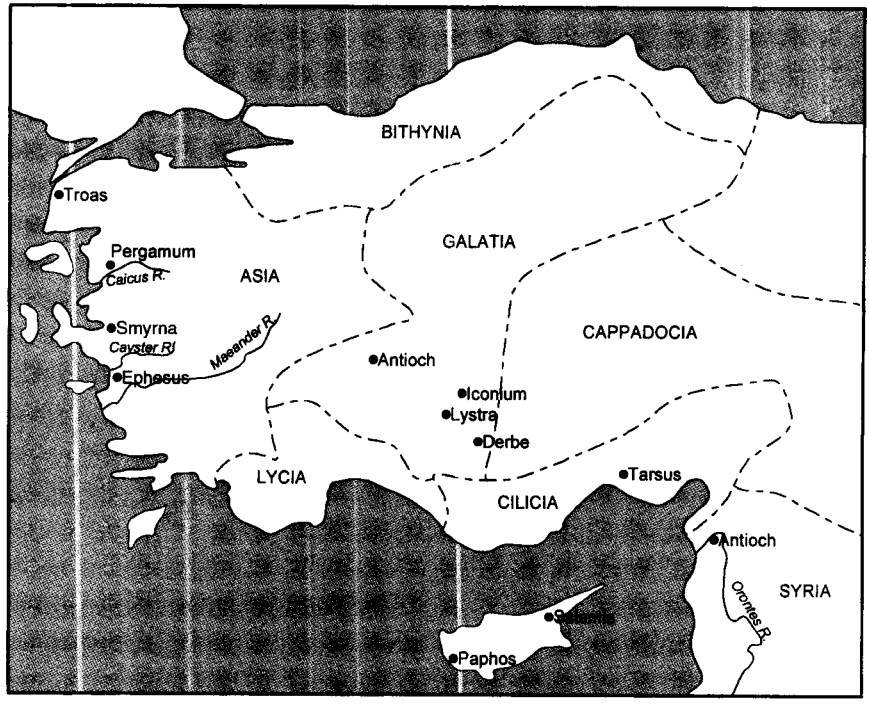
In Cyprus Saul deliberately went to the provincial capital Paphos where, arguably, he positioned himself to minister to the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paullus, who became his major Gentile convert. From an eminent family, L. Sergius Paullus was previously a Roman senator who was later to become a consul of Rome in the early years of the emperor Vespasian. As a mark of the proconsul's greatness, Saul now adopted the cognomen *Paulus,* an uncommon Roman name. Saul would probably not have done this except with the goodwill of the eminent L. Sergius Paullus.

A clear strategy is signaled by Saul's approach to this distinguished Roman. Saul, the Roman Jew, had Rome as his ultimate destination, but his first port of call was Paphos, the capital of the Roman province of Cyprus. His first Gentile convert was the proconsul.

Barnabas and Paul's decision on their arrival in Pamphylia to leave behind the well-populated coastal cities like Perge, Attalia, Side and Aspendos, and head inland through the rugged Taurus range to the high country of the Anatolian plateau calls for some explanation. Why did they pass by the significant missionary

opportunity that lay before them in the cities of the coastal plain? Some have proposed that Paul's health needs brought them to the high country, based on his words to the Galatians, "it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first" (Gal 4:13-16). However, this does does not explain why he went by the Augustan highway from Perge so deliberately to Pisidian Antioch as the springboard for the mission to the cities of Galatia. Most probably the decision was based on a policy of establishing the gospel in centers of Roman population. (This was sufficiently controversial for their attendant John Mark to proceed no farther. Had Mark become nervous about this new emphasis on the mission to *Roman* Gentiles?)

This journey into the interior, then, was probably based on *Roman* considerations. Pisidian Antioch had been refounded by Augustus as the leading Roman



Map 19. Asia Minor

colony in the east in 29 B.C. with a large contingent of Italian settlers.[2] Under Tiberius a massive building program had transformed Antioch into an overtly Roman city, deliberately modeled on Rome itself. Pisidian Antioch was located on the Via Sebaste, the great trunk road that connected Ephesus to Mesopotamia. No less than two legions were stationed in this city. As the leading city of a cluster of Roman cities, this city effectively controlled the land routes from west to east. Further, Pisidian Antioch was an appropriate gateway for mission journeys to other Roman cities in the region, cities like Iconium and Lystra. Little is known of Derbe, but there is some evidence for its location in the center of the region of Lycaonia.[3] It is a matter of debate whether Derbe lay within the Roman province of Galatia or within the kingdom of Commagene. Most probably Derbe, like Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, lay within Roman jurisdiction. Be that as it may, Pisidian Antioch was the gateway overland from the east via a series of stepping stones to the Imperial City itself. Paul would pass through that gateway and purposefully make his way via such intermediate Roman centers as Ephesus, Corinth and Philippi to Rome.

Moreover, it is now known that the family of L. Sergius Paulus, though of Italian descent, had for some generations been domiciled in Pisidian Antioch. An inscription bearing the name of his son or grandson has now been unearthed in Pisidian Antioch. It is plausibly suggested that Paul came to this city with letters of introduction from the proconsul of Cyprus. After all, the missionaries needed friends of substance and influence, especially in the face of anticipated hostility in the synagogues.

It is possible that Paul deliberately came to Pisidian Antioch via Cyprus in the hope of some support from Sergius Paulus. After all, his traveling companion Barnabas was a Cypriot who probably knew the name of the new proconsul (senatorial-appointed governors served for only one year) and of his connections with *Colonia Caesareia Antiocheia*. Moreover, Paul may have changed his name at this juncture, not only to mark the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the first Roman governor to embrace the faith of Christ, but also to acknowledge the patronage and protection of the Paulii family in Pisidia.

The major example of Paul's synagogue preaching recorded in the book of Acts is a speech given at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:16-41). While Paul emphasized the motif of the fulfillment of prophecies in the resurrected son of David, his sermon concluded with a warning to the historic people of God not to scoff at this message. Doubtless the news of Paul's conversion of Gentiles like Sergius Paulus had come to their attention. Paul secured support from some Jews, but more particularly from the God-fearers, those Gentile sympathizers of Judaism who attended the synagogues. For the first time these are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as being ministered to by Paul, though there were other God-fearers mentioned earlier who were evangelized by others. The Ethiopian treasurer was presumably a God-fearer, and the Roman Cornelius is explicitly called a God-fearer (Acts 8:27; 10:2).

Paul explicitly addressed the God-fearers in the synagogue, along with his Jewish

hearers; God-fearers were among those impressed by his words (Acts 13:16, 26, 43). Yet the Jews who took exception to Paul's preaching were able to influence a number of the women God-fearers who were prominent in Pisidia and the local magistrates (some of whom may have been husbands of these women) to oppose Paul. This illustrates the unusual relationship of the God-fearers to the synagogue. Many proved to be open to the new preaching, that Jesus was the Christ of Israel in whom there was acceptance with God apart from circumcision and the Jewish law. Others, however, were influenced by the local Jews to oppose the apostle Paul.[4] The hostility of God-fearers is also reported, by inference, at Iconium (Acts 14:2, 5). The Jewish opposition to Paul, which was expressed through Gentiles in Antioch and Iconium, also followed the apostle to Lystra, where it inspired stoning by the Gentile mob. Evidently Jews in these cities and towns had considerable power, not only in regard to God-fearers in the synagogues, but also more broadly in relationship with the wider communities.

When Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps back through these cities, they established assemblies composed of those Jews and God-fearers who had previously accepted the missionaries' teachings about Christ (Acts 14:21-23). Local elders (*presbyteroi*, "presbyters") were now appointed. Inevitably, however, problems associated with Judaism and the new assemblies would soon occur, reports of which followed Paul on his return to Antioch-on-the-Orontes.

From c. 47 Paul's ultimate destination was Rome. The Roman proconsul of Cyprus and the Roman cities of Galatia were important first steps taken in the direction of the imperial capital. However, Paul's intentional mission to win Gentile converts, undeterred by synagogue hostility, was to have powerful repercussions, both in the new churches in Galatia and also in Jerusalem.

14.4. Upheaval in Judea

Paul's initial foray into the Gentile world westward occurred at a time of deep unrest within Judea. It is helpful to understand the first mission against a background of deepening hostility to the Gentile world. The slaughter of Jews in Alexandria from 39 and the barely averted desecration of the holy place in 41 were followed in 44 by the unexpected death of their popular king, Herod Agrippa, a massive blow to the hopes of the people. Back marched the Roman legionaries with new governors to assume administration of the province of Judea, to which now for the first time Galilee was also added.

The new governors under Claudius were styled "procurators," with a tax-gathering emphasis, rather than "prefects," who had had a military role. Now there was even more opportunity for corruption and extortion. The first such procurator, Cuspius Fadus, was particularly inept as well as insensitive to Jewish scruples. Among his unwise acts was the reclamation of the vestments of the high priest, which Vitellius had earlier restored to them.[5] At that time a self-styled prophet

named Theudas led a mob from Jerusalem to the brink of the Jordan, where he had promised, Joshua-like, to part the waters by command allowing the people to follow him across to the wilderness.[6] Perhaps from that place of sacred deliverance in the great age of the exodus conquest, this prophet hoped to lead the people back to reconquer the land. The opportunity did not arise. The Romans were waiting at the Jordan, and they killed the prophet and brought his head back to Jerusalem on a pole.

Worse, from the midforties the entire Middle East entered a period of protracted famine.[7] Surviving records register a steep increase in the price of grain, the food staple of the people.[8] This forced many people into theft. Bands of robbers assembled, each with their leader. It was a short step from this banditry to a more political, even military, formation to act against the Roman occupying forces. Among those who rose up were James and Simon, the sons of Judas, the rebel leader who was killed in the uprising of 6/7. These men were crucified at the hands of the governor, Tiberius Alexander, an apostate Jew. Josephus, a boy at the time, conveys the strong impression that severe economic hardship resulting from the famine led to deep social unrest.

Each year following the death of King Herod Agrippa appeared to bring worsening difficulties. Paul set out with Barnabas for ministry in Roman settlements at this unpropitious time. He invited Gentiles to attach themselves to the believers from the covenant people by preaching a circumcision-free gospel, centered in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ.

14.5. The debate about circumcision

Paul's mission activity in Cyprus and the province of Galatia must be understood against the background of Jewish and Gentile attitudes toward one another. The Greek and Roman writers of the first and second centuries convey a generally negative attitude toward Jews and Judaism.[9] This race with its religion was perceived as socially aloof from the Gentile world of the day.

The much traveled Philostratus, the biographer of the wonderworker Apollonius of Tyana, commented on the distinctiveness of the Jews.

> For the Jews have long been in revolt not only against the Romans but against humanity; and a race that has made its own a life apart and irreconcilable, that cannot share with the rest of mankind the pleasures of the table nor join in their libations or sacrifices.[10]

The historian Tacitus, a former senator and consul in Rome who became proconsul of Asia early in the second century, had extensive opportunities to observe their behavior in a province where there were large concentrations of Jews.

> The Jews . . . sit apart at meals, and they sleep apart. . . . They adopted circumcision to distinguish themselves from other people by this difference. Those who are converted to their ways follow the same practice.[11]

From the Jewish perspective, circumcision was a matter of debate. Not all Jews regarded circumcision as obligatory. The school of Hillel argued against the school of Shammai that proselyte baptism was valid in itself without circumcision.[12] In the diaspora, liberal Jews were teaching that a Gentile who observed *spiritually* the requirements of circumcision need take part in the external rite. Philo of Alexandria objected to such views.

> Let us not abolish the law of circumcision on the ground that circumcision signifies the cutting away of pleasure and passions of every sort and the destruction of ungodly glory.[13]

Philo affirmed that circumcision did not merely signify the cutting away of sensual evil, as if it could be dispensed with if right attitudes were adopted.

Josephus writes at length of a specific situation in which circumcision was being treated in just that manner. In 40, Izates, the king of Adiabene in Mesopotamia, was being instructed in the Jewish religion by a certain Ananias. Izates was advised to worship God according to the laws of the Jews, but without being circumcised. " 'The king could,' [Ananias] said, 'worship God even without being circumcised if indeed he had fully decided to be a devoted adherent of Judaism, for it was this that counted more than circumcision.' "[14]

However, a Galilean Eleazar, who was visiting Adiabene, convinced the king that he must be circumcised. "In your ignorance, O King, you are guilty of the greatest offence against the Law and thereby against God. For you ought not merely to read the Law but also, and even more, to do what is commanded in it. How long will you continue to be uncircumcised?"[15] Izates submitted to circumcision.

Thus the debate between Paul and the circumcision party from Jerusalem in the forties and fifties was not altogether without precedent. Those who insisted that Gentiles must be circumcised as a prerequisite to conversion to Judaism would have represented the mainstream view of the Jews, especially in times of deteriorating relations between Jews and Gentiles, as was the case from the forties. Nonetheless, there does not appear to have been a proactive Jewish mission to win Gentile proselytes.[16] Rather, Gentiles became God-fearers and proselytes because of their attraction to the theology and ethic of Judaism.

Paul's insistence on a circumcision-free gospel for Gentiles, however, was not at all because he was a "liberal" Jew. On the contrary, Paul was a "zealot" who had persecuted fellow Jews like Stephen whom he would have regarded as "liberal." The pre-Christian Paul would have insisted that proselytes be circumcised. Rather,

Paul's present insistence on freedom from circumcision for believing Gentiles was christologically based and a sign of his own radical conversion to Jesus the Messiah.

14.6. Agitation in the Galatian churches

Upon his return to Antioch in Syria, Paul found it necessary to write to the newly formed churches in Galatia. The book of Acts, because it keeps our attention directed toward Paul, does not tell us about the circumstances of the churches left behind in Galatia as the fruits of his ministry. Paul's letter to the Galatians, which was written "quickly" (Gal 1:6) after his visit, provides a valuable glimpse of what had happened in the meantime. It appears that the hostility from the Jews and God-fearers (as influenced by the Jews) against Paul and Barnabas when they were preaching in Galatia (Acts 13:50) was experienced within the new assemblies after their departure. Reports of these troubles reached the apostle in Antioch, prompting a speedily written letter to deal with the crisis.

The churches in Galatia were being "troubled" by a group of Jews led by an unidentified individual (Gal 5:10, 12; 3:1; 1:6). As far as we can see, these Jews were teaching a gospel at variance with Paul's preaching. They told the churches that unless Gentiles, including the God-fearers, were circumcised, they were not "sons of Abraham," not members of the "Israel of God" (Gal 3:6-14; 6:16). These "agitators," as Paul calls them, were putting pressure on their fellow Jews within the churches to compel Gentile believers to submit to circumcision (Gal 6:12). It had a domino effect. There are hints of inducements to the Gentile God-fearer members, whether of flattery or of duress (Gal 4:17, 29). It appears their efforts were meeting with considerable success, as reflected by the urgency and severity of Paul's tone throughout the letter.

While it is not clear that the Gentiles had submitted to circumcision, there is reason to believe that the Gentiles in the churches were now observing the Jewish calendar (Gal 4:8-11). Their embrace of the law, at least in principle, meant that, from Paul's view, they must be re-evangelized and to that end he preached the circumcision-free, law-free gospel to them so passionately in this letter (Gal 4:12-20).

Who are these Jews who have penetrated the churches of Galatia and where have they come from? It is almost certain that they had come from Jerusalem and that they were members of the circumcision party (cf. Gal 2:12; 4:25). It is quite apparent that Paul was responding throughout to a skewed portrayal of him that could not have been known in Galatia and that must have come from Jerusalem. It is probable that these Jerusalem Jews allied themselves with the local synagogue leaders in persuading believing Jews in the new assemblies to apply a Judaizing pressure to the Gentile believers, most of whom were probably God-fearers. Their argument appears to have been that Paul had no authority in his own right but was entirely subject to the authority of the Jerusalem apostles (cf. Gal 1:1, 11-12,

18-19; 2:1, 7-9, 11). Moreover, he was a mere man-pleaser, practicing circumcision when convenient, failing to do so at other times (Gal 1:10; 5:11). This information, though wrongly interpreted from Paul's perspective, must have been sufficiently close to the raw facts that he must correct it.

But how did these "agitators" know that Paul had been in Galatia? One possible source of such knowledge was John Mark, who refused to travel with Paul and Barnabas from the coast through the Tarsus mountains to Pisidia, perhaps for the very reason that he was unconvinced about the rightness of Paul's intentions to win the Gentiles for Jesus the Christ.

The letter to the Galatians is historically significant. The available evidence suggests that Jews did not at that time engage in deliberate and intentional evangelism to win proselytes to Judaism.[17] The arrival of *Christian* Jews from Jerusalem demanding that Gentiles, who were predominantly—perhaps exclusively—God-fearers be circumcised may be without precedent. Previously, Jews of the diaspora were content to allow these Gentile "sympathizers" to attend their synagogues, applying no pressure for their conversion through circumcision and baptism. But Paul's arrival in Phrygian Galatia changed all that. From that time a countermission from Jerusalem to proselytize Gentiles, that is, the God-fearers, became a reality, and the bane of Paul's life and ministry.[18]

Negative reactions to Paul's mission to the Gentiles against the backdrop of the dire circumstances of the forties are readily imaginable. Circumstances could have provoked a countermission from within the messianic community in Jerusalem to Gentiles in Galatia. For them the conditions of inclusion for Gentiles were rightly onerous, in particular the requirement that Gentile males accept circumcision as a sign of the covenant of God with Abraham. Along with this, so it appears, was the requirement to follow the strict dietary laws of the Jews and to observe the sacred calendar. In short, these "agitators" insisted that Gentiles who believed in the Christ must become proselytes to Judaism. For Paul, by contrast, the blessings of righteousness and the Spirit came by faith in the Christ through hearing the word of God. For him "the truth of the gospel" was overturned once any further requirement was demanded beyond faith in Christ.

14.7. Conflict in Antioch in Syria

In the Syrian capital itself Paul faced another major problem. A crisis occurred when a number of men came from Jerusalem, "from James," to Antioch (Gal 2:11-14). Until that time Jews and Gentiles within the community of faith had eaten together, including Cephas who had come to Antioch (during Paul's absence in Cyprus and Galatia?). This freedom of Jew-Gentile intercourse was quite significant since Jews, as a matter of principle, would not enter a house of Gentiles or eat with them (cf. Jn 18:28; Acts 10:14, 28). The newcomers, however, demanded that Jews separate from the uncircumcised at meals, including, we

assume, at the Remembrance Meal instituted by Jesus. It appears that these Jews, who belonged to the Christ, regarded themselves as the true sons of Abraham. They did not regard Gentiles, despite their faith in Christ, as true members of the covenant community. Underlying this, so it seems from this distance, was the requirement that such Gentiles become proselytes to Judaism through circumcision, thereby accepting the cultic and legal observances of Israel.

Paul appears to have had several reasons for mentioning this incident to the Galatians. One was to establish with the Galatians that Cephas did not have an absolute authority over Paul but that the "truth of the gospel" overrode the judgment of even so senior an apostle as Cephas. Besides this, Paul was comparing these emissaries from Jerusalem who provoked a crisis in Antioch with the visiting "agitators" who caused a crisis in the Galatian churches. Indeed, in essence, the visitors to Antioch and the "agitators" in Galatia were saying the same thing. They were demanding that Gentile believers in Christ must become Jews before they could be acceptable members of the messianic community of Israel.

In Antioch Cephas withdrew from the Gentile believers, as did Barnabas despite his partnership with Paul in the recent mission to Gentiles in Cyprus and Galatia. Indeed, the Jewish believers as a whole, following the lead of Cephas and Barnabas, also withdrew. The Jewish and Gentile members of the church of Antioch were effectively divided from each other by these demands. It appeared that there must now be two separate Christian associations, one Jewish and the other Gentile. The demand of these Christian Jews to eat separately from Gentile believers was, in effect, a denial of Paul's circumcision-free gospel and therefore of the "truth of the gospel."

In the ensuing confrontation, Paul reminded Cephas that, although he was a Jew, in the past he had "lived like a Gentile." Paul was probably recalling the well-known occasion when Peter entered the house of Cornelius on the Gentile's terms regarding the things that were eaten (Acts 11:34-48). Cephas ate what was put in front of him in the house of the Gentile. How inconsistent, therefore, for Cephas now to demand that Gentiles live like Jews, eating only what they ate!

Who were these visitors "from James," whom Paul calls "those of the circumcision party"? According to the book of Acts, they taught the necessity of circumcision of Gentiles for their salvation (Acts 15:1). Thus there is remarkable agreement here between Paul's letter to the Galatians and the Acts of the Apostles as to the objectives of these men. Both affirm, in effect, that newcomers from Jerusalem demanded the circumcision of Gentiles as a qualification for their inclusion of the people of the Messiah.

But they did not come at James's request or with his authority. In a passing reference in the Acts of the Apostles, James declares that, in relation to Gentiles in Antioch and Cilicia, "some persons from us have troubled you with words . . . although we gave them no instructions" (Acts 15:24). Who, then, were they? The

book of Acts leaves us in no doubt. These men, now back in Jerusalem, were "believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees" (Acts 15:5). Evidently, the "circumcision party" was composed of Pharisees who had become members of the wider community of the Messiah in Jerusalem. Paul, too, had been such a Pharisee. His views of Gentiles and their views were diametrically opposed. Whereas they insisted that Gentiles be circumcised, Paul was equally insistent that no such conditions should be imposed upon the Gentiles.

14.8. Responses to the circumcision crisis

It appears that Paul made a twofold response to the activities of the "circumcision party" in Galatia and Antioch. First, he wrote immediately to the Galatian churches. Then he traveled south to meet with James in Jerusalem.

The arguments within the worldwide community of believers did not take place within a political vacuum. On the contrary, and thanks to Josephus's accounts, we are aware that the circumcision disputes in the churches of Galatia and in Antioch-on-the-Orontes occurred in deeply unsettled times within Judea.

By our calculation the bad news from Galatia and the dispute in Antioch occurred in 49, the first year of the new procurator, Ventidius Cumanus. Under this governor, a series of grievous acts of desecration by Roman soldiers occurred in Judea.[19] During the Passover a Roman soldier desecrated the temple by exposing his genitalia. Soon after, another soldier publicly tore up the Torah while uttering blasphemies. Both actions created serious public incidents requiring military intervention.

14.8.1. Paul's response: The letter to the Galatians. In the first part of his letter, Paul establishes his independence from the apostles of Jerusalem, in answer—apparently—to the contrary assertions of the "agitators." God's call came to him as an eminent, and zealous, Jew who had been a violent persecutor of the church of God. In consequence he had preached to the Gentiles, as God had commanded him to do, in Arabia and Damascus for three years before he had even met Cephas and James in Jerusalem. After a further eleven years absence, preaching to Gentiles in Syria and Cilicia and Antioch, he again met with the leading apostles in Jerusalem. The "pillars," James, Cephas and John, endorsed his circumcision-free gospel to Gentiles and agreed that he should "go to the Gentiles."

Galatians is Paul's first letter, or at least his first *surviving* letter; there may have been earlier ones. Nonetheless, it must not be thought that the case he is arguing is new to him. Paul had fifteen or sixteen years to reflect upon his theology before it had become necessary to take up his pen. This is confirmed by reading the letter, especially from Galatians 2—4. Running through the letter are a series of sophisticated arguments, with many Old Testament Scriptures from the Septuagint that are cited in support of those arguments.

Critical to Paul's reasoning with the Galatians was the notion of compulsion

(Gal 2:3, 14; 6:12). Had Titus been *compelled* to be circumcised or had the Gentiles of Antioch been *compelled* to "live like Jews," then the "truth of the gospel" would have been overturned (Gal 2:5, 14).[20] To be sure, Paul was prepared, voluntarily, to observe Jewish laws (1 Cor 9:19-21; Ats 18:18) and even to circumcise Timothy (Acts 16:3).[21] But Paul was determined that "the truth of the gospel" should be maintained "for you [Galatians]" (Gal 2:5). The "works of the law" must not be made obligatory for Gentiles.

Paul's case for a circumcision-free gospel for Gentiles is closely argued. First, he points out that even Jewish believers in Christ like himself and those others mentioned by name—James, Cephas, John and Barnabas—were "not justified by works of the law but through faith in Christ" (Gal 2:15-16). There is level ground under both Jews and Gentiles for "justification"—God's verdict, "not condemned"[22]—and that level ground is Christ, and faith in him. Paul is overwhelmed by the love of Christ, "who gave himself for our sins," Paul's included (Gal 1:4; 2:20). Previously as a sinner, a law-breaker, Paul had been dead to a relationship with God (Gal 2:19). But as a man "in Christ," Paul had been, as it were, "crucified with Christ" to the claims of the law, but now raised "justified" with Christ to a new life of relationship with God (Gal 2:19-20).

Mention of faith prompts Paul to remind the readers that the Spirit—that other blessing of God closely related to justification (cf. 2 Cor 3:8-9)—had also been received as they heard with faith the message of Christ crucified (Gal 3:1-5). Having begun with the "Spirit," are they proposing to finish with the "flesh"? This is surely a pun, pointing at the same moment to the "flesh" of the circumcised foreskin and the "flesh" of the "works of the law." By the Spirit, poured out upon them as they heard with faith the gospel of Christ, they have come to know God, as "*Abba*, Father" (Gal 4:4-6). Paul's is a powerful appeal to their experience and, indeed, his own experience when he was present with them. Let them return to the gospel as Paul preached it to them.

Paul then refers to Abraham, in the age before the giving of the law. God made Abraham a promise of a descendant, Christ. Thus, in a sense, God preached the gospel based on a promise to Abraham, which he believed, and it was reckoned to him by God as righteousness (Gal 3:6). Faith in the promise of God has now brought justification to the Gentiles, who are thus blessed by God as sons of Abraham and who had previously been "justified by faith."

By contrast, a curse lies on those who rely on works of the law, for no one is able to fulfill the demands of the law (Gal 3:6). The curse of God fell on Christ crucified upon the "tree" for lawbreakers instead (Gal 3:13). As the Gentiles rely on Christ, rather than the works of the law, the blessing of Abraham comes upon them as they receive the promise of the Spirit.

According to Paul the law of God only had a role with the historic people of God until Christ came, the offspring God had promised Abraham (Gal 3:16-19).

While the law had an educative role, it also had an imprisoning effect (Gal 3:23; 4:1-2). Indeed, now that the time of adulthood has come, Jews who continue to attempt to relate to God by the law are subject to a kind of bondage (Gal 4:1-4). Gentiles in Galatia who have been set free from idolatry by Christ and the Spirit should not revert to a comparable bondage, a spiritual bondage under which unconverted Jews continue to suffer (Gal 4:8-11).

To make the point, Paul relates an exemplary allegory, based on the two wives of Abraham (Gal 4:21-31). Hagar, a slave, bore a son according to the flesh. She is Mount Sinai, where the law was given; the "present Jerusalem" corresponds to her. Jerusalem and her children are slaves. Pointedly, Paul is referring to the circumcision party of Jerusalem and the "gospel" they preach among the Gentiles. The other wife, who was childless, was promised children. Because she believed the promise, she bore a son, Isaac. She is "Jerusalem above" and she is free and her children are free. The Galatian Gentiles who believe the promise of God are likewise the free children of their free mother. They are the true children of Abraham, whereas the "children" of the "present Jerusalem" are slaves.

Thus Paul completes his appeal to the Gentiles with a passionate call to "stand fast therefore . . . and not submit again to a yoke of slavery" by being circumcised (Gal 5:1-4). Faith in Christ, who bore the curse of lawbreaking, is the ground of justification for all people, for Jew and Gentiles alike, and the means of receiving the Spirit. Men and women of faith are the true children of Abraham. Law was introduced subsequently and only for a limited period that has now passed with the coming of Christ. By faith in Christ the Gentiles of Galatia have been justified, given the Spirit, redeemed and set free.

According to Paul, circumcision is now irrelevant to the end-time purposes of God. The "new creation" based on justification and the Spirit is the rule of "the Israel of God," to which these Gentile readers now belong (Gal 6:15-16). Faith in Christ working through love to one another is now everything (Gal 5:6).

Paul's letter to the Galatians is his manifesto in response to the demands of the circumcision party of Jerusalem that Gentiles must become circumcised proselytes to be counted among the true people of God. Here we have Paul's written response to a concrete historical situation. With some assistance from the Acts of the Apostles, the situation is readily imaginable, even though some of the details are beyond our recovery.

Such was Paul's response to the challenge of "the circumcision party." How will James answer their demands?

14.8.2. James's response: The Jerusalem decree. The structure of the Jerusalem church was now different from the early days when the leaders of the community were the twelve apostles of whom Peter was clearly the leader and spokesman. Now, however, there are also "elders" mentioned alongside "apostles." Peter is no longer the leader of the community. That role has fallen to James, the brother of the Lord.

In the intervening years Peter's ministry had often taken him outside Jerusalem as the apostle to the circumcised within the land of Israel, leaving a leadership vacuum.[23] Herod Agrippa's persecutions during the early forties forced Peter and probably other apostles to withdraw from Jerusalem. By the time Agrippa had died in 44, James and "the elders," whoever they might have been, appear to have taken the place of Peter and the apostles (cf. Acts 11:30). The reason for James's emergence as the leader of the Jerusalem community can only be a matter of conjecture. It is quite possible that, apart from his own inherent abilities, James was respected in this role because of his descent from the royal house of David and because he was the younger brother of Jesus the Christ.

A few years earlier, when Saul met privately with the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church, it was clear that James was preeminent, with Cephas and John mentioned after him (Gal 2:1-10). It is possible that James and Cephas (with his junior colleague John) represented two somewhat discrete groups within the wider community. Perhaps in the aftermath of the recent persecutions, James with the elders represented one group, who had now emerged as leaders, whereas Peter and John with the apostles represented the other, whose influence in Jerusalem was waning. When we next catch a glimpse of the Jerusalem church ten years later, there is no mention of Peter or the apostles (Acts 21:18). The church had come under the governance of James and the elders. Peter and John and the other apostles appear to have gone from Jerusalem.

Indeed, by the time the delegates from Antioch came to Jerusalem in c. 49 to address this critical issue, James was the leader of the church and the president of the meeting. In essence, the issue was, "Under what conditions, if any, were Gentiles to be considered members of the community of the Christ, the Messiah of Israel?"

The attitude of the "believers from the party of the Pharisees" was clear. Some of their number had already visited the Galatian churches and the church in Antioch to press the claims of the necessity of the circumcision of the Gentiles. They repeated this demand at the Jerusalem assembly (Acts 15:5).

Peter and Paul took the opposite view (Acts 15:6-12). Peter had witnessed the Holy Spirit fall upon the Gentile Cornelius as he had upon the original Jewish disciples on the day of Pentecost. Barnabas and Paul related the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles in Cyprus and Galatia.

The proceedings of this meeting were not conducted along modern democratic lines, by resolution of a majority. Rather, James heard various arguments and then made *his* decision, which issued in a letter from those present to Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.

Critical to James's oracle was his recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit, as reflected in his words, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28). Most commentators have understood this to refer to the activity of the Holy Spirit

guiding the members of the council. However, it is more likely that James is referring to the involvement of the Spirit in the inclusion of the Gentiles in recent years, most notably Cornelius and his family. He surely was also referring to the fruits of Paul's ministry first in Damascus, Nabataea and Syria-Cilicia but most recently in Cyprus and Southern Galatia. James is not pointing to subjective experience at the council but to the approval of the Holy Spirit evident in the objective results of mission work among the Gentiles, which Peter and Paul have recounted to the Council.[24]

In essence, James handed down a judgment in support of the argument of Peter and Paul against the circumcision party. James perceived that through Peter and Paul God had been calling out Gentiles adding them to his people, without the necessity of circumcision. Here James saw the words of the prophets finding their fulfillment.

> After this I will return,
> and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen;
> I will rebuild its ruins,
> and I will set it up,
> that the rest of men may seek the Lord,
> and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,
> says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old. (Acts 15:16-18)

It has been shown[25] that this is not merely a straightforward quotation of the Septuagint text of Amos 9:11-12; James has also added to that text nuances from other "prophets." Moreover, within this scriptural citation is also to be found its interpretation. In this intertextual use of scriptural passages, James is following methods of exegesis that have become well known to us from the Qumran scribes. Subtle allusions to isolated words and catch phrases in this citation point to clusters of passages from the prophets that affirm the inclusion of the Gentiles.[26]

The "dwelling of David" is the temple God promised through Nathan to David, that David's son "would build" (2 Sam 7:11-16).[27] According to Amos's prophecy, that "dwelling"—historic Israel—had "fallen" and was in "ruins." But God "will rebuild it" and "set it up," that is, upon the foundation of believers from among the Jews, represented by those present then in Jerusalem. These are the "rebuilt dwelling of David," the new temple. The very purpose of this rebuilding is that "the rest of men," that is, "the Gentiles," should "seek the Lord."

James's use of Amos's text is in parallel with Jesus' exegesis of 2 Samuel 7:11-16. Jesus saw that prophecy fulfilled in himself. He was that son of David, the Christ of God—as Peter had acknowledged him to be—who would build his "church" (= temple) on the foundation of the Twelve (Mt 16:16-18).[28] James's citation of Amos 9:11-12 builds upon Jesus' interpretation of 2 Samuel 7:11-16. Jesus' allusion to Nathan's prophecy points to himself as the long-expected son of David,

the Messiah, and as the foundation of that new temple. James takes the matter further, declaring that the new temple has now been "rebuilt" for the very purpose of welcoming the *Gentiles* into its walls.

Thus James uses this text to prove that the end point of God's purposes had always been the inclusion of the Gentiles. But on what conditions? Certainly not circumcision. While previously Gentiles could not enter the old temple without circumcision, now, in the age of the Messiah, the Gentiles could be welcomed into the new temple, the remnant of messianic Israelites, without becoming Jews.

What, then, of James's fourfold requirement that Gentiles abstain from (1) "the pollution of idols," (2) "unchastity," (3) "what is strangled," and (4) "blood"? These restrictions are found in one passage, Leviticus 17—19.[29] Requirements (3) and (4), forbidding the eating of animals killed by choking from which the blood had not been drained, may be two sides of one provision, based on Leviticus 17:10-14. It is by no means certain why James added this requirement to (1) and (2), which are unproblematic, being found also in the Ten Commandments. Are we helped by noting that prohibitions (2) and (3/4) applied also to "the alien living among [Israelites]" (Lev 17:10-14; 18:26)? Did James now see believing Gentiles included with believing Jews as somehow equivalent to the "alien" who "lived among" the Gentiles? Unanswered[30] is the question of why James insisted that Gentiles eat only kosher-killed meat while ignoring other provisions of Leviticus 17—19, including, for example, the keeping of the sabbath, an issue close to Jewish hearts (Lev 19:3, 30), or the prohibition of the practice of sorcery or necromancy (Lev 19:26, 31), which was endemic among Gentiles?

14.8.3. Implications and consequences of James's decision. James's decision at Jerusalem, therefore, had two connected parts: (1) Circumcision must not be demanded of believing Gentiles because they are welcome to the restored "dwelling of David," and therefore (2) they must only be required to observe the requirements that "aliens living among" Israelites were expected to keep. Historically, the two parts were articulated by James in Jerusalem. The historicity of the "no circumcision" decision, which is not referred to outside of the Acts of the Apostles and which has therefore been doubted by some, is validated by the indisputable references to the elements of the fourfold requirements of James elsewhere in the New Testament and later Christian writings (Rev 2:10, 14).[31]

Clearly James perceived "the dwelling of David," the "new temple" of God, to be located in Jerusalem in the living members of the believing community (see also Acts 21:20). From James's perspective, Gentiles from the Gentile world were welcome on the basis of his decision. Indeed, he appears to have seen the church in Jerusalem as the epicenter of God's world mission for the ingathering and inclusion of the Gentiles. James may have seen Peter and Paul as merely part of that mission based in Jerusalem, where he, James, stood at the center as leader.

Nonetheless, James's own primary mission was to Israel. He remained a faithful

Israelite, who presided over a community of law-keeping Israelites in the holy city (Acts 21:21). His fashioned his fourfold decree to be observed by Gentiles for the sake of Jews scattered throughout the world (Acts 15:21). He chided Paul later for his failure to require the Gentiles to observe the decree (Acts 21:25). Paul delivered the letter from the Jerusalem meeting expressing James's decree, but only to churches in Syria, Cilicia and Galatia (Acts 15:23, 30, 41; 16:4). Paul did not impose the food requirements for the kosher-killed meat and against the idol-sacrificed meat upon the Corinthians (1 Cor 10:23—11:1)[32] or, we assume, other Gentile churches, though he was vehement regarding prohibition of the worship of idols and the practice of fornication.[33]

14.9. Summary

During the middle and late forties Paul took the gospel of Jesus the Christ westward to the Gentiles in Cyprus and Phrygian Galatia. He appears to have set out with deliberation, with particular interest in Roman Gentiles, as a preliminary to going to Rome. But at this very time Jewish-Roman relationships had seriously deteriorated in Judea, especially after the death of King Herod Agrippa in 44. At the same time Jews were very concerned about admitting Gentiles to the community of Israel apart from circumcision.

Paul's missionary activity among Gentiles in Cyprus and southern Galatia, without the requirement of circumcision, appears to have come to the attention of the circumcision party in the Jerusalem church. These were Pharisees who believed in Christ. Representatives of this group visited Galatia and Antioch in Syria, insisting that Gentiles become proselytes to Judaism through circumcision and observance of the Jewish law. In Jerusalem in c. 49 James ruled that Gentiles must be welcomed into the restored "dwelling of David." However, for the sake of Jews in general, the Gentiles were required to conform to a number of conditions. Only the passing of the years would determine to what extent the Gentiles observed James's fourfold decree.

Excursus 14A: An early dating for Galatians

New Testament scholars have for many years debated whether Galatians should be dated to the middle fifties, written to a north Galatian cluster of churches, or whether this was, in fact, Paul's first (extant) letter, written in the late forties to the churches of southern Galatia.[34]

The north Galatian destination bears the weighty imprimatur of J. B. Lightfoot with extensive arguments by James Moffatt,[35] and it has been followed by a significant number of scholars. There are several major reasons advanced for supporting this view. One is that the migrating Gauls, known at that time as Galatians, are known to have settled north of the region visited by Paul as recorded in Acts 13—14 and that they gave their name to *that* region. The Roman province of Galatia is that northern region; the places visited by Paul in Acts 13—14, it is argued, were not then called Galatia or Galatian. Indeed, Acts 13—14 nowhere refers to the regions evangelized by Paul as "Galatia." In fact, only after Paul had revisited these southern churches, according to Acts 16:6, did he then "[go] through the region of Phrygia and Galatia" (cf. Acts 18:23).

The north Galatian view proposes that Paul evangelized this region at that later time and that the letter to "churches of Galatia" was written some years later (Gal 1:2). Consistent with this, it is argued, the letter to the Galatians is expressed in terms similar to 2 Corinthians and Romans, which were known to have been written c. 56/57. Galatians is seen to be much closer to the forensic arguments based on "justification"/"righteousness" concepts than the more eschatological and apocalyptic style of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, which were written c. 50-55. Galatians, it is admitted, is somewhat out of keeping with those earlier letters.

Notwithstanding the force of the above arguments and the distinguished scholars who have held this opinion, the view taken here is that Paul's letter to the Galatians was written in the late forties, soon after his return from the regions described in Acts 13—14. The primary consideration here is that the book of Acts has a detailed and lengthy account of Paul's visit to these cities of the Anatolian plateau, which he later revisited and strengthened (Acts 16:6; 18:23). On the other hand, we know of no evangelism by Paul in the sparsely populated northern region, nor of the creation of churches there. As noted earlier, Paul appears to have set his sights on Roman colonies and capitals of well-established provinces. The rather wild northern Galatian region was not notably Romanized at this time.

What, then, of the assertion that the southern region is not the province that takes its name from the ethnic Galatians who settled in the more northerly parts two centuries earlier? The matter is settled by writers of the period, Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy, each of whom include Pisidia as part of the province of Galatia.[36] Further, there is an inscription from Pednelissus, in southern Pisidia, calling it "a city of Galatia."[37] It is clear that by Paul's day Galatia extended south of the ethnically defined northerly region and that the cities evangelized by him in his first missionary journey were part of greater Galatia.

Moreover, that southern part of Galatia was described as "Phrygian." Geographical extremities within provinces were often described adjectivally in terms of an adjoining province or region.[38] It is evident that the southern parts of Galatia were so described by reference to the adjoining region, Phrygia.[39] Thus the critical statement of Act 16:6 (cf. Acts 18:23), that Paul and his companions "went through the region of Phrygia and Galatian" is to be understood as their return journey though "Phrygian Galatia."[40]

Consistent with an early dating for the letter is Paul's exclamation that these churches have "so quickly" (Gal 1:6) turned their backs on his circumcision-free gospel to an alternative message as proclaimed by the "agitators." Paul could, indeed, speak of such a brief space of time on the "southern" Galatian hypothesis since it could only have been a matter of months between his return to Antioch and the arrival of the first reports of problems in the Anatolian churches. The other hypothesis, however, requires the lapse of five or six years between the supposed evangelization of the northern Galatia (c. 49/50) and the writing of letters in the theological style of 2 Corinthians and Romans (c. 56/57). In those circumstances Paul would not have used the reproachful words, "so quickly." Indeed, the whole tenor of the letter is one of passionate urgency (see, e.g., Gal 4:19-20; 6:17).

A significant portion of the letter is devoted to Paul's review of past events. He begins by referring to his "former life in Judaism," which was interrupted by God's call to preach to the Gentiles, followed by his visits to Arabia and Damascus. He continues with an account of his visit to Jerusalem, his withdrawal to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, his second visit to Jerusalem, an incident in Antioch and, finally, his visit to Galatia to preach the gospel. This is where Paul's review ends, with his ministry to the Galatians. Had the letter been directed to a north Galatian destination, we would expect some references beyond areas beyond Antioch—to Asia, Macedonia and Achaia—but there are none. Almost certainly, therefore, the letter to the Galatians was directed to those churches established by Paul in Phrygian Galatia in the late forties, as narrated in Acts 13—14.

What, then, of the theological factor? Whereas the Thessalonian letters and 1 Corinthians are effectively free of references to "justification"/"righteousness," in 2 Corinthians and, more particularly, in Romans, there is considerable exposition of the doctrines associated with this forensic concept. Since "justification"/"righteousness" is prominent in Galatians, surely this letter, like 2 Corinthians and Romans, was also written in the middle fifties.

This viewpoint fails to recognize, however, that Paul had been preaching to Gentiles for more than fourteen years before the mission to the Galatians. Significantly, this ministry had been exercised in regions congruent with Jerusalem, the world center of Judaism. The issues associated with the circumcision of Gentile converts in Galatia could not have been new. This would explain why the argument in the letter is so well developed, including its use of the "justification"/"righteousness" vocabulary. For Paul there had been many years to work out how believing Gentiles fitted in with the purposes of the God of Abraham. His thought is revealed by his use of various scriptural citations in Galatians.

Paul displays remarkable capacity to respond to the pastoral needs of the moment in the various churches. Because neither the Thessalonians nor the Corinthians, initially, were troubled by the circumcision question, the "justification"/"righteousness" theology finds no reference in 1 and 2 Thessalonians or in 1 Corinthians. With the arrival of the Judaizers in Corinth after the writing of 1 Corinthians, we find this vocabulary in 2 Corinthians and in Romans, which was written next and from Corinth.

Paul's sensitivity to current pastoral situations is well illustrated by contrasting the two (extant) Corinthian letters. Almost no issue found in 1 Corinthians carries on into the second letter, even though only a year separated the two letters (2 Cor 8:6, 10; 1 Cor 16:1-4). Once the Judaizing issues reappeared, however, Paul reintroduced the "justification"/"righteousness" terminology from Galatians. This is not to assert that the Judaizing of the Galatians and the Corinthians was identical. Doubtless there had been changes during the six or seven intervening years, including the resolution of the circumcision issue by the Jerusalem decree of c. 49; circumcision finds no reference in 2 Corinthians. Nonetheless, the Judaizers may have had other other objectives and other strategies.[41]

In short, there is no substantial reason to subscribe to a north Galatian hypothesis. This is a theory for which no clear historical evidence can be found. Consistent with Acts 16:6 and 18:23, the southern region was *Phrygian* Galatia. On the other hand, the earlier construct fits in exactly with both the narrative of Acts and the chronology of Paul's review in Galatians. Galatians' own reference to the brevity of time ("so quickly") between Paul's mission to the Galatians and the writing of the letter, together with the passion and urgency expressed throughout, is potent reason for accepting the early dating of the letter. Paul must have been reflecting on the very issues in Galatians for a decade and a half before he wrote the letter. This, along with his undoubted ability to address issues of the moment with high concentration, accounts for the developed theological emphases found in Galatians.

Although the northern hypothesis, with its concomitant, a later dating, has had widespread support from New Testament scholarship, the verdict of ancient historians should be heard. Stephen Mitchell, the greatest authority of the century on Galatia, has commented, "the most authoritative champion of the Southern Galatian Theory was the great explorer of Asia Minor, W. M. Ramsay, and although the North Galatian Theory finds many supporters, his work long ago should have put the matter beyond dispute."[42] The noted Roman historian Fergus Millar has spoken of the letter to the Galatians as "almost certainly the earliest" of the Pauline letters.[43]

Excursus 14B: The missionary agreement and the Jerusalem Council

It is frequently claimed that Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 15:6-21 are Paul's and Luke's separate

accounts of the one event, the meeting of the Jerusalem Council.[44] Two meetings in Jerusalem to resolve the issue of the circumcison of Gentile believers is surely unlikely, it is claimed.

Against this view and in favor of two meetings, the following considerations are raised.

1. This hypothesis requires that Galatians 2:1-10, Paul's second visit to Jerusalem,[45] be equated with the third visit mentioned by the Acts of the Apostles.[46] This is very unlikely. In Galatians for strong apologetic reasons, Paul is very precise in his review of his visits to Jerusalem: "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem" (Gal 2:1). Failure to mention an interim visit to Jerusalem would have been a fatal omission by Paul.

2. The meeting recorded in Galatians 2:1-10 was a private meeting between James, Cephas and John, "pillars" of the Jerusalem church, and Barnabas and Paul, delegates from the church at Antioch. Acts 15:6-21, however, describes an assembly of some size, consisting of "apostles and elders" presided over by James, which Barnabas and Paul attended and at which they spoke.

3. According to Galatians 2:7-9 James, Cephas and John, having recognized the validity of Paul's circumcision-free gospel, agreed that Barnabas and Paul should go to the Gentiles. However, Acts 15:6-21 makes sense only on the basis that Barnabas and Paul had already preached to the Gentiles.

There is a more plausible reconstruction of the events. Paul made his second visit to Jerusalem, in company with Barnabas, with famine relief for the church, prompted by the visit to Antioch by Agabas the prophet, as in Acts 11:27-30. The "revelation" of Galatians 2:2 that brought Paul to Jerusalem was received during Agabus's ministry in Antioch. In the course of their visit to Jerusalem, the delegates from Antioch met privately with James, Cephas and John. Their decision that Barnabas and Paul "go to the Gentiles" was contingent upon them remembering the poor (believers in Jerusalem). Paul's assertion of Galatians 2:10, "which very thing I had been eager[47] to do," accommodates the famine relief visit of Acts 11:27-30 and anticipates the collection from the churches of the Gentiles taken in the midfifties. Paul's vigorous approach to evangelizing the Gentiles of the Roman cities, including to no less a person than the proconsul of Cyprus, Sergius Paullus, raised problems that may not have been anticipated at the private meeting in c. 47 in Jerusalem. Greater precision regarding the scale of Gentile inclusion was urgently needed. This was arrived at in a more representative setting, prompting the meeting in Jerusalem in c. 49.[48]

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Notes

[1]Much depends on the dating and destination of the letter to the Galatians. The view taken here is that the letter was written to south Galatia and that it was written soon after Paul's visit there. See excursus 14A.
[2]See Stephen Mitchell, "The Rise of the Church," *Anatolia* 2 (1993): 6-8.
[3]See Bastiaan Van Elderen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Festschrift* for F. F. Bruce, ed. W. W. Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), pp. 156-61.
[4]See Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 5. Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 124-26.
[5]Josephus *Ant.* 20.7-9.
[6]Ibid., 20.97-99. See Paul W. Barnett, "The Jewish Sign Prophets A.D. 40-70," *NTS* 27 (1981): 679-97.
[7]Josephus *Ant.* 20.101.
[8]Colin Hemer, "Observations on Pauline Chronology," in *Pauline Studies,* ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), pp. 5-9.
[9]See Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976-1984), pp. 1-111.
[10]Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 5.33.
[11]Tacitus *Histories* 5.5.
[12]Babylonian Talmud *Yebamot* 46a.
[13]Philo *Migration of Abraham* 92.
[14]Josephus *Ant.* 20.41.
[15]Ibid., 20.44.
[16]See excursus 13B.
[17]Ibid.
[18]See, e.g., 2 Corinthians 10:1—12:13; Philippians 3:1-10.
[19]Josephus *Ant.* 20.103-15.
[20]Had Paul agreed on voluntary terms that Titus be circumcised in Jerusalem? Does this underlie the jibe that Paul still, in fact, preaches circumcision (Gal 5:11)?
[21]Strictly speaking, Timothy was a Jew, based on his mother's heritage, although his father was a Gentile. For Paul to have an uncircumcised Jew working alongside him would have proved difficult in ministry to Jews.
[22]Cf. 2 Corinthians 3:8 where Paul contrasts the ministry of *righteousness* (*dikaiosunē*, "justification") with the ministry of *condemnation.*
[23]See §12.5.3.
[24]I am indebted for this insight to the Rev. Dr. John McIntosh, who provided me with a brief unpublished paper. He cites in support among a few others G. Haya-Prats, *L'Esprit, Force De L'Eglise: Sa Nature et Son activite d'apres les Acts des Apotres* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1975), p. 185 (not seen by me).
[25]Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: 4.Palestinian Setting,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 450-62.
[26]See especially LXX Jer 12:15-16; cf. Bauckham, "James," pp. 454-57.

[27]See P. W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 94-98.
[28]See §8.6; 12.3-4.
[29]Leviticus 17:10-14; 19:26 (against the eating of blood); Leviticus 18:1-30 (against various forms of sexual unchastity); Leviticus 19:4 (against making and worshiping idols).
[30]But cf. Bauckham, "James," pp. 458-62, who argues that the catch phrase "in the midst of" establishes just these four requirements for Gentiles who would enter the eschatological people of God.
[31]For evidence of other references to the decree of James, see Bauckham, "James," pp. 464-65.
[32]On further reflection after the Jerusalem Council, Paul may have decided that the ritual terms of the decree were legalistic and contrary to his law-free, circumcision-free gospel.
[33]1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14—7:1; 12:21—13:2.
[34]For a detailed study, which favors an early dating of Galatians, see Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), pp. 277-307.
[35]Moffatt's detailed arguments are given and answered in Hemer, *Book of Acts.*
[36]Ibid., pp. 294-95.
[37]Ibid., p. 301.
[38]Ibid., pp. 282-85.
[39]Ibid., p. 295.
[40]So F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 353-54.
[41]See Paul W. Barnett, "Opposition in Corinth," *JSNT* 22 (1987): 3-17.
[42]*ABD*, 2:871.
[43]Fergus Millar, "Hagar, Ishmael, Josephus and the Origin of Islam," *JJS* 44 (1993): 38.
[44]For survey and discussion, see David Wenham, "Acts and the Pauline Corpus: II. The Evidence of Parallels," in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting: 1. Ancient Literary Setting,* ed. Bruce Winter and Andrew Clarke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 226-43.
[45]The first was Galatians 1:18-9.
[46]The first three Jerusalem visits by Paul are cited in Acts 9:26-30; 11:27-30; 15:1-3.
[47]Greek *espoudasa,* an aorist, is effectively a pluperfect, "I had been eager." See F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians,* NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), pp. 126-27.
[48]See R. Bauckham, "James," pp. 468-70.

15

James, Cephas & John

15.1. The "pillars"

In this chapter we trace the ministries of the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church who, it was agreed, would take the gospel of Christ to the Jews. Cephas/Peter, John and James were leaders in mission work among Jews in Palestine—Judea, Samaria and Galilee—during the thirties and forties, that is, up to the Jerusalem Council c. A.D. 49. For the next decades these three men, among others, continued missionary work among Jews, though our information about them compared to Luke's narratives about Paul's mission westward to the Gentiles is fragmentary.

Cephas/Peter, John and James knew the historical Jesus very well, unlike Paul who either did not know Jesus at all or at best had only a fleeting awareness of him. Paul was driven in his ministry by the power of his conversion and call and the traditions about Jesus that he had received from the original disciples. By contrast Cephas/Peter and John had been disciples who were already set on a trajectory of mission as a result of three or more years of close association with Jesus. Although James was not originally a disciple but a post-resurrection convert, as Jesus' sibling he had a close and special knowledge of his brother. While the skeptical might explain away Paul's missionary zeal as experience-driven, the mission work of Cephas/Peter, John and James flowed out of their extended contact with the historical Jesus into the thirties and forties and beyond that into the fifties and sixties. Their missionary careers over four or more decades serve to validate Jesus' genuineness as the Christ of God. Indeed, the independent yet missionary directions of their lives throughout those decades is inexplicable otherwise.

15.2. The Jerusalem meeting c. A.D. 47

The meeting of leaders in Jerusalem in c. 47 recorded in Galatians 2:7-9 points forward to the future apostolic ministry:

> When they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Unfortunately Paul does not say what transpired after it was agreed that he, with Barnabas, "should go" to the Gentiles and that James, Cephas and John "should go"[1] to the circumcision. This passage, more than any other in the New Testament, explains the subsequent *actual* history of the apostolic age. The dominating effect of Paul's letters and the narratives of the Acts of the Apostles, whose chief character is Paul, easily creates the impression that this was the only apostolic history. Not explicitly narrated, but no less important, was the apostolate to the circumcised, led by James, Cephas and John.

Here a qualification is appropriate. It is likely that the three "pillars," James, Cephas and John, did not represent one apostolate, but two, at least when the agreement was struck. By the late forties James and the "elders" appear to have represented one group within the Jerusalem community; Cephas and John, with the "apostles," represented another.[2] James had not been a disciple of Jesus; he was a latecomer to the community of faith (Acts 1:14; 12:17). Cephas and John, however, had previously been fishing partners in Capernaum (Lk 5:10).[3] Along with James Zebedee, Peter and John had formed an inner circle close to Jesus. The names of Peter and John are often bracketed in the Gospel of John and the early chapters of the book of Acts.[4] The Gospel of John and Peter's first letter share teachings not found elsewhere in the New Testament.[5] These two were long-term friends and held many ideas in common. Galatians 2:7-9 may well mask the reality that there were to be *two* apostolates to the circumcised, one led by James, the other by Cephas and John together. From that time it was probably assumed that James would preach to Jews in the land of Israel while Cephas and John would go to the diaspora. As it happened, Cephas and John would soon take separate paths, geographically speaking, but that may not have been in their minds in c. 47.

15.3. The impact of Paul's mission to the Gentiles

Paul's ministry in Galatia and Antioch in Syria provoked visits by members of the Jerusalem church to these places to rectify the effects of Paul's teachings. This is evident from Galatians 2:11-14 in regard to the visit of "men from James" to Antioch, and it is to be inferred from Galatians as a whole, where Paul corrects misinformation about himself that could only have come from Jerusalem.[6] These rather shadowy figures appear to have been alarmed that Paul was going so deliberately to the Gentiles and that he was preaching a circumcision-free gospel. By their countermission they were actually engaging in deliberate *Jewish* proselytization of Gentiles, and of God-fearers in particular, something that to our knowledge is without precedent.[7]

It is clear from Galatians that Paul reacted vehemently against this proselytizing in the churches in Galatia and in Syria. We assume that the church in Jerusalem must also have been in turmoil over the inclusion of Gentiles. Nonetheless, it appears that all parties anticipated the inclusion of the Gentiles in the community of Christ. Conflict arose over the terms that were to be imposed on the Gentiles as a condition of entry.

James enunciated his attitude at the Council of Jerusalem in c. 49. He saw the inclusion of the Gentiles as the fulfillment of the end-time purposes of God. However, for the sake of their relationship with Jews in the diaspora, these Gentiles who believed in Christ were required to accede to the terms of the decree abstaining from idol worship, from unchastity and from kosher-killed meat.[8]

James's known attitudes may have created an ethos in Jerusalem in which the circumcision faction, which was composed of former Pharisees who had come to believe in Christ (Acts 15:5), felt supported. Theirs was a grudging acceptance that Gentiles might be included in the purposes of God. However, they felt the Gentiles must walk the path of other proselytes in accepting the full weight of conversion to Judaism, including submission to circumcision.

As far as we can discern the situation in Jerusalem in the middle and late forties, it appears that Cephas and John, with the remaining apostles, led a more moderate group within the wider community. Peter had baptized the household of the Gentile Cornelius, without circumcision. To be sure, he crumbled beneath the pressure of the circumcision party in Antioch, though this may have been a temporary lapse. Was it the case that Cephas found Jerusalem rather uncomfortable in the new situation of James's leadership and the assertiveness of the circumcision advocates who found James's attitudes more acceptable than Peter's? Was Peter's discomfort intensified by the rising tide of Jewish nationalism and violence following the famine as Jewish-Roman relationships went from bad to worse? Is this why our last glimpse of Peter and the apostles in Jerusalem is at the Council in c. 49? Did Peter and John and the remaining "apostles" quit Judea at this time and for these reasons?

15.4. Further ministry of Peter

15.4.1. Sketch of the remaining years. After the Jerusalem Council c. 49, Peter did not remain in Palestine but journeyed (via Antioch and northern Asia Minor?) to Corinth by the early fifties and then on to the Eternal City, Rome.

He met his end during the massacres of Christians under Nero after the great fire in 64.

Peter's later movements are only known by scattered references in Paul's letters, 1 Peter and the works of the post-apostolic writer Clement of Rome. We can be confident about only two subsequent details of Peter's life, that he came to Corinth in the early fifties and that subsequently he came to and was killed in Rome. The

sheer lack of hard evidence provokes many questions and inspires some speculation, but yields little certainty about the details of Peter's final fifteen years.[9] Nonetheless, an overall impression may be formed from our limited sources.

We assume that Peter's pursuit of the apostolate to the circumcision brought him back to Antioch in Syria and that he traveled there through the coastal plain of Judea through Lydda and Joppa to Caesarea visiting and encouraging believers from the earliest years of his ministry. After a probable return visit to Samaria and Galilee, Peter may then have made his way from congregation to congregation along the northern seaboard of the Mediterranean back to Antioch. Accompanied by a wife and having no employment (1 Cor 9:4-6), Peter would have traveled more slowly than the unmarried Paul who worked to support himself from place to place. Peter's movements were probably quite dependent on hospitality in existing communities of believers.

Having arrived again in Antioch, by which route would he have traveled from the Syrian capital to Corinth? He may have made the journey by ship. More probably he traveled overland, but by which route? Did he follow the east-west route retracing Paul's steps in Anatolia, visiting the churches in southern Galatia? More probably he took a more northerly route.[10] This certainly would explain a letter addressed to believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.[11] Were local evangelists inspired by Peter to evangelize the more remote areas after his contacts with them, explaining why he was able to write to these readers a decade or so later?[12]

After the Jerusalem Council our next certain glimpse of Peter is in Corinth sometime between c. 52, when Paul left the city, and c. 55, when he wrote 1 Corinthians, where there is a reference to Peter (1 Cor 9:5). The church had been established by Paul in c. 50. It is likely that Peter and his wife had received both hospitality and financial support from members of the community of faith. It is reasonable to suppose that Jewish members cared for them. Peter's visit to Corinth, however, brought division to the church; a faction (of Jewish believers?) was formed around him. According to Paul, writing in c. 55, some said, "I belong to Cephas" (1 Cor 1:12). A year later the Judaizers arrived in Corinth, seeking to undermine the teachings of Paul.[13] It is possible that Peter's visit, which factionalized the Jewish (?) members, created an environment in which the Judaizing newcomers found a ready welcome (2 Cor 11:1-6).

Our only other evidence about Peter comes from Clement, bishop of Rome, writing to the church at Corinth in the midnineties. It is clear from this reference that Peter had come to Rome (by 55?), where he settled until his death in c. 65. The death of Claudius in 54 made it possible for Jews once more to live in Rome; the emperor had expelled Jews from the city in 49.[14] We assume that Jewish believers were still a minority among the believers when Paul wrote Romans in c. 57. Romans 14—15 suggests that Gentile and Jewish members were unintegrated,

and Romans 16 supports the notion that the community existed in a series of house churches composed of Gentiles or Jews.

Peter spent the latter decade of his life in ministry to Jews in Rome—whether believers or unbelievers. When Paul arrived in Rome in the early sixties, the unbelieving Jews in the city were aware of Christian teaching (Acts 28:22). His letter to the Philippians, apparently written from Rome, mentions the presence and activity of the Judaizers (Phil 1:15-17; 3:1-11). As in Antioch and Corinth, Peter's presence may have created an environment in which the Judaizers sought to press their claims on Gentiles as well as on fellow Jews who may have tended to drift from the law under Paul's influence. In his letter to the Romans, Paul's reticence to "build on another man's foundation" (Rom 15:20) is often taken as a reference to Peter's presence in Rome. Paul later chose to merely pass through Rome but not remain there (Rom 15:24). Meanwhile, in his letter to the Romans Paul railed against a Judaizing, circumcision-based theology, which had evidently taken root among the Jewish members (Rom 3—4; 6:1; 9—11).

Peter's own first letter appears to have been written from the Rome. The letter was sent from "she who is at Babylon" (1 Pet 5:13). *She* evidently refers to the church, while *Babylon* was a code word used in Revelation for Rome (cf. Rev 14:8; 18:2). Some of the references to suffering (see, e.g., 1 Pet 4:7, 12; 5:6-11) probably point to the beginnings of official persecution from the writer's perspective, whereas the persecutions of the readers in Anatolia appear to come mainly from their former drinking and womanizing associates (1 Pet 4:3-6). Do his words, "do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you" (1 Pet 4:12), suggest that the Neronian persecution had already begun when Peter wrote this letter?

Though we cannot know the historical context, Clement speaks of Peter's death at that time.

> Through jealousy and envy [of the Jews?] the greatest and most righteous pillars of the church were persecuted and contended unto death. . . . Peter because of wicked jealousy, suffered not one nor two but many trials, and having borne witness there went to the place of glory which was his due.[15]

Clement continues, speaking about "a great multitude" who "suffered indignities and tortures" and who were killed "from among us," that is, in Rome. While he does not refer specifically to Nero's assault on the Christians in 64, it is reasonably certain that Peter was among those who lost their lives at that time.

Our chief source of information about this pogrom, which occurred immediately after the fire that destroyed the greater part of the city, is the Roman historian Tacitus.

> Consequently, to get rid of the report [i.e., that he had ordered the burning of the city] Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. . . . Accordingly

> an arrest was first made of all who confessed; then upon their information an immense multitude was convicted. . . . Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames.[16]

Peter escaped death under Herod Agrippa I in Jerusalem in the early forties. Twenty or so years later in Rome he would be among the "immense multitude" who perished under Nero.

Jesus prophesied that Peter would die a martyr's death. On the night before the crucifixion Jesus told him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow me afterward" (Jn 13:36). After the resurrection Jesus said to him, "When you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go." The narrator added, "This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God" (Jn 21:18, 19). Jesus' prophecy appears already to have been fulfilled in the mind of the Evangelist, suggesting that the Gospel of John was written after the event.

15.4.2. Peter and his associates. As we mentioned earlier,[17] Peter the Galilean was from a Hellenized region within Israel, and he must therefore have had some competence in the Greek language. His original name, Simon, like that of his brother Andrew, was Greek. Ministry on the Hellenized coastal plain of Judea, including to the family of Cornelius in Caesarea, implies some competence in Greek. His travels outside of Israel through Syria (and Anatolia?) toward Rome, and his ministry there, also presuppose knowledge of the world *lingua franca, koinē* Greek. Peter, who after c. 47 became missionary to the Jews of the diaspora, was almost certainly bilingual. His first language was Aramaic, but he also spoke Greek.

Did Peter also *write* Greek? This is rather unlikely, given his modest origins as a fisherman in Galilee. The dismissive remark of the temple authorities that Peter and John were "unlettered and unlearned" (*agrammatoi . . . idiōtai*, Acts 4:13) refers to Peter and John's lacked of formal training in the Torah, but it may also imply a lack of ability to *write*. Associated with Peter were two colleagues who appear to have facilitated the apostle's ministry on the written page, John Mark and Silas/Silvanus. Both of these men had been associated with the church in Jerusalem; both were able to write Greek.

Mark is referred to by Papias, who was bishop of Hierapolis (in Roman Asia) in the first decades of the second century. Based on information he received from John the Elder, Papias described the writing of the Second Gospel.[18]

> Mark became Peter's interpreter *[hermēneutēs]* and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said and done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded, but not

> making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave nothing out of what he had heard and to make no false statement in them.[38]

According to Papias, Mark was Peter's "interpreter" in the sense that he *wrote* a Gospel based on what he had heard Peter teach regarding "the things said and done by the Lord."

A close association between Peter and Mark is established in Jerusalem in the forties (Acts 12:12) and in Rome in the sixties (1 Pet 4:12). Between these two occasions Mark was involved in ministry with Barnabas and Paul in Cyprus and southern Galatia (Acts 12:25—13:13), with Barnabas in Cyprus (Acts 15:39) and with Paul in Roman Asia (Col 4:10; Cf. 2 Tim 4:11). John Mark was the son of Mary, in whose home the believers were at prayer during Peter's imprisonment under Herod Agrippa. This house may have been "upper room" base of the Galilean Christians.[20] The substantial nature of the family home, which boasted a maid, and his Hebrew and Latin biname *[Iōanēs Markos]* suggest relative affluence consistent with a literate education.

Where and when did Mark write his Gospel? In our view Mark wrote his Gospel, or perhaps an earlier version of it, in Palestine by the late forties. Traces of the Gospel of Mark found in Paul's letter to the Romans, written in c. 57,[21] demand an earlier date for the Gospel.

Silas/Silvanus, Peter's other associate, is referred to in Peter's first letter. Silas/Silvanus was a prophet from the church in Jerusalem who prepared a letter from the mother church[22] to churches in Antioch, Syria, Cilicia and Galatia (Acts 15:23, 30, 41; 16:4), which he also helped to deliver (and explain) to those churches. Silas/Silvanus accompanied Paul through his missionary tour of southern Galatia to Troas, across to Macedonia and down to Achaia (Acts 15:40—18:5; cf. 2 Cor 1:18). He is the coauthor of the letters to the Thessalonians, written from Corinth in c. 50. Thereafter we lose sight of Silas/Silvanus until the sixties, when he appears alongside Peter in Rome, as mentioned in Peter's first letter. Where had Silas/Silvanus been in the meantime? Had he perhaps been in northern Asia Minor, serving the churches whose members are addressed in 1 Peter?

Near the end of the letter Peter declares, "by *[dia]* Silvanus . . . . I have written briefly to you" (1 Pet 5:12), suggesting that Silvanus was the real author. This letter is written in superior ***koinē*** Greek, far beyond our expectations of Simon son of John from Galilee. At the beginning of the letter, Peter identifies himself as the the author of the letter and personally appeals ("I beseech you," "I exhort the elders") to the readers at a number of points (1 Pet 2:11; 5:1). Yet the superior Greek in which this letter is written is beyond the expectations we might have for Peter's literary capacities.[23] The ideas were Peter's, but Silvanus composed the

letter and delivered it to its far-flung readers in the northern part of Asia Minor.

Peter's second letter is so different in style from the first that we must conclude that it came from a different hand. This letter is to a significant degree dependent on the letter of Jude.[24] Critical scholarship has declared that the letter could not have been written by Peter, nor by one of his associates.[25] We agree with the first assertion on literary grounds, but the second does not logically follow the first. A member of the Petrine circle who is not known to us may have written this letter under Peter's authority and direction, as we argue Silvanus did in the first letter.

The second letter makes strong claims to be Petrine. Having identified himself at the head of the letter as "Simon Peter," the writer later observes, "This is now the second letter that I written to you, beloved, and in both of them I have aroused your sincere mind" (2 Pet 3:1). He places himself autobiographically within the circle of the historical Jesus. He states, "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. . . . [W]e heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain" (2 Pet 1:16, 18). He also declares, "The putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus showed me" (2 Pet 1:13-14), pointing evocatively to the lakeside scene in John 21 where Jesus spoke to Peter for the last time. A mark of the letter's integrity is the unusual "*Simon [Symeōn]* Peter" in the introduction. James uses this appellation for Peter at the Jerusalem Council as described in Acts 15:14, but it could not have been copied from the Gospels since it appears nowhere in them in that archaic form.

The bald fact is that if the letter is not Petrine, is must be pseudonymous. Pseudonymous writings were commonplace among the Jews in the intertestamental era, and many argue that this form of literature was quite acceptable in early Christianity. But this is to be doubted. Though a Jew, Paul himself is quite negative about any letter that purported to be written by him and was not (2 Thess 2:2). When the apostolic age had passed, numbers of works appeared bearing the names of the apostles, Peter's in particular. However, in c. 190 when Serapion bishop of Antioch heard that the Gospel of Peter was circulating in Rhodes, his response was unequivocal.

> For our part, brothers, we receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ, but the writings which falsely bear their names we reject, as men of experience, knowing that such were not handed down to us.[26]

From the apostolic age into the patristic era orthodox believers were convinced about the reality and historicity of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Consistent with this, they were concerned to know who were the authors of the Gospels. From early in the second century, the Gospels of Christ had been identified and given the superscriptions "according to Matthew," "according to Mark," "according to Luke," and "according to John." Tatian's *Diatessaron* ("four gospels harmonized into one") indicates that the fourfold expression of the one gospel of Christ was firmly established in the second century.[27]

The flood of pseudonymous writings bearing apostolic names from the second century and later were invariably vehicles for heterodox teaching, mostly various forms of Gnosticism. Can any pseudonymous writing be identified that is not heterodox? It is true that the second letter of Peter is scarcely noticed in the century following. However, neither its othodoxy nor its Petrine integrity was ever in doubt.

Returning to Peter, it appears that he spent the last decade of his life in Rome and that a number of literary works were written bearing his name or undergirded by his authority. In our view, however, because of Peter's literary inadequacy, these were actually written by colleagues under his direction. There is evidence for this for the first letter and the Gospel of Mark. It is not unreasonable to conjecture that this was also the case with the second letter.

An interesting parallel to Peter and these associated writings is provided by Josephus, the Jew who had settled in Rome about twenty years after Peter, though in different circumstances. Josephus was the "client" of the Flavian emperors, and he assumed their name, "Flavius" Josephus. Under their financial patronage Josephus wrote extensively, beginning with the *History of the Jewish War Against the Romans*, originally written c. 75 in Aramaic[28] to dissuade Jews of the diaspora from further hostility against the might of Rome and her legions. Like Peter, Josephus's mother tongue was Aramaic, though he would also have had some ability in spoken Greek. Although he made a study in Rome of "Greek prose and poetry after gaining a knowledge of Greek grammar,"[29] he wrote the *Jewish War* "in the leisure which Rome afforded me . . . and with the aid of some assistants for the sake of the Greek."[30] Like Josephus, Peter too had "assistants," in all likelihood also "for the sake of the Greek."

15.4.3. Peter and the Gentiles. As noted above, Cephas was among those who, it was agreed, should "go" to the Jews. Cephas had been given the apostolate to the Jews in Palestine, and God had worked through him in Judea, Samaria and Galilee for fifteen years from the day of Pentecost until the private meeting with Paul and Barnabas in c. 47 (Gal 2:7-9).[31] Wherever we catch glimpses of Peter (through Paul's eyes) outside of Israel in the following years, whether in Antioch, Corinth or Rome, we have the impression through tangential information (and some conjecture!) that he chiefly ministered to Jews, believers and unbelievers. Further, it appears that the Judaizers ministered in those situations on account of Peter, because he was there. This may have been opportunism on their part rather than calculated policy on Peter's; that, certainly, was the case in Antioch (Gal 2:11-14).

The first letter of Peter[32] is a thoroughly Jewish document[33] as signaled by its opening sentences: "To the exiles of the Dispersion . . . chosen and destined by God . . . and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood." The letter throughout is expressed in the redemptive and cultic vocabulary of the Septuagint, with many citations from the Scriptures. The Israelite characters Abraham, Sarah and Noah figure significantly in the exposition. The

Jewishness of the letter is consistent with its author, the apostle Peter, who had been "entrusted with the apostolate to the circumcised" (Gal 2:7).

Yet the letter is clearly addressed to Gentiles. The following words in the letter could not have been written with Jews in mind:

> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. (1 Pet 1:14)
>
> You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers. (1 Pet 1:18)
>
> Through [Christ] you have confidence in God . . . so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Pet 1:21)
>
> Let the time that is past suffice for doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry. (1 Pet 4:3-4)

Jews did not typically pursue "passions," practice "futile ways," engage in "lawless idolatry," nor could it be said of them that they did not "know God." Gentiles are in view here.

We face a dilemma. Here is arguably the most Jewish-sounding letter of the New Testament written to a Gentile audience. The solution to this problem may be that these Gentiles are God-fearers.[34] In our view, initially the majority of Gentiles who embraced Jesus the Christ were God-fearers, that is, Gentiles who had already moved into the orbit of the synagogue.[35] Such people had already been exposed to the Greek Bible, its vocabulary and stories. The more earnest God-fearers had already made some kind of a break from "passions" and "lawless idolatry." Thus Peter could address them as Gentiles but *as if* they were Jews.

Such a solution is consistent with Peter's own unforgettable experience before and during his ministry to the God-fearer Cornelius, the Roman centurion (Acts 10:1—11:18). Mindful of the events at Caesarea in the late thirties, Paul had cause to rebuke Peter in Antioch for inconsistency: "you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile" (Gal 2:14). Although he had been entrusted with an apostolate to the circumcised, Peter at the same time knew what it was to "live like" and minister to Gentiles, that is, to God-fearers. In the unfolding years of ministry outside Israel, it is almost certain that Cornelius was not the last God-fearer to whom Peter preached. In any case, ministry to Jews must have become painfully difficult by the midfifties. News of Paul's outreach to Gentiles would have reached Jewish ears everywhere by then. Theirs was a remarkable international network (cf. Acts 28:22); millions of Jews converged annually on Jerusalem. Doubtless the notoreity of the new preaching of the Messiah Jesus was widespread, especially Paul's law-free gospel. It is likely that Peter himself was increasingly driven to minister to Gentiles.

A striking feature of 1 Peter is the absence of reference to the debate over the law, circumcision and "righteousness"/"justification," which are so much part of the letters of Paul, especially Galatians, 2 Corinthians, Romans and Philippians. Why is this letter silent on these issues? Was it because churches founded by Paul automatically became the focus of a vigorous Judaizing countermission, which in turn provoked the apostle to the Gentiles to respond polemically? If churches associated with Peter did not attract Judaizers, then the language employed by Paul might not be needed. We can only wonder whether the Gentiles of the Petrine churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia were obliged to observe the kosher dietary requirements of the Jerusalem decree.

15.4.4. Peter and New Testament history. Historically, Peter is arguably the most important figure in New Testament history, that is, apart from Jesus the Christ. This is because he is on view longer than anyone else. Peter overarches the critical span of the New Testament story. Originally a disciple of John the baptizer, Peter was there at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Throughout that ministry Peter was one of the inner group of three and spokesman for the Twelve. He became the apostle to the circumcised in the land of Israel from 33 to 49, after which he traveled westward (from Antioch and northern Asia Minor?) through Corinth to Rome, a journey that may have taken five or six years. He passed his last years in Rome, where he underwrote key texts of the New Testament and where he died during the pogrom of Nero (64-65).

In Galilee and Judea in the half century before Jesus there were a number of "messianic" figures. Most prominent of these was Judas the Galilean, who led an uprising (6-7) at the time of the Roman annexation of Judea when a census was conducted for direct taxation purposes. Judas was killed by the Romans, and his movement died with him. No names of Judas's disciples have survived in the pages of Josephus, with the exception of his sons James and Simon, who were crucified by the Romans in the late forties. It is a mark of the distinctiveness of the Jesus movement that his followers outlasted his death. Indeed, we are able to trace Peter's career for the next thirty years. During those years Peter is noted in the Acts of the Apostles and the two letters of Peter as an "eyewitness" of the life, sufferings and resurrection of Jesus.[36]

The achievements and extensive travels of an otherwise obscure fisherman from the land-locked Galilean lake, who died as a martyr in Rome, are quite remarkable. They bear their own witness to the truth of the identity of Jesus as the Christ, which Peter preached from Jerusalem to Rome over a thirty-year period.

15.5. Further ministry of John

Like Peter, John moved from Palestine after the Jerusalem Council c. 49. Within the next few years he appears to have moved to Ephesus in Roman Asia. For the next half century until his death c. 98, John ministered extensively in western Asia.

This reconstruction is based on information passed on from Polycarp to Irenaeus, who recorded it c. 180.

15.5.1. John, apostle to Roman Asia. John's later movements are even less certain than Peter's. To be sure, his name is bracketed with Peter's in ministry in Jerusalem and to the Samaritans in the first years of the early church. Named as one of the three "pillars" of the Jerusalem church—James, Cephas and John—John is probably to be associated closely with Cephas, his long-term friend and fellow disciple. These "pillars," it was agreed, were to "go" to the "uncircumcised." In Peter's case, and almost certainly also in John's, this meant moving out of the land of Israel to the diaspora. Doubtless he is one of the unnamed "apostles" present at the Jerusalem Council who were probably a more moderate group in contrast to James and "the elders" (Acts 15:4, 22). The "apostles" are not heard of again in the book of Acts, presumably because of the rising temperature of religious nationalism in Judea, which appears to have fired up a comparable fervor within the sectors of the community led by James. One group, composed of believing former Pharisees, embarked on a series of countermission movements against Paul from the late forties to the middle fifties in Galatia, Antioch and Corinth. Most probably John Zebedee and Peter had moved out of Judea at that time. But where did John go? Where was the Gospel written that bore the superscription, "according to John"?

Two pieces of evidence cast light on this question. One is the book of Revelation in which "John" is named as the author to whom the visions were given on the Island Patmos offshore from Roman Asia.[37] The other information comes from Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in southern Gaul writing c. 180, information that he had received from Polycarp. Irenaeus had come from Roman Asia where, in his youth, he had known Polycarp.[38]

> [I could] speak even of the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and disputed . . . how he reported his discourse with John and with others who had seen the Lord, how he remembered their words, and what were the things concerning the Lord which he had heard from them.[39]

Polycarp is a bridge between the apostle John and Irenaeus. Who was Polycarp? Polycarp was born c. 69 and brought up as a Christian.[40] According to Irenaeus, Polycarp had been appointed as bishop of Smyrna by "apostles in Asia," who must have included the apostle John. John, Irenaeus says, "remained permanently in the church of Ephesus until the reign of Trajan,"[41] in 98. We conclude that Polycarp was appointed bishop at about that time, something confirmed by Ignatius's letter to Polycarp, written c. 108.

Polycarp is doubtless the source of critical information to Irenaeus about the apostle John and the Fourth Gospel.

> Lastly John, the disciple of the Lord, who had leant back on his breast, once

more set forth the gospel, while residing in Ephesus in Asia.[42]

The disciple whom Jesus loved was John Zebedee, and John Zebedee wrote the Gospel according to John in Ephesus.

This verdict, however, is unacceptable to critical scholarship which balks at the proposition that so subtle and profound a work as this Gospel could have been written by a humble fisherman. Their rejection of John Zebedee has sometimes driven eminent scholars to offer improbable alternative solutions. For example, C. K. Barrett declared that "the evangelist" was "perhaps the greatest theologian in all the history of the church" but "was now forgotten. His name was unknown."[43] This assumes a rather greater store of luminaries in the church at the time than is evident, for example, in the rather dull writings of the post-apostolic era.

Martin Hengel, however, does propose an author for this Gospel, namely, John the Elder. Eusebius[44] distinguishes John "the Elder" from John "the Lord's disciple."[45] He refers to two tombs in Ephesus, both called "John's." In a series of conjectures, Hengel[46] argues (1) that Papias's "Elder John" is the author of 2 and 3 John, and therefore of 1 John, (2) that he had migrated from Judea to Ephesus, where he had gathered a circle of pupils sometime between 70 to 100, who published the Fourth Gospel after the John the Elder's death, (3) that he was an aristocratic Jew who as a young man heard Jesus in Jerusalem, and (4) that John the Elder in this Gospel has somehow merged his own identity with that of John Zebedee, the ideal original disciple of Jesus. In reality none of Hengel's suggestions has any basis in evidence.[47]

Is the straightforward proposal that John Zebedee wrote the Fourth Gospel so impossible? First, we note Irenaeus's identification of the Evangelist as "this disciple whom Jesus loved," which rests on Polycarp's oral testimony as one who heard the apostle John. But this coincides exactly with the rather oblique identification of that disciple with John Zebedee in John 21. By a process of elimination of seven disciples who were present by the lakeside after the resurrection, as recorded in John 21:1-2, we conclude that one of these, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 21:20), who witnessed the death of Jesus, who first looked into the empty the tomb (Jn 19:35; 20:2-4) and who wrote this book (Jn 21:24; 20:30-31), was John Zebedee (Jn 21:2). Irenaeus may well have not worked out from John 21 that the author of this Gospel was John Zebedee, but the conjunction of that rather oblique exegetical conclusion with Polycarp's direct testimony from John himself is striking.

Second, the low view of John Zebedee's capacity may have been overstated. The evidence points to a financial standard and personal contacts that are consistent with literacy. John was partner in a fishing business with James and Peter and Andrew (Lk 5:10). They owned a boat, and they employed hired servants (Mk 1:20). John's mother, Salome, belonged to a group of women who provided materially for Jesus and the disciples; Joanna the wife of Chusa, the tetrarch

Antipas's steward, belonged to the same group (Mk 15:41; Lk 8:3).[48] There can be little doubt that he was well known to the high priest (Jn 18:15-16; cf. Jn 21:2), and that he may, therefore, have been a priest. John Zebedee was a man of some means and connected with leading persons in both Galilee and Jerusalem. John Zebedee may have had a level of education necessary to write this Gospel.

Moreover, this John was one of the inner group of three closest to Jesus, along with Peter and James Zebedee. We must not underestimate Rabbi Jesus' educative impact on his disciples. Further, with Peter, this John became a leader in ministry in Jerusalem and Samaria after the first Easter. In c. 47 he is mentioned as one of the three "pillars" of the Jerusalem church. Thus, by the midsixties, by which time the Gospel was probably written, John Zebedee was a seasoned and experienced Christian leader, who had been much loved by his Lord, into whose hands Jesus had entrusted the care of his mother (Jn 19:27).

The Johannine literature is extensive and complex. Second and third John may have come from a hand different from the one that wrote 1 John.[49] The stylistic differences between the Gospel of John/1 John and Revelation are well known and are apparent even to the reader of the English text. These differences were noted in the third century by Dionysius bishop of Alexandria as evidence of different authorship.[50] Yet both the Gospel of John/1 John and Revelation are written in *koinē* Greek, which has a Hebrew flavor. The Gospel of John is said to have been the work of one who "is not a Greek and who was not brought up in a Greek way."[51] The Greek of the Apocalypse is characterized by Hebrew idiom. The Gospel is dotted with Aramaic terms, for example, *Messias, Cephas, Rabbi, Rabbouni, Siloam, Gabbatha* and *Golgotha.* Moreover, there are a number of echoes between the Revelation and the Gospel (see table 11). The number seven is critical in Revelation; there are seven signs in the Gospel. Terms like *life, death, victory* and *word* and the "I am" sayings occur in both. Similarities are evocative of some literary association.

Revelation 21:6	**John 7:37**	**John 4:14**
To the thirsty I will give . . . from the fountain *[pēgē]* of the water of life.	If any one thirst, let him *come to me and drink.*	The water that I shall give him will become in him spring *[pēgē]* of water welling up to eternal life.

Table 11. Water and thirst imagery in the Fourth Gospel and Revelation

Revelation is presented in the format and terminology of Jewish apocalyptic. Yet apocalyptic thought is strongly present in the Gospel (see, e.g., Jn 5:10-30; 6:35-40; 11:17-27). Though stylistically disparate, there is a community of thought and a shared Semitic character in both the Gospel and the Revelation that could allow for the possibility of common authorship.

The John of the Apocalypse is an imposing figure who needs no introduction

to his widespread readership throughout Roman Asia. He simply introduces himself as "John to the seven churches" and "I John, your brother" (Rev 1:4, 9), and his readers are expected to know who he is and to accept his authority. Though he does not apply the word "apostle" to himself, his very authoritative manner suggests that he has no need to do so. Justin Martyr, an early witness, ascribes the writing of Revelation to John the apostle.[52]

The Gospel concludes with the affidavit, which may have been added posthumously, "This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true" (Jn 21:24). The "we" indicates a group or community.

15.5.2. The mixed audience of the Gospel of John.[53] John, a Jewish apostle, was to "go" to the Jews (Gal 2:7-9), yet the Gospel associated with his name assumes a mixed Jewish and Gentile readership.

The Gospel reflects Jewish and Palestinian origins. It is steeped in the Jewish Scriptures and shows an extensive knowledge of the climate and topography of Judea and Jerusalem (e.g., "It was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon" [Jn 10:22-23]), as well as the religious, social and historical circumstances of the times it narrates (e.g., "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" [Jn 4:9]). The Qumran discoveries have established clear parallels with the Gospel, especially regarding dualism and election, defining a Palestinian milieu for its author.[54] Fictive imagination could not produce such authenticity. The author presents his Palestinian Jewish contents in "simple unliterary Greek" associated with Hellenized upper-class Jews from Jerusalem.[55] According to Hengel, "direct pagan influence cannot be demonstrated anywhere."[56]

Consistent with its Palestinian Jewish roots, this Gospel appears to be addressing Jews, but as those who are outside the circle of faith and antipathetical toward it. The lengthy polemical discourses of John 7—11 are between Jesus and Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Jesus speaks to Jewish readers in terms of "your law," which from their perspective is "our law."[57] On logical grounds these words are directed toward Jewish readers, to win their acceptance of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. There would be no point in devoting so much space to such exchanges between Jesus and the Jews for Gentile readers.

At the same time John also has Gentile readers in mind. Three times he speaks of a festival in Jerusalem as "a feast of the Jews," and twice he refers to "the Passover of the Jews." He explains that *rabbi* means "teacher" and that *messias* means "Christ" (Jn 1:38, 41). These explanatory glosses cannot have been written for the benefit of Jewish readers.

In short, this Gospel has elements that point to both Jewish and Gentile readers. This mixed readership may be hinted at in a question asked in the course of the Gospel narrative: "Does he [Jesus] intend to go to the dispersion *[diaspora]* among

the Greeks and teach the Greeks?" (Jn 7:35). These words may well capture the future ministry of John Zebedee in Roman Asia. John, a "pillar" apostle in Jerusalem, would "go" (Gal 2:9) to the Jewish diaspora scattered "among the Greeks" (in Roman Asia) for ministry to Jews, but also to teach "the Greeks." "Greeks" in this context can only mean Gentiles.[58] To be sure, the Gospel later narrates an incident in which certain "Greeks" seek Jesus in Jerusalem during the Passover (Jn 12:20-22). In this context, however, these "Greeks" must be Gentile proselytes or God-fearers on pilgrimage to the holy city. It is likely that they, too, would be among the groups John would encounter in a province where there were heavy concentrations of Jews and numerous synagogues.

These "Greeks" who appear in the Gospel—whether outright Gentiles or Gentile proselytes and God-fearers—are doubtless the "other sheep who are not of this fold" (Jn 10:16) who will be the gathered "children of God" but who were previously "scattered" (Jn 11:52). John Zebedee, the apostle who emigrated from Jerusalem to Roman Asia after c. 50, for the next half century became the instrument of the "gathering" of these "Greeks." He was to leave his mark on Roman Asia for decades to come, in churches like the seven addressed in Revelation, in the lives of individuals like Papias and the the martyr bishop of Smyrna and through the body of literature that arose from his ministry.

The Jews of Roman Asia appear to have made little positive response to Christian preaching, whether initially the efforts of Paul or subsequently those of John. The evidence points to Jewish hostility toward Christians in this province (Rev 2:9; 3:9).[59] The mixed readership implicit in the Gospel of John appears to reflect also mixed response associated with these racial/religious groups. The Gentile readers (the "Greeks") are those who have acknowledged Jesus as the Christ and who now belong to Johannine churches. The Jewish readers (the "Jews") are as yet outside the church and perhaps still hostile to Jesus as the Christ.

15.6. James of Jerusalem c. 49-62

According to Paul, by c. 47 James's name appears as the leading "pillar" of the Jerusalem church (Gal 2:7-9; cf. Gal 2:11-14). This is confirmed by the book of Acts where James is head not only of the Jerusalem members at the assembly but also of all who attended, including the Antiochene delegates Paul and Barnabas. James not only presided at the meeting, he issued the decree that was to bind the churches of the Gentiles. In Jerusalem c. 49 James appears to have been the world head of Christianity.

As discussed earlier, it is clear that James welcomed the inclusion of the Gentiles into the messianic community.[60] However, he saw that community as centered on the Jerusalem church located in the holy city and its temple. This is the "fallen" temple of David that the Messiah is rebuilding. Gentiles are allowed to be part of that structure. While they must not be compelled to accept circumcision, they are

to observe certain moral and cultic practices for the sake of relationships with Jews everywhere (Acts 15:21). James was bent on keeping good relationships with Jews in Judea. Let the Gentile believers also not offend Jews of the diaspora.

In our view, the Jerusalem community became increasingly divided at this time. On one side were Cephas, John and the "apostles," who had been disciples of Jesus. On the other were James, a nondisciple, other "brothers of the Lord" who had not been disciples, and the "elders." It appears that a group of former Pharisees were by this time part of the community. They took serious exception to news of Paul's circumcision-free, law-free gospel to Gentiles. Though not agreeing with James's rather minimal demands upon Gentiles, they sided with his group rather than with Cephas, John and the apostles. When Cephas, John and the apostles withdrew from Jerusalem, it is likely that the Judaizers' influence became quite strong in Jerusalem.

Thus James exercised his leadership into the fifties in a community from which the original disciples of Christ had withdrawn. This was a critical period within Jewish history in Judea.

15.6.1. Turmoil in Judea in the fifties. The formal recognition in Jerusalem of Paul's "apostolate" to Gentiles in c. 47 occurred at a time when Jews in Judea were profoundly unsettled. The death of a popular Jewish king, Agrippa I, in 44 was followed by the return of the Roman legions. Matters were to deteriorate further. In 49 Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome.[61] In Judea under the procurator Cumanus (49-52), Jewish religious scruples were repeatedly violated.[62] A soldier blasphemously exposed his genitals in the temple precincts during Passover. Another publicly tore up a scroll of the Torah. Galilean pilgrims to Jerusalem for the Passover were killed by Samaritans, with no Roman reprisals.

In the time of Felix (52-60), affairs in Judea were to worsen even more.[63] Felix began in the twilight of Claudius's principate and continued throughout the early years of the young and inexperienced Nero. A former slave, Felix had actually married the Jewish princess, Drusilla, something deeply offensive to Jews. There are hints that Felix harbored aspirations to royalty. Tacitus comments that "Felix played the tyrant with the spirit of a slave."[64]

Felix's procuratorship was marked by a harsh campaign against the banditry that had flourished in consequence of the protracted famine that began in the forties. Josephus states that "of the brigands whom [Felix] crucified, and of the common people who were convicted of complicity with them and punished by him, the number was incalculable."[65] Even allowing for some overstatement we are left with a grim picture. Tacitus notes that Felix "plunged into all manner of cruelty and lust."[66] The problems of Felix's incumbency were compounded by the character of the notoriously corrupt high priest Ananias, who held office from 48 to c. 55 and who seized sacrifices from the temple for his own use.[67]

Josephus mentions three "movements" that arose in Felix's time and that which

he appears to connect with the governor's extreme policies. First, he describes the rise of the *sicarii* faction,[68] whose *modus operandi* was to murder eminent Jews known to be sympathetic to their Roman masters.

Second, Josephus writes of a number of "prophets" at that time.

> Under the pretense of divine inspiration fostering revolutionary changes, they persuaded the multitude to act like madmen, and led them out into the desert under the belief that there God would give them signs of liberation.[69]

Josephus does not say what those promised "signs" were. Given that the locale was the "desert"—so evocative in the salvation history of Israel—it is likely that the "signs" included those performed by Moses and Joshua at the time of the exodus-conquest. The "liberation" would have been a reenacted conquest—in the manner of Joshua—over the enemies of the moment, the Roman occupying force.

Third, Josephus refers to some kind of an alliance between these apocalyptic prophets and various brigands in actions of a political, but religiously inspired, nature. In a frenzied manner these organized themselves in companies threatening to kill any who submitted to Roman rule. They moved through the countryside murdering those who supported Rome, putting fire to many houses.[70]

Such was the world of Judea in the later forties and into the fifties when James continued his leadership of the church in Jerusalem. It was also the period in which Paul moved even more emphatically westward toward the Gentile heartland, Rome, the great enemy of the covenant people. In this period of religious nationalism and apocalyptic fervor, anti-Pauline feeling ran high.

15.6.2. Correcting the preaching of Paul. Paul left Jerusalem after the council meeting of c. 49 and traveled north to Antioch-on-the-Orontes. His dispute with Barnabas over John Mark led Paul to invite Silas/Silvanus, a prophet of the church of Jerusalem, to join him in a second missionary tour westward. By overland travel Paul revisited the churches of Phrygian Galatia. With various companions, Silvanus, Timothy and Luke, he crossed ultimately to Macedonia, after which Paul came to Achaia. During this tour of approximately three years, congregations are known to have been established in Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea and Corinth. There may have been others. Paul then returned to Antioch, following a brief visit to Jerusalem.[71]

Paul, however, was probably not the only source of information about his church-founding activities in Macedonia and Achaia. The local Jewish outrage at his preaching of the Messiah, Jesus,[72] in the cities of Macedonia and Achaia doubtless also filtered back to Jerusalem,[73] where it would come with hostile interpretation to the Jewish believers, including Paul's opponents. The news of Paul's successes establishing assemblies of predominantly Gentile believers (mostly God-fearers?) who were not obliged to be circumcised or observe the law must have brought further alarm to the conservative element in the Jerusalem church.

Some time in the midfifties a decision was made in Jerusalem to launch a further mission against Paul's ministry. This was to be directed to the church in Corinth. These missionaries arrived in the Achaian capital soon after the writing of 1 Corinthians, and their activities were the major stimulus for the writing of the second letter.

Scholars have noted that 2 Corinthians has no mention of either circumcision or law, concerns so prominent in Galatians. The conclusion is often drawn that the intruding newcomers (2 Cor 10:13—11:4) were not Judaizers, as in Galatia. This, however, may be unwarranted. Like Paul the newcomers were "Hebrews, Israelites, the seed of Abraham" (2 Cor 11:22). Masquerading as "ministers of righteousness" they preach "another Jesus" associated with the "old covenant," written in "letters inscribed in stone" associated with "Moses," that is, the law (2 Cor 11:15; 1:4; 3:7).[74] The "righteousness"/"justification" vocabulary, though not extensive in the letter, is sufficient to associate the argument with Galatians and Romans (2 Cor 3:9; 5:21; 11:15). Likewise, the experience of the Spirit, to which Paul appeals as evidence of his own genuiness as a "minister of the new covenant,"[75] agrees exactly with the nexus between the Spirit and "righteousness"/"justification" established in Galatians and Romans.[76] It may be quite significant that the next letter written after 2 Corinthians, which was written from Corinth, was Romans, a letter dominated by the issues of Judaizing, that is, circumcision, the law and "righteousness"/"justification." Romans is probably Paul's more systematic response to the issues dealt with so passionately in 2 Corinthians.

Second Corinthians provides the most informative profile of the missionaries who have come to a Pauline church to overturn the teachings of the founding apostle. These "apostles of Christ," whom Paul called "false apostles" (2 Cor 11:13) because of their erroneous preaching, he also called "superlative apostles" (2 Cor 11:5) because of their claimed superiority over Paul in rhetorical expertise and in apocalyptic experience.[77] Like Paul, they are Greek speaking (though he conceded they are more professional communicators [2 Cor 11:6]), and they are Jews who have been lifted to the "third heaven" with consequent ecstatic experience. There is no reason to doubt that, like Paul, they have come from Jerusalem where Greek was spoken and where, as the world center of Judaism, apocalyptic beliefs and experiences flourished. It must not pass unnoticed that the Jewish countermissionaries set out for Corinth to rectify Paul's errors at a time of deepest difficulty in Judea under Felix, when apocalyptic fervor ran high.

While these anti-Pauline groups existed within the wider community of faith in Jerusalem, it must not be assumed that they set out for Corinth with James's blessing or that he supplied the "letters of commendation" that they carried (2 Cor 3:1). Paul is unlikely to have worked so hard for the collection from the Gentile churches for the saints in Jerusalem if this had been the case. Rather, the church in Jerusalem under James must be seen as multifaceted and of numerous member-

ship. The lines of membership with the wider community of Jerusalem were quite blurred.[78] The "Roman" crisis from 44 to 66 inevitably threw all Jerusalemites together against the common enemy.

15.6.3. The letter of James. The letter of James is addressed to an explicitly Jewish readership. The letter is strong in moral exhortations, with a concern for wisdom and wise behavior.[79] At the same time, eschatological and apocalyptic elements are to be found, especially regarding God's judgment at the end times.[80]

The letter is practical and ethical in content and hortatory in its approach to the readers (to be "wise"). It contains a relatively understated Christology and soteriology. Nonetheless, it reflects a kerygmatic context of the readers. The writer and the readers have heard "the word of truth" by which "we should be a kind of first fruits of [God's] creatures" (Jas 1:18; cf. Jas 1:22-23).

Who wrote the letter of James and when? Because the letter of James was written to believers as the "twelve tribes of the dispersion," that is, to Israel of the diaspora, we take it that the author is James, head of the Jerusalem church. The worldwide audience addressed is consistent with the worldwide authority assumed by James at the Jerusalem Council (c. 49) noted above.[81] Although James, the leading "pillar," did not to our knowledge actually "go" to the Jews of the diaspora, he exercised his leadership of international Christian Jewry by means of this encyclical letter.

The letter is written in high-quality *koinē* Greek. Whereas James doubtless spoke Greek, it is open to question whether he had the education to write Greek of this quality. We suggest that this letter was written under James's direction by a well-educated assistant. This writer, when considered alongside the letterwriters Paul and Silvanus, points to a pool of Greek literacy among Jews in Jerusalem. Apocalyptically minded Jews, who were Greek speaking and rhetorically accomplished, who traveled from Jerusalem to Corinth, whom Paul ironically called "superlative apostles," are readily imaginable.

The dating of the letter is uncertain. It is possible that James's indictment of the rich who have lived in luxury but who have held back the wages of their laborers may provide a clue (Jas 5:1-6; cf. Jas 1:9-11; 2:6). Josephus describes the situation in c. 55 when the younger Agrippa appointed the high priest Ishmael.

> There was now enkindled mutual enmity and class warfare between the High Priests, on the one hand, and the priests and leaders of the populace, on the other. . . . [T]he high priests actually were so brazen as to send slaves to . . . receive the tithes that were due to the priests, with the result that the poorer priests starved to death.[82]

The more general lament against the rich by James does not coincide directly with the situation in Josephus's specific reference. Nonetheless, the wickedness that became systemic under Ishmael may have created the corrupt environment presupposed by James's broad complaint against the rich.

Galatians 2:16; 3:6-7, 9	**James 2:14, 17, 19, 21-23**
A man is not justified by works of the law but through faith.	What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?
	So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.
	You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.
Abraham "*believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.*" So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham.	Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and *it was reckoned to him as righteousness.*"
So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith.	

Table 12. Faith and works in James and Paul

Does the letter of James set out to correct Paul's law-free gospel? The words of James are worth comparing with Paul's letter to the Galatians (see table 12). Arguably the issue of faith is the centerpiece and major theme of James's letter, signaled by "My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jas 2:1).

Clearly James is responding to Paul's teaching in Galatians. The parallels between the two passages are striking, both by the common vocabulary ("justified," "faith," "works") and by the appeal to the example of Abraham in the citation of the same text, Genesis 15:6.

James's particular concern relates to the appeal to Genesis 15:6, that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." He is understandably troubled by any teaching that such "belief" can be independent of works. Was not Abraham "justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?"

James takes "belief" as merely credal, that "God is one," adding that this is "empty" if it not further demonstrated by works of obedience. For James the categories are faith *about* God, as in the daily *shema* ("Hear, O Israel, God is one") and the *moral* law. James makes no reference to the issues raised in Galatians, that is, the necessity for Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the ritual law.

But Paul was pointing to Abraham's belief in God not merely in credal terms but as active obedience to God's promise regarding Isaac. It was that faith, not circumcision nor the works of the law, that set Abraham in a right relationship with God. Paul would be the first to agree with James that such faith is active and dynamic and that it is "working through love" (Gal 5:6).

Such are the cross-purposes mirrored in James that it appears he was not aware of what Paul actually wrote in Galatians. It is open to question whether James had

Paul's text before him. Was he responding to a (skewed?) *report* of what Paul wrote and the appeal Paul had made to the citation of Genesis 15:6, that "Abraham believed God"?

What does James's letter say about Jesus? James refers to Jesus as "Christ" (Jas 1:1; 2:1) and as "Lord"(Jas 1:1; 2:1; 5:7, 8, 15), the same word he uses for God (Jas 1:8 [cf. 1:5]; 4:14; 5:14, 15). Jesus is the returning "Lord" and "judge" (Jas 5:8-9). At the same time, James makes no reference to the person of the historical Jesus, apart from his allusions to Jesus' teachings. James's letter alludes to Jesus' teaching at many points: teaching on the Father's generosity, the need not merely to hear but also to do the word, the plight of the hungry, the effects of evil speech, the wrongness of judging, the prohibition on oaths, the nearness of the Lord and the salvation of sinners.[83]

These echoes of the Lord Jesus come mostly from the Gospel of Matthew, or more probably from sources used in that Gospel.[84] It is evident, therefore, that those sources—oral, but more likely written—were well and truly part of James's world in Jerusalem by the fifties.[85]

15.6.4. James in Jerusalem c. 57. We catch our last glimpse of James through the eyes of Luke, who was present when Paul paid his final visit to Jerusalem. The narrative is written in the first person: "Paul went with us to James" (Acts 21:18).

There is a certain stiffness in the narrative. The hospitality afforded Paul and Luke and their companions in the holy city was not provided by James; we do not know whether James extended an invitation. The new arrivals stayed with Mnason of Cyprus, "an early disciple" (Acts 21:16). Presumably Mnason was a Hellenist, more sympathetic to the spiritual needs and integrity of the Jews of the diaspora than to the needs of conservative elements from Jerusalem that has emerged under James in the troubled forties and fifties.

Paul and his associates, having greeted James and the elders, related in detail God's deeds among the Gentiles. Doubtless Paul now formally presented the substantial collection (2 Cor 8:20) from the Gentile churches, though to our surprise Luke makes no mention of this. He merely notes with pointed brevity the thankfulness of those present for the news of Gentile interest in the gospel. Then follow the words of the elders who direct Paul's attention to the many "thousands" in Jerusalem who are believers, sharply adding, "they are all zealous for the law." Even allowing for some hyperbole, this is striking information. Here is a vast community of Jewish believers in the heart of Israel, whose members are strictly keep the law. Jews of the diaspora may have been relatively cool to Paul's preaching, but it has been otherwise in Jerusalem under James.

The elders then confront Paul with complaints they have heard from their members in Jerusalem. Rumors have come from Jews of the diaspora regarding Paul's message to both Jews and Gentiles. They are saying that Paul teaches Jews to forsake observing the law of Moses, to discontinue circumcising their sons and

to abandon Jewish customs, in effect to relinquish their Jewishness. These complaints were only partially true, as Paul's own words indicate.

> To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. (1 Cor 9:20)

> Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God. (1 Cor 10:32)

Some Christian Jews may have become diffident in their observances, but not by Paul's direct instruction. While the apostle appears to have been respectful of Jewish adherence to Judaism, his own position as one who was now "not under the law" must have had some indirect influence.

The elders also confront Paul with Jewish complaints from the diaspora about his dealings with Gentiles. They have heard that Paul failed to apply to Gentiles James's fourfold decree issued at the council in Jerusalem c. 49. This, too, is only half true. The apostle had been resolute in insisting that Gentile believers have no part of idol worship or fornication (1 Cor 6:9, 18; 10:14; 2 Cor 6:14—7:1). He instructed the Gentiles to abstain from eating idol-sacrificed meat in local temples or in homes of unbelievers if the issue is raised (1 Cor 10:27—11:1). However, Paul is silent in his letters about Gentiles eating only kosher-killed meat.

Regardless of the precise truth, these allegations against Paul were extremely serious. One who led a Jew to apostasy was worthy of death (Deut 13:13).[86] The elders' requirement that Paul publicly purify himself (from defilement by a corpse among the Gentiles) and that he pay for the purification of four Christian Nazarites was calculated to demonstrate publicly in Jerusalem that Paul was, in fact, a deeply observant Jew.

Doubtless with misgivings, Paul did as requested by the elders. But he was seen by Jews from Asia who wrongly concluded that Paul had taken a Gentile into the temple; they had seen Trophimus the Ephesian with Paul in the city. Paul was set upon by the crowd and would have been beaten to death had the Roman cohort not intervened.

Questions linger. Had the elders been naive in their demands that the notorious Paul appear so publicly in the temple? Or, was their request sinister in motive? Why did they apparently fail to appeal to the Jewish authorities telling them that this was *their* demand? The elders' frosty reception of Paul implied in Luke's narrative, Luke's failure to mention the collection[87] and his careful silence about the elders' attitude toward the violent assault outside the gates of the temple combine to leave a negative impression of Luke's opinion of Paul's final visit to Jerusalem.

While Luke may convey a negative impression about the elders, the figure of James himself is shadowy and undefined on this occasion. Unlike the Jerusalem Council in c. 49, where James alone was dominant, in this situation in c. 57 he is

silent; only the elders speak and then, perhaps ominously, fail to speak. Is Luke leaving us with the impression that James is being manipulated by the elders, who are sympathetic to Paul's critics? It must not be forgotten that by c. 57 religious nationalism among the Jews in Jerusalem was at its height as every day the nation moved closer to war with the Romans. In Jewish eyes, including those of Jewish Christians, Paul was easily seen as a pro-Gentile, pro-Roman and traitor to the covenant of Israel.[88]

15.6.5. The death of James in Jerusalem c. 62. After the Romans rescued Paul from the Jewish mob, he languished in prison in Caesarea Maritima for two years. On taking office in 60 the procurator Festus dispatched Paul to Rome for trial before the emperor since Paul was a Roman citizen. In c. 62 Festus died after only two years as governor of the province. In the interregnum, before the new procurator Albinus arrived, the high priest Annas acted against James. Josephus narrates what happened.

> Annas . . . followed the school of the Sadducees who are more heartless than any other of the Jews . . . when they sit in judgment. Possessed of such a character, Annas thought that he had a favorable opportunity because Festus was dead and Albinus was still on his way. And so he convened the judges of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law and delivered them up to be stoned.[89]

Since only the governor had the authority *(imperium)* from the emperor to impose the death penalty, Annas's action must be regarded as illegal under the Roman settlement. That James, like Stephen, was stoned suggests an accusation of blasphemy against the laws of Moses. This was almost certainly a false charge. According to Josephus, "those who were strict in observance of the law," that is, Pharisees, protested first to Agrippa the Younger and then to the incoming governor. Agrippa deposed the high priest for illegally convening the Sanhedrin.

Annas must have had other motives to kill James, though we can only guess what they might have been. Was it due to jealousy? Since James presided over a large community, did the high priest somehow see him as a rival? Is it noteworthy that this Annas was son of the former high priest Annas, the real power behind his son-in-law Caiaphas under whom Jesus was delivered to the Romans for crucifixion? Was it because James, unlike Jesus, made no messianic claims that could be interpreted as treason that Annas felt he must strike before the Roman magistrate arrived? Did Annas the Younger somehow see James, brother of the so-called Christ, as a rival messianic dynast? Indeed, James was probably appointed as the leading "pillar" of the Jerusalem church after Peter's withdrawal from Jerusalem during the persecutions of Agrippa the elder,[90] precisely because he was brother of the Christ. At James's death, another close relative of Jesus, his cousin Symean,

was appointed leader of the church in Jerusalem.

The evidence from Josephus suggests that James, the head of a substantial community in Jerusalem, was highly regarded within the city. Dramatic events followed the stoning of James at the instigation of the high priest Annas.

> Those of the inhabitants of the city who were considered the most fair-minded and who were strict in their observance of the Law were offended at this. They therefore secretly sent to king Agrippa urging him, for Ananus [Annas] had not been correct in his first step, to order him to desist from any further such actions. Certain of them even went to meet Albinus who was on his way to Alexandria, to inform him that Ananus had no authority to convene the Sanhedrin without his consent.[91]

Most likely the high priest and the Sanhedrin had James stoned for the sin of blasphemy, as also occurred with Stephen. This was a point of contention with the Roman authorities, who held that only the governor, the surrogate of the emperor, had the authority to execute people in a Roman province. The action of "those of the inhabitants of the city who . . . were strict in their observance of the Law" must refer to leading Pharisees. Clearly they acted out of sympathy and respect for James. They would have approved of the Sanhedrin possessing the power to stone blasphemers, and they certainly would have resisted the Roman demand that this body only meet at the approval of the procurator. The incident portrays James as a well-respected and devout member of the community of Jerusalem. These religious leaders would not have acted in the way they did had this not been the case.

So ended the life and ministry of James of Nazareth, the brother of Jesus the Christ. At his death as a martyr in c. 62 he had been a member of the Jerusalem church for about thirty years and its leader for at least fifteen years. He saw the Jerusalem church as the rebuilt temple of David, with Gentiles welcome to its courts. He had imposed minimal conditions for the inclusion of Gentiles; he did not support the demands for their circumcision. Although preeminent at the Council in c. 49 he appears to have effectively lost his independence despite the remarkable growth of the Jerusalem church under his leadership. Indeed, his influence may have diminished precisely because of the expansion of the church. The membership became so "zealous for the law" and sensitive to the complaints against Paul because of outraged Jews scattered from Jerusalem in the diaspora.

15.7. Conclusion

The years after the missionary agreement between the delegates in Jerusalem in c. 47 saw remarkable developments within Christianity. Paul continued his travels, first in the Aegean region, then toward and in Rome, then again in the Aegean region before his execution under Nero in Rome in the midsixties. Though Paul

won Gentiles for faith in the Christ, his continuing motive was the redemption of Israel (see Rom 9—11).

Peter left Israel after c. 49, eventually traveling through Corinth to Rome. He was caught in Nero's massive assault against the Christians in the pogrom of 64. Though called to witness to the Jews, Peter seems to have expressed his ministry increasingly to Gentiles, in all probability God-fearers.

His friend and fellow disciple John Zebedee was initially also an apostle to the Jews. He too may have migrated from Israel after the Jerusalem Council c. 49. It appears that John came to Roman Asia where he imposed a powerful influence on the churches and on key individuals during the half century before his death c. 98. John's ministry appears to have been to Gentiles; the Jews of Asia were both numerous and hostile.

James alone remained in Israel, where he presided over a large community of Jewish believers. This was a conservative enclave of Jews who were obedient to the covenant of Israel. James was stoned by an illegal process at the hands of the high priest. It is a measure of James's prominence in Jerusalem that his death is described at such length by the historian Josephus.

These four leaders—Paul, Peter, John and James—are each associated with colleagues: Paul with his coworkers, Peter with his surrogate "son" Mark and his amanuensis Silvanus, John with his unidentified circle in Ephesus, James with other "brothers of the Lord" and "the elders" in Jerusalem. From these four men and their associates came the four main blocks of New Testament literature.

Further reading

Barnett Paul W. "Opposition in Corinth." *JSNT* 22 (1984): 3-17.

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Bruce, F. F. *The Canon of Scripture.* Glasgow: Chapter House, 1988.

Hartin, Patrick J. *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus.* Sheffield: JSOT, 1991.

Hengel, Martin. *The Johannine Question.* London: SCM Press, 1989.

Martyn, J. L. "A Gentile Mission that Replaced an Earlier Jewish Mission?" In *Exploring the Gospel of John,* pp. 124-44. Edited by R. A. Culpepper and C. Clifton Black. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 1996.

Michaels, J. Ramsey. *1 Peter.* WBC 49. Waco, Tex.: Word, 1988.

Selwyn, E. G. *The First Epistle of St Peter.* London: Macmillan, 1961.

Notes

[1]The Greek original does not employ the verb *go* either for Paul and Barnabas or for the three "pillars."
[2]See §12.5.3.
[3]For the association between Peter and John, see 12.3; 12.5.3.
[4]The name John (Zebedee) does not occur in the Fourth Gospel, but Peter is bracketed with "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in that Gospel (Jn 13:23-24; 19:26; 20:2). Peter and John are often connected in the book of Acts (Acts 1:13; 3:1, 3, 4, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14).
[5]See, e.g., 1 Peter 5:2 and John 21:15-17 ("feed my sheep"); cf. 1 Peter 1:3, 22 and John 3:3, 5 ("born again"); 1 Peter 3:18-22 and John 13:36; 21:19, 22 ("you will follow later").
[6]See §14.6.
[7]See excursus 13B.
[8]See §14.8.2-3.
[9]Eusebius' reference (*HE* 2.14.6) to Peter coming to Rome in the time of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) has prompted speculation that the apostle may have visited Rome during the forties prior to a subsequent visit in the fifties (see, e.g., J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1976], pp. 112-14). However, this earlier visit lacks credible evidence. In any case, Peter's visit to Corinth after Paul in the early fifties provides little opportunity for Peter to have arrived in Rome before Claudius' principate ended. Claudius banned Jews from Rome in 49, operative until his death in 54.
[10]So E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 45-47. For an opposing view, see Colin J. Hemer, "The Address of 1 Peter," *ExpTim* 89 (1977-1978): 239-43.
[11]This rather odd sequence of regions may be explained by the bearer of the letter arriving from Rome by sea, disembarking in Pontus and reembarking in Bithynia; the places in between provided a natural courier route.
[12]It is clear that Peter himself was not the evangelist (1 Pet 1:12, 23-25).
[13]2 Corinthians 8:6, 10; 2:17—3:3; 10:1—12:13.
[14]Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4.
[15]*1 Clement* 5:4-5.
[16]Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.
[17]See §12.3.
[18]According to Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.33.4, Papias was "a hearer of John," by which he must mean John the apostle. However, Eusebius, *HE* 3.39.12, who is our immediate source for Papias's words, attributes his information not to John the apostle but to a later disciple, John the Elder. Note, though, that Irenaeus was a century and a half closer to these events than Eusebius was.
[19]Eusebius *HE* 3.39.12-16 (LCL).
[20]See §10.3.
[21]See §18.3.1.
[22]"They wrote through the hand of *[dia cheiros autōn]*"; the word *letter* does not appear.
[23]Some argue that this means Silvanus was merely the bearer of the letter. So J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter,* WBC 49 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1988), pp. 306-7. He and others point to a similar

expression in the book of Acts where the apostles, elders and the whole church sent Barsabbas and Silas (= Silvanus) to Antioch with a letter to the church in Antioch (Acts 15:23-24.). This text can readily mean not only that Barsabbas and Silas delivered and explained the letter on arrival, which they did, but also that they had previously drafted the letter under the instructions of the senders. It is quite possible that Silvanus fulfilled the same function with regard to the first letter of Peter.

[24]Compare 2 Peter 1:5 with Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:12 with Jude 5; 2 Peter 3:2-3 with Jude 17-18; 2 Peter 3:14 with Jude 24; 2 Peter 3:18 with Jude 25.

[25]See, e.g., W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1975), pp. 430-34.

[26]Eusebius *HE* 6.12.1-5 (LCL).

[27]F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Glasgow: Chapter House, 1988), pp. 124-29.

[28]Josephus *J.W.* 1.3.

[29]Josephus *Ant.* 2.263.

[30]Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.50.

[31]See §12.4-5.

[32]Critical scholarship is generally doubtful about Petrine authorship of 1 Peter. For a survey of the issues involved, see Michaels, *1 Peter,* pp. lxi-lxvii. The classical case for Petrine authorship was presented by Selwyn, *First Epistle of St Peter,* pp. 7-17, 33-36.

[33]For discussion of the Jewish character of the letter while recognizing its Gentile readership, see Michaels, *1 Peter,* pp. lxv-lv.

[34]So Selwyn, *First Epistle of St Peter,* p. 44.

[35]See excursus 13B.

[36]See, e.g., Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:20; 10:41; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:16-18.

[37]Revelation 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8; see §19.3.

[38]Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 3.3.4.

[39]A letter from Irenaeus quoted Eusebius *HE* 5.20 (LCL).

[40]When Polcarp was martyred in 155, he declared that he had served his king for eighty-six years, suggesting that he was born into a Christian family (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.3). Accordingly, we date his birth to 69.

[41]Irenaeus *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9.3.

[42]Quoted in Eusebius *HE* 5.8.4 (LCL).

[43]C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: SPCK, 1960), p. 114.

[44]Commenting on lost works of Papias.

[45]Eusebius *HE* 39.3-7.

[46]Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM Press, 1989), pp. 30, 34, 80, 81, 130-32.

[47](1) It is entirely speculative to identify the "Elder" of 2 and 3 John with Papias's "Elder John." (2) We have no reason to believe this "Elder John" came from Jerusalem or that the Fourth Gospel was redacted by his followers after his death.

[48]See §6.5.2.

[49]Second and 3 John use enough of the language of 1 John to suggest a close literary connection. Yet, unlike 1 John, 2 and 3 John introduce the author and sender as "the Elder," suggesting that he may not have been John the apostle. Is this author the last of the Johannine circle, sufficiently close to John in person and to his other writings for them to be considered Johannine?

[50]Quoted in Eusebius *HE* 7.25.

[51]Hengel, *Johannine Question,* p. 110, quoting A.-J. Festugière.

[52]Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho* 81.

[53]For the view that the intended readership is Gentile, see Hengel, *Johannine Question,* pp. 119-24; for the view that Jews are the intended audience for this Gospel, see J. Louis Martyn, "A Gentile Mission That Replaced an Earlier Jewish Mission?" in *Exploring the Gospel of John,* ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster, 1996), pp. 124-44.

[54]See Hengel, *Johannine Question*, pp. 111-12.
[55]Ibid., pp. 113-14.
[56]Ibid., p. 113.
[57]See passages from Jesus' standpoint: John 8:17; 10:34; cf. 7:19; passages from the Jewish viewpoint: John 7:51; 12:34; 19:7.
[58]Martyn, "Gentile Mission?" pp. 127-29.
[59]*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12.2. Tertullian made the comment, "synagogues of the Jews, sources of persecution" (*Scorp.* 10).
[60]See §14.8.2.
[61]Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4.
[62]See Josephus *J.W.* 2.223-45.
[63]Josephus *J.W.* 2.246-70.
[64]Tacitus *Histories* 5.9; cf. *Annals* 12.2.
[65]Josephus *J.W.* 2.253.
[66]Tacitus *Histories* 5.9. Allowance must be made for Josephus's tendency to blame bad governors for the problems in Judea and for Tacitus's bias against people of nonsenatorial background. Nonetheless, Felix emerges badly from the sources.
[67]Babylonian Talmud *Pesaḥim* 57a.
[68]So named after the Latin curved daggers they concealed under their flowing garments (Josephus *J.W.* 2.254).
[69]Josephus *J.W.* 2.259.
[70]Ibid., 2.264-65.
[71]Jerusalem is not mentioned in Acts 18:22 but is surely understood.
[72]Cf. Acts 17:2-3; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; 2 Corinthians 1:19-20.
[73]Cf. Acts 21:21, 27-28.
[74]This assumes the unity of the letter; see Paul W. Barnett, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 17-25.
[75]Cf. 2 Corinthians 1:19-21; 3:3, 7-9; 15-18.
[76]Cf. Galatians 2:15—3:5; 5:2-6, 16-26; Romans 8:1-6.
[77]2 Corinthians 5:11-13; 11:4-5; 12:2-3.
[78]See Acts 21:20-21; cf. Acts 21:27-28.
[79]See, e.g., James 1:5-8; 3:13-18.
[80]See, e.g., James 2:1, 12; 3:1; 4:7, 12; 5:1, 7, 9, 20.
[81]The authority implicit in the opening sentences is consistent with authorship by James, brother of Jesus, rather than James Zebedee, who in any case was killed in the early forties (Acts 12:2). This may be earlier than a more likely date for the letter, in the fifties.
[82]Josephus, *Ant.* 20.179-81.
[83]James 1:17 (Mt 7:11); James 1:22-25 (Mt 7:24); James 2:15 (Mt 25:3); James 3:6 (Mt 12:36; 15:11); James 4:11-12 (Mt 7:1); James 5:12 (Mt 5:34-37); James 5:8-9 (Mt 24:33); James 5:19-20 (Mt 18:11).
[84]See Patrick J. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991).
[85]See §18.8.3.
[86]Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 7.4.
[87]Luke knows of the collection (Acts 24:17), yet he makes no other reference to it. Is his silence about the collection and the Jerusalem elders' reception of it diplomatic, to mask the hostility of the Jerusalem church toward Paul?
[88]For suggestions about the impact of contemporary circumstances in Judea upon the Judaizing mission against Paul, see Paul W. Barnett, "Opposition in Corinth," *JSNT* 22 (1984): 3-17.
[89] Josephus *Ant.* 20.197-200.
[90]See §12.5.3.
[91]Josephus *Ant.* 20.201.

16

Paul's Later Ministry (c. 50-65)

16.1. Delivery of the Jerusalem decree (Acts 15:22—16:5)

At the meeting in Jerusalem under James's leadership, a letter was written to the churches of the Gentiles previously established by Paul, setting out the conditions of their inclusion in the covenant people.[1] They sent this letter to the church in Antioch with two of their delegates, Judas and Silas, accompanied by Barnabas and Paul. In Antioch, these delegates from the church in Jerusalem spent some time explaining and applying the letter they had brought.

Paul then planned to revisit the churches in southern Galatia with Barnabas. When Paul declined to allow John Mark to accompany them, Paul invited the Jerusalemite Silas/Silvanus to come with him. Barnabas, with his cousin John Mark, returned to Cyprus for further ministry there.

Paul and Silas then traveled from Antioch-on-the-Orontes westward through Syria and Cilicia, including Tarsus, strengthening the churches previously established by Paul and delivering the letter from the Jerusalem Council. Then striking northward they passed via the Cilician Gates through the Taurus mountains on to the high plateau country of southern Galatia. In a reverse of the sequence in the initial visit, Paul with Silas visited the churches of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia, where they delivered and explained the decisions of the meeting in Jerusalem.

Luke makes a special point of mentioning Timothy, who joined Paul and Silas in Lystra. Already a disciple, most probably from Paul's initial visit, Paul circumcised the young man. Although Timothy was a Jew (his mother's Jewishness determined this), Timothy was as yet uncircumcised, presumably because his father was a Gentile. For Paul to have been assisted by an uncircumcised Jew would have

been deeply offensive in ministry to Jews. But did this action glaringly contradict his own insistence on a circumcision-free gospel about which Paul had written recently to those very Galatian churches in which Timothy was a member? Since this decision was based on discretion and not obligation, Paul had not breached his own commitment to the "truth of the gospel" about which he had protested so much in the letter to the Galatians (Gal 2:5, 14; 4:16).

According to the book of Acts, these churches grew in numbers at this time, no doubt because of the impulse of the ministry of Paul, Silas and Timothy.

16.2. Pisidian Antioch to Macedonia

Having consolidated the ministry in this cluster of Roman cities, Paul struck westward, that is, toward Rome (Acts 16:6-10). This he did first by heading west to one Roman destination, then north to another, then west to another and yet once more west to another until he was directly on a road to Rome.

Thus from the churches in southern Galatia Paul set out along the great trunk road, the Via Sebaste, to Roman Asia, in all probability toward its greatest city, Ephesus. However, in the first of a series of supernatural revelations, Paul was deflected northward toward Bithynia and the Black Sea. Before reaching that destination Paul and his assistants were once more redirected, this time westward, but by rough back roads, suggesting a clear intention to come to Alexandria Troas. Troas, a midsized Roman city, was strategically located near the Hellespont. This city was the connecting port in northern Asia between Asia and Macedonia. It may be that Paul took his westward route not merely to reach Troas, but also to sail to Macedonia. The subtle change of pronoun in Troas from "they" to "we" indicates that the diarist-historian of the book of Acts has himself now become part of the events he is describing.

Based on silence in the narrative of Acts, it appears that the missionaries did not preach along the way from southern Galatia to Troas, but sought to arrive at that destination as soon as possible. Troas, however, did not prove to be their final destination or a place where they were to exercise ministry. Once more a revelation directed them, this time onward, across the mouth of the Hellespont to Troas's corresponding port in Macedonia, Neapolis. It was from Neapolis that the Via Egnatia, the road that crossed Macedonia en route to Rome, began. Its remains are still visible today.

16.3. Paul, Rome and the Aegean Provinces

If Paul was not to preach in Roman Ephesus, nor yet in Roman Troas, but was summoned to Macedonia, to the threshhold of the road to Rome, perhaps the Lord was telling Paul that he should march on to Rome itself, a mere two weeks farther. Seven years later he was to write to the Romans, "I have often intended to come to you" (Rom 1:10, 13; 15; 22). It is distinctly possible that his arrival in

Neapolis was one of those occasions of fervent intention.

However, it was not the right time for Paul and his companions to press on to Rome. Paul probably arrived in Macedonia c. 50; an earlier date is unlikely.[2] In 49 the emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome because of internal disputes within their community, quite probably associated with the preaching of Christ.[3] As a Jew and as a preacher of Jesus the Christ, Paul was doubly hobbled in his hopes of coming to Rome. Only when Claudius died in 54 and the ban on Jews in Rome was lifted would it be possible for Paul to turn his eyes again toward the imperial capital. When that time came, however, Peter had already arrived in Rome and had laid apostolic foundations there, making it impossible for Paul to serve as the pioneer builder (Rom 15:20-22).[4] Despite his many hopes in the meantime, Paul's time in Rome would be limited to a brief visit on his way to Spain (Rom 15:24; cf. Rom 1:11-12).

Thus the die was cast for Paul to remain in the Aegean region. For the next eight years (50-57) Paul devoted his energies to preaching and church building in Philippi and Thessalonica on the Via Egnatia, in Corinth, the capital of Achaia, and in Ephesus, the leading city of Roman Asia. Moreover, he had missionary designs on Alexandria Troas (2 Cor 2:12-13).

To be sure, Paul preached in Beroea and in Athens, as well as in other places not mentioned in the records; yet he appears to have had a decided preference for establishing centers of Christianity in Roman cities. We may only speculate as to the reasons. Was it because Paul the Roman citizen knew he would enjoy greater protection from violence in cities subject to Roman governance? That proved to be the case in Philippi, Ephesus and Jerusalem.[5] Did the nuances of Roman law provide greater security for Paul the Jew from other Jews in a world where Judaism was *religio licita?* Paul sheltered beneath that umbrella in Corinth (Acts 18:12-16). More generally did Paul see the *Pax Romana,* particularly as it applied in Roman cities, as offering a more stable base for evangelism, including evangelism to outlying centers? Did Paul regard these cities as logical steppingstones to Rome itself, the real as well as the symbolic hub of the Gentile world? Did Paul see the ultimate fulfillment of his commission to evangelize the Gentiles in his capture of its world capital, Rome, for Christ?

16.3.1. Macedonia (Acts 16:11—17:15). The book of Acts narrates the ministry of Paul and his associates in three Macedonian centers: Philippi (a Roman colony), Thessalonica (the capital of the province) and Beroea. Philippi and Thessalonica were located on the Via Egnatia, but Beroea was twenty miles south of the Roman road.

Unlike Thessalonica and Beroea, Philippi did not boast a synagogue, though the God-fearer Lydia from Thyatira was among the open-air assembly of Jews who was baptized and who offered hospitality to the missionaries. Following the exorcism of a slave girl, Paul and Silas were the victims of officially sanctioned mob

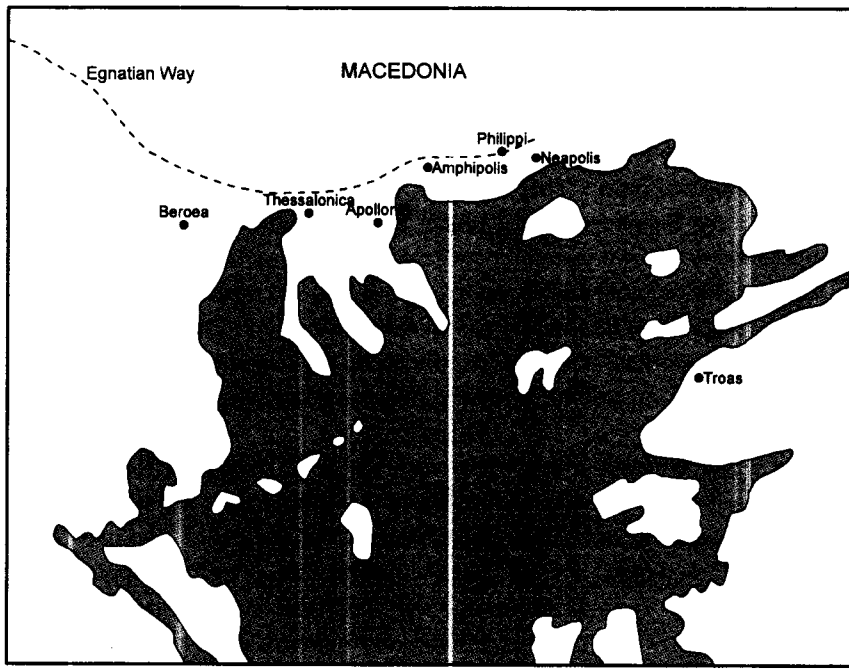
violence after which they were imprisoned overnight. Paul insisted on an apology before they departed from Philippi. The reference to "brethren" indicates that an assembly of believers had been established by the time they left the city. The "we" sequence ends with Paul's withdrawal from Philippi, suggesting that Luke, the diarist-historian did not continue with "them" along the road to Thessalonica.

Thessalonica,[6] which was known as "the metropolis of Macedonia,"[7] was strategically located on the Thermaic gulf, which extended a distance inland. Its proximity to the Bosphorus to the north, to the Adriatic to the west and to the Balkans to the northwest guaranteed wealth and properity to Thessalonica. Pella, the capital of the kings of Macedonia of former times, was now heavily silted, giving way to Thessalonica as the leading city of the region. By the New Testament era, of course, Macedonia had succumbed to the Romans, following the Battle of Pydna in 168 B.C. When Paul arrived, Thessalonica was a self-governing city and the seat of the proconsul.

There was a synagogue in Thessalonica where on successive sabbaths Paul preached that Jesus, crucified and raised from the dead, was the Christ. Some Jews but many God-fearers, including leading women, "joined Paul," that is, formed a rival assembly; a reference to "brethren" confirms this. Jewish unhappiness with this eventuality led to public accusation that the preaching of Christ was against the political settlement of the city since, it was claimed, these men were urging loyalty to "another king" rather than to the emperor. The preachers were forced from the city.

The choice of Beroea as the next destination was probably governed by the existence of a synagogue. Here the Jewish members as well as prominent women of the God-fearers were very receptive to the message. Mention of "brethren" suggests that a congregation was also established in Beroea. However, the arrival of hostile Jews from Thessalonica forced Paul from the city and from Macedonia, from which he traveled by ship to Athens. However, Silas and Timothy remained in Macedonia.

Sometime after Silas and Timothy had joined Paul in Corinth, he and they wrote two letters to the Thessalonians. Of predominantly Gentile membership (1 Thess 1:9-10; cf. 1 Thess 4:1-8), this congregation was suffering some level of persecution from fellow Gentiles, as it had from the beginning (1 Thess 2:14; cf. 1 Thess 1:6-9; 3:1-5). Perhaps the charges of treasonable anti-imperial attitudes originally directed at Paul had been redirected at other Christians after his departure. In his absence Paul has been subject to serious slander by unnamed opponents regarding his financial dealings; he addresses these accusations in this letter (1 Thess 2:1-12).[8] Evidently matters relating to eschatology were of concern in Thessalonica. In the first letter Paul answers questions related to the security of those who have already "fallen asleep" as well as questions regarding the nature of the parousia (1 Thess 4:13—5:4; 2 Thess 2:1-12). In the second letter Paul is responding to bogus



Map 20. Paul in Macedonia

reports, some of which purported to have been written by him, that the day of the Lord had already come (2 Thess 2:1-3). The writers address a number of moral matters in these letters. In the first letter they admonish the readers regarding marital fidelity, sobriety relating to drunkenness and respect of church leaders (2 Thess 4:1-8; 5:4-13). In both letters they appeal to those who will not work (1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:6-15), perhaps in anticipation of the last days ("the day of the Lord has come" [2 Thess 2:1-2]).

The letter to the Philippians was written a decade after Paul's initial visit to the city.[9] It is evident from Paul's extensive reports of his own sufferings (Phil 1:3-8, 12-26; 3:10-11), as well as by his references to the conflicts experienced by the Philippians, that the readers are suffering significant persecution in the wider community (Phil 1:27-30). His emphasis on the certainty of the believer's hope reinforces our sense that these Philippians have been subject to considerable pressure.

What was the source of the Philippians' difficulties? They appear to be connected with Philippi's distinctiveness as a Roman colony.[10] Various references to "citizenship" within the letter are appropriately made to readers in a Roman colony. Paul,

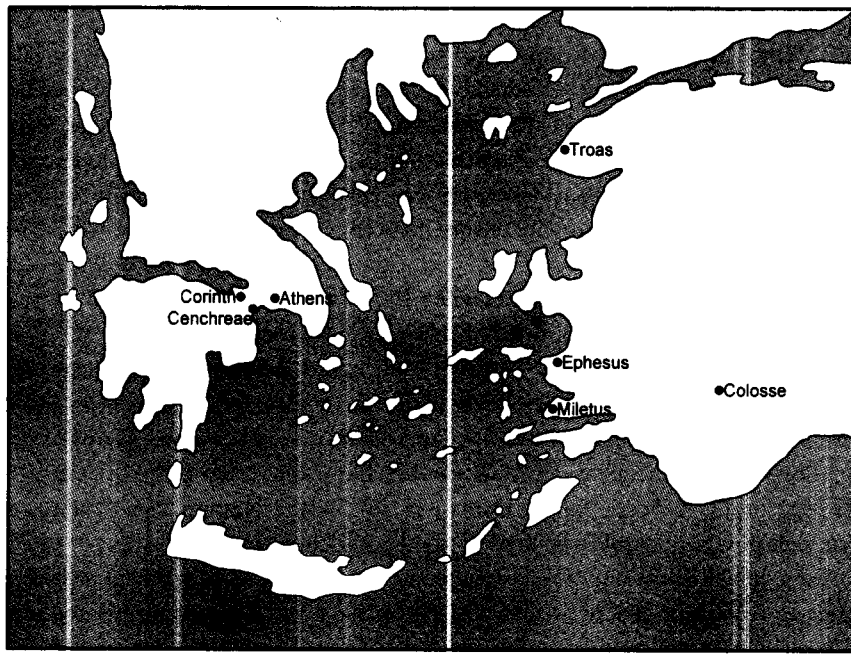
however, alters the concept, referring to "heavenly citizenship" (Phil 1:27; 3:20). Paul's own sufferings, but also his triumphs, which appear to be quite intentionally narrated, have occurred in relationship to the Roman empire (Phil 1:12-14, 19-26; 4:22). Since they are caught up in the "*same* conflict" as he (Phil 1:30), we take it that their struggle also relates somehow to Rome. Are we able to be more specific? Paul's attribution to Jesus of the titles *kyrios,* "Lord," and *sōtēr,* "savior," was probably deliberate; these were also titles of the emperor Nero. We may tentatively conclude that the Philippians' sufferings arose from their higher loyalty to Jesus and their consequent higher citizenship, heaven. Opposition to these Christians in Philippi, then, appears to have been politically motivated as it had been a decade earlier in neighboring Thessalonica when the missionaries were accused of pro-claiming "another king" and, thus, of subverting the social order.

16.3.2. Achaia (Acts 17:16—18:18). Paul could hardly bypass Athens, the former intellectual center of the Greek world. To be sure, with the creation of the Hellenistic kingdoms of the *diadochoi,* "successors," the days of intellectual glory had long passed to the great city of Alexandria, but also to lesser centers of learning like Pergamum, Antioch, Tarsus, Damascus and Gadara. Nonetheless, Athens was their wellspring and could still boast a strong academic tradition.

Alone in this great city, Paul preached in the synagogue but also preached in public in the agora, where he was noticed by Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. Because he appeared to be introducing foreign deities (a male god *Iēsous,* "Jesus," and a female consort *anastasis,* "resurrection"?) to the city, Paul was brought before a meeting of the Areopagus to explain himself. The speech that followed, which probably had elements Paul regularly used when addressing Gentiles,[11] provoked considerable mirth, especially his references to the resurrection of Christ. Several were persuaded by Paul's words, but we know of no church being formed in Athens.

So Paul traveled on to his ultimate destination in Greece, the great city of Corinth. Rebuilt as a Roman colony in 46 B.C. by Julius Caesar after a century in ruins, Corinth was now a prosperous metropolis. Sitting astride the narrow isthmus joining the Pelopponese to Greece with consequent north-south land traffic and east-west sea traffic between the Adriatic and the Aegean, Corinth must surely have been the most strategically located city in the Greco-Roman world.

Again alone, Paul arrived in Corinth with, apparently, the clear intention of remaining for a considerable period. Initially he was given hospitality by Priscilla and Aquila, with whom he shared three things: they were tentmakers, they were Jews and, almost certainly, they were fellow believers. Prosperous traders who traveled from place to place where they remained for some time, Priscilla and Aquila were among those Jews required to leave Italy by Claudius's decree in c. 49. When Paul left Corinth, they too left and moved to Ephesus in concert with Paul's plans to teach there (Acts 18:18; 19:26).[12]



Map 21. Paul in Achaia and Asia

Initially Paul preached in the synagogue arguing his case from the Septuagint that "the Christ was Jesus."[13] There were "Greeks" (that is, God-fearers) among his hearers. Once again the familiar pattern unfolded: Paul was forced from the synagogue with a small number who had been convinced by his preaching, including Crispus the ruler of the synagogue.

Shortly after his arrival Paul was joined by Silas and Timothy. This appears to have marked the moment when the three men brought the message of "Jesus Christ, the Son of God" to the wider Gentile community of the city (2 Cor 1:18-20). Analysis of the names and circumstances of the persons mentioned in the book of Acts as well as in 1 Corinthians suggests that the membership of the church represented a reasonable cross section of the wider community, including some from the elite classes.[14]

Approximately six months after Paul came to the city, the new proconsul, Gallio, arrived. In civilian provinces like Achaia, the governor's tenure lasted only a year, beginning routinely on the first day of July. Scholars of Roman history are able to date Gallio's year in office to 51/52 by an inscription of the

emperor Claudius in Delphi northwest of Athens.

> Tiberius [Claudius] Caesar Augustus Germanicus . . [year 12 acclaimed emperor for] the 26th time . . . I have for a long time been zealous for the city of Delphi . . . the present stories and those quarrels of the citizens of which [a report has been made by Lucius] Junius Gallio, my friend and the proconsul of Achaea.[15]

The Jewish community, disaffected following Paul's arrival to their synagogue, brought charges against Paul to the proconsul. They claimed he was teaching the worship of God contrary to the law, that is, introducing a new religious cult not sanctioned by the Romans. Gallio dismissed the charge, believing that Paul's activities lay within the province of Judaism, which enjoyed Roman protection as a *religio licita.* This was a momentous decision that afforded protection for Paul's ministry for some years. Had the proconsul reached a different verdict, it is likely that Paul would have faced similar charges wherever he went throughout the Roman provinces.

16.3.3. Asia (Acts 18:22—20:38). A year later, before a new governor could decide differently, Paul left Corinth. He had decided to move to Ephesus. Having briefly visited that city, he found he needed to return to Jerusalem, doubtless to maintain contact with the leadership of the church. After revisiting Antioch in Syria he retraced his steps back (through Tarsus and Cilicia) to the churches of Galatia. Not being deflected by supernatural guidance as he had been previously, he then traveled along the Via Sebaste from the cities of southern Galatia across the "upper country" to the greatest city of the province, Ephesus. This journey, remarkable for its length, which encompassed both sea and land and which Paul appears to have made alone, is narrated in the book of Acts in just five verses![16]

The Roman province of Asia had formerly been part of the kingdom of Pergamum, one of the Hellenistic kingdoms following the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. In 129 B.C., however, following the death of Attalus III a few years earlier, the kingdom fell into Roman hands. The numerous Hellenistic cities that had arisen after Alexander increasingly assumed a Roman character. The province was dotted with many cities, each with her temples to Rome and her Caesar, along with traditional local deities like Artemis in Ephesus. There were great harbor cities like Smyrna, Miletus and Halicarnassus, as well as inland centers like Pergamum, Magnesia, Aphrodisias and Hierapolis. But there was none greater than Ephesus.

Like Corinth, Troas, Philippi and Thessalonica, Ephesus was remarkably strategic in its location. Situated on a harbor a few miles inland, it was a major port for the Aegean, with shipping going to and from the Black Sea to the north and into the wider Mediterranean to the south. Moreover, it was the terminus for the great trunk road to the east, which began as the Roman Via Sebaste to Pisidian

Antioch and reached ultimately to Meesopotamia. Within this Roman city was a large Jewish community. Both elements were important in the Pauline strategy.

Furthermore, Ephesus and its province were very important in Paul's patchwork of Gentile provinces.[17] The formation of churches in Asia closed the gap between the Greek provinces Macedonia and Achaia and Galatia. By establishing churches in Asia, including through Epaphras in the Lycus region (Col 1:7; 4:12; Philem 23), Paul established direct geographic links with his Galatian churches. As the Galatian correspondence shows, these churches were capable of being alienated from their founder. Southern Galatia was closer to Jerusalem than to Macedonia and Achaia. Thus, Asia was critical in securing a cluster of churches united within the Pauline tradition of a circumcision-free gospel against undesirable influence from Jerusalem.

Paul's friends Priscilla and Aquila established themselves in Ephesus ahead of Paul. Evidently they had established a house church in the city; the book of Acts refers to "brethren" before Paul arrived. In the synagogue Priscilla and Aquila met and were able to help to a full Christian understanding a fellow Jew, Apollos from Alexandria. He had been influenced previously by a group of adherents of John the Baptist, who were doubtless also associated with the synagogue in Ephesus. On his arrival Paul ministered to twelve of these "Baptist" adherents, whom he baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul spent three months teaching in the synagogue, to our knowledge a much longer period than in any other place. Eventually, however, he was ejected, taking his converts with him. This may have marked the formal beginning of a discrete Christian assembly in the city. Then, for two to three years, Paul taught by day in a private hall, with many people from Ephesus and the province coming to hear him.[18] Among those converted by Paul's preaching was Epaphras, who returned to his native Lycus valley region to establish churches in Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col 1:7-8; 4:12-13). Paul also visited the house churches belonging to the congregation, where he instructed them in the gospel of Christ (Acts 20:20). Throughout this period, as in Thessalonica and Corinth, Paul worked (by night?) as a tentmaker to support himself and his associates, Timothy, Titus and Erastus.[19]

Paul's years in Ephesus were turbulent. It is possible that he sustained some periods in prison, from which he wrote letters to the churches in Colossae and Laodicea (Col 4:3, 10, 16). (The letter to the Laodiceans, of which we have no other knowledge, may also have been written as a general encyclical from Paul to churches in Asia, later becoming known as his letter to the Ephesians.)[20] Most certainly 1 Corinthians, written from Ephesus, speaks of acute sufferings:

> God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; . . . a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. (1 Cor 4:9)

> Why am I in peril every hour? . . . I die every day! . . . I fought with beasts at Ephesus. (1 Cor 15:30-32)

The climax of Paul's ordeals came with the citywide riot and demonstration of loyalty for Artemis the patron-deity of Ephesus. This event effectively forced Paul from the city and brought his ministry there to an end (Acts 19:23—20:1; 2 Cor 1:8-10).

16.3.4. Troas and Macedonia. Paul traveled north to Alexandria Troas, where for some time apparently he had hoped to preach the gospel of Christ. But Titus's failure to arrive after returning from a delicate mission to Corinth forced Paul to cross over to Macedonia where an alternative rendezvous had been arranged (2 Cor 2:12-13). Before Titus's arrival, Paul appears to have renewed his fellowship with the Macedonian churches of Philippi, Thessalonica and Beroea. Paul was reunited with Timothy, whom he had sent on ahead from Ephesus some time earlier (Acts 19:22). Timothy was to join with Paul in sending a major letter to the Corinthians, the canonical second letter.

16.3.5. The collection for Jerusalem.[21] In c. 54/55 Paul made the major decision to go to Rome (Acts 19:21; cf. 1 Cor 16:5). News had come of the death of Claudius, opening the city once more for Jews (cf. Acts 18:2). After years of waiting it would now be possible to fulfill his long-held hopes. In any case, he had come to believe that he "no longer [had] any room for work in [those] regions" (Rom 15:23).

This plan involved two subsidiary matters that were closely connected. On one hand, he needed to depart the Aegean churches in an orderly way, leaving their affairs in good condition. On the other hand, he sought to strengthen the relationship between his network of Gentile churches with the mother church in Jerusalem, seeking her recognition of these assemblies. To that end he organized an extensive collection of money from the members of the churches. This offering would be taken to Jerusalem at about the time Paul himself would return there (1 Cor 16:1-4).

On this mission he sent Titus to Corinth (2 Cor 8:6, 10; cf. 1 Cor 16:1-4) and, we presume, an envoy to southern Galatia (1 Cor 16:1) to make arrangements. The Asian churches also participated (Acts 20:4) along with the Macedonians, though the latter were not initially invited to do so because of their poverty (2 Cor 8:1-5). The sheer magnitude of the task was complicated by the Corinthians' discontinuance of their contributions and in the revelation of a Jewish conspiracy for shipboard interception of the money. Despite these obstacles, the collection with its impressive body of delegates from the Gentile churches arrived in Jerusalem.

To be sure, a sincere concern for relief of need and expression of fellowship underlay this vast enterprise, as Paul explains in several of his letters.[22] In addition, as Paul prepared to journey west, he was concerned for the welfare of these churches that had been the fruits of his labors for the past decade. Recognition by Jerusalem of these Gentile assemblies, vulnerable without apostolic representation, would be

important. He hoped for official acknowlegment that these were also among the new covenant people of God.

16.3.6. Paul and the Corinthians. After Antioch-on-the-Orontes, Corinth was the greatest city in which Paul exercised his apostolic ministry. As a Roman city it would be his major steppingstone to Rome itself. From Corinth Paul would write his letter to the Romans at the very end of his Aegean ministry (2 Cor 10:15-16).

We are able to trace Paul's dealings with the Corinthians over an eight-year period (50-57). Initially he spent a year and a half there establishing the church (50-52). This was followed by a (brief?) emergency visit c. 55 (2 Cor 2:1; 13:2) and a final sojourn lasting three months (Acts 20:2-3; 2 Cor 13:1). Paul wrote no less than four letters to the church: the "previous" letter, 1 Corinthians, the "severe" letter and 2 Corinthians; the "previous" and "severe" letters have not survived. Various problems brought Paul's envoys to Corinth. Timothy accompanied 1 Corinthians in c. 55 and, later that year, Titus delivered the "severe" letter.

A number of recurring problems may be noticed running through these letters and visits by Paul and his associates. Prominent among Paul's concerns was their continuing worship in the pagan temples, which inevitably involved temple prostitution, both heterosexual and homosexual.[23] A fundamental concern throughout his correspondence was the church's failure to recognize unambiguously the apostolic authority of their founder, Paul. This was exacerbated by the visits to Corinth of various other ministers whom the Corinthians seized upon in preference to Paul. The first letter mentions the comings and goings of Apollos and Cephas/Peter in this regard, though there is no evidence that either of these men set out to undermine Paul's connection with the church.

Of more serious concern by far were unnamed missionaries (from Jerusalem?), whose influence in the city threatened Paul's leadership. Discussion of this influence dominates 2 Corinthians, written from Macedonia after Paul's reunion with Titus, who had come from Corinth.[24] These men came (from Jerusalem?) with the definite intention of establishing their own leadership in place of Paul's in Corinth, preaching an alternative Christology with a Moses-based righteousness (2 Cor 11:4, 15). Second Corinthians is Paul's passionate last-ditch attempt to secure the allegiance of the Corinthians away from the hands of these impressive newcomers. Not to have succeeded would have meant losing to a Judaizing mission the major church in his network of Gentile churches! Lost, too, would have been their contributions to the collection, a serious loss both materially and symbolically in his attempt to win for his churches recognition from James and the mother church.

16.3.7. Corinth and the letter to the Romans. Having dispatched Titus with the famous unnamed "brother" and a less well-known "brother" back to Corinth bearing the powerfully worded 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 8:16-24), Paul waited for some time to allow the impact of the letter to have its effects in the southern capital.

In due course he arrived there and remained for three months, staying in the house of Gaius (Rom 16:23). Circumstantial evidence suggests that he had rewon the loyalty of the Corinthians through the writing of 2 Corinthians. That he remained there, rather than withdrawing on arrival, is suggestive of his acceptance in Corinth. The letter to the Romans, written from Corinth (see Rom 15:25-26), is generally calm in its manner of expression, which is also consistent with a calm situation in the church.

Paul's letter to the Romans is his major work, written with the assistance of Tertius (Rom 16:22). Such is its magnitude and depth that the three-month stay in Corinth may have been substantially occupied in its composition. Perhaps the letter arose from specific teaching Paul was offering in Corinth at that time, possibly by means of a series of lectures. In many ways Romans completes in more measured terms the arguments Paul had advanced so hotly in the immediately previous letter, 2 Corinthians.

Paul had several reasons for writing to the Romans. First the letter would serve as a substitute for his own presence in Rome. Since Peter had (apparently) arrived beforehand and laid an apostolic foundation upon which Paul did not feel free to build (Rom 15:20-21), this written work must achieve what he in person would not now be able to do. Not to have reached Rome as the pioneer apostle after years of waiting to do so must have been a source of considerable disappointment to Paul.

The theological issues raised by the recent Judaizing countermission to Corinth set the agenda for much of the letter, in particular his exposition of the place of faith in Christ as the means of divine justification.[25] At the same time certain matters were enlarged upon in ways not anticipated in earlier writings. In particular Paul stressed the dire human need for God-given righteousness, the reality of human sin that originated in the disobedience of Adam and that continued grievously even after incorporation in Christ.

The extended ethical section also touched on matters of urgent current concern. His exhortations for harmonious relationships between Gentiles and Jews within the worshiping community in Rome, which remained divided at the time of writing, were quite apposite. The practical and visible unity of the people of Christ, Jews and Gentiles, was not yet a reality. The freely given righteousness of God in the crucified and risen Christ in the face of universal sinfulness, the subject of the first eight chapters, could be the only true basis for the unity for which Paul appeals in Romans 14—15.

Less weighty, yet still pertinent, was the call for submission to Roman authority (Rom 13:1-7). Let the Jewish believers not forget the disturbances within the Jewish community regarding *Chrestus* in the late forties, which provoked Claudius to expel their entire community from Rome.[26] Furthermore, Paul must have been painfully aware that the authorities in Rome knew of the rapidly deteriorating relations between Jews and Romans in Judea. Let the storm clouds of Judea not be seen in unruly (Christian) Jews in Italy.

Of practical concern to Paul was his need for shelter and nurture on his arrival in the great city, in which he would be a stranger. A not unimportant reason for writing to the Romans was his need to be received in the church, given hospitality and helped on his way to the western extremity of the Roman empire, Spain.[27]

16.4. Escorting the collection to Jerusalem

The delegates from the churches of Galatia, Asia and Macedonia converged on Corinth in company with the delegates from Achaia, prepared to accompany the collection by ship to Palestine (Acts 20:3—21:16). The details of the escort may have been influenced by Jewish practices around the Mediterranean, where each year groups of Jewish men would bring the tax for the temple to Jerusalem. Only men of highest standing in the synagogue communities were accorded the honor of making this journey.

As noted above, the discovery in Corinth of a Jewish plot meant a change of plan; the entire group would travel north to Macedonia, cross the northern Aegean to Troas, then travel by sea down the coast of Asia. This plan afforded Paul the opportunity to make his last farewells to the churches that ringed the Aegean. The tearful scene at Miletus, where Paul addressed the presbyters from Ephesus, is narrated at length in the book of Acts as an example of what may have happened at other places.

The resumption of the "we" passages in Philippi signals that diarist-historian has personally rejoined the apostle in his travels and ministry, significantly at the very place the "we" passages ceased seven or eight years earlier. Had this person, surely Luke, remained at Philippi throughout those years? Most of the remainder of the narrative of the book of Acts is told from the viewpoint of "we"/"us" and is more detailed since the author is now an eyewitness to the events. After calling on Hellenist-Jewish congregations in Tyre, Ptolemais and Caesarea, the party came at last to Jerusalem.

Significantly, Paul did not stay with James in Jerusalem; instead he resided with Mnason of Cyprus, "an early disciple." Mnason was probably a part of the Hellenist group originally led by Stephen, one who managed to remain in Jerusalem. Mnason, and others like him, remained separate from the broader community of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

16.5. Paul's years of imprisonment (Acts 21:17—28:31)

Paul arrived in the holy city in c. 58. The various prophetic warnings of dangers in Jerusalem, and his own fears, proved to be well founded. After a less than warm welcome by James and the elders of the Jerusalem church, Paul was obliged to prove to the wider community his authenticity as a Jew by publicly paying the costs for four men regarding their Nazirite vow.[28] Paul was immediately fallen upon by a hostile crowd who alleged that he brought a Gentile into the temple. This result

was inevitable, as Paul doubtless knew, and it appears that the Jerusalem church did nothing to defend him.[29]

From that point onward Paul's life changed. He was subject to a trial before the Sanhedrin, which broke up in disarray. Subsequently he was taken under guard to Caesarea. Here he remained in prison for more than two years under the corrupt Roman procurator Antonius Felix. With the arrival in c. 60 of a new governor, Porcius Festus, Paul appealed as a Roman citizen to be tried before the emperor.

The journey to Rome under guard proved to be tumultuous; the ship was wrecked off the coast of Malta. His ultimate arrival under these ignominious circumstances was far different from his earlier confident expectations. Yet, humiliated prisoner though he was, he doubtless saw himself as "led in triumph by God" (cf. 2 Cor 2:14), as he had been throughout his ministry. He would be kept under open house arrest for two more years.

At that tantalizing point the Acts of the Apostles draws the curtains on the life and ministry of Paul. The reader is not told the outcome of Paul's appeal to Nero, whether he was released, kept in prison or executed.

Paul's letter to the Philippians, which was probably written during the latter part of his imprisonment, casts some light on his experience in Rome.[30] At the time of writing, Paul was quite hopeful that he would be released from prison and could make a return visit to Philippi (Phil 1:19, 25-26; 2:24). The letter itself does not indicate whether Paul regained his freedom for further ministry, though this seems quite likely.

16.6. The final phase

Since the book of Acts leaves Paul's story in Rome in c. 62, we are dependent upon other sources for information about his final years. Here we chiefly lean on the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

Their authenticity as works by Paul has been widely disputed since the nineteenth century.[31] These letters have a different texture from his undisputed writings, both in style and in content. The phenomenon of pseudonymous literature within Judaism is cited to explain how the letters could claim to be, and yet not in fact be, Pauline. As remarked earlier, however, there is no evidence that pseudonymous writing was acceptable within the Christian community.[32] Rather, when such literature later began to appear, it was rejected. Serapion, bishop of Antioch (died c. 211), wrote: "we receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ, but pseudepigrapha in their name we reject."[33] The reference by name to two dozen people in the Pastoral Epistles[34] if contrived for the sake of verisimilitude would be intentionally deceptive. One of the features of Jewish pseudepigrapha is that both the writer and the reader appear to understand that the work is not actually written by, for example, Enoch or Moses or Solomon. Writing under a venerable name from the past was an accepted literary device in dealing with a

contemporary issue. One has no similar sense with the Pastorals; rather, the writer expects the reader to believe in the integrity of the authorship and the subject matter and to heed what is being said in the letter.

Stylistic and theological difference could be accounted for on other grounds, especially when we reflect that even among Paul's undisputed writings no two letters are exactly the same in either content or expression. Much depended on Paul's circumstances, the identity of the particular amanuensis and the degree of freedom Paul may have allowed. The Pastorals are more or less uniform in expression and content, implying the same amanuensis in all three letters. In fact they are the most homogeneous of any cluster of Paul's letters. If the amanuensis was someone quite different from the one who wrote earlier letters, as appears to be the case, we would be able to account for the admitted differences between the Pastoral Epistles and Paul's earlier letters.[35]

Furthermore, people change over the years, especially in the face of disappointment. Allowance must be made for the possibility that Paul expressed himself rather differently in these latter years, especially after five years of imprisonment. The Pastorals throughout paint a somewhat discouraging picture of the circumstances of the churches during the sixties (see, e.g., 1 Tim 1:3-7; 2 Tim 1:15). We can detect in Paul's words the sense of regret in the light of apostasy and betrayal. The more structured ecclesiology evident in the letters, which is pointed to as a sign of non-Pauline authorship, may be accounted for by the deteriorating circumstances evident in Ephesus and elsewhere.

All things considered, the case against Pauline authorship, because it is based on the pseudepigraphal hypothesis, is questionable. The homogeneity of these letters could be explained by the use of a new amanuensis, which could also explain the differences from other letters and support the underlying Pauline authorship and authority.

Regardless of the literary question, however, the Pastorals surely come from the period of Paul's ministry after his release from the captivity referred to in the closing sentences of the book of Acts. During this period he visited Ephesus,[36] Miletus (2 Tim 4:20), Troas (2 Tim 4:13), Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3) and Crete (Tit 1:5), though we do not know in what sequence or for how long. The author must have known these letters would have been immediately disqualified if Paul had not in fact visited these places.

Did Paul finally arrive in Spain? Clement, writing in the midnineties, asserts that he did "reach the farthest limits of the west."[37] But this could mean Rome, not Spain. In fact, it is difficult to see how Paul could have had time or opportunity to have traveled to the Iberian peninsula. The Pastorals are silent, and the author of Acts did not produce a further volume as he surely would have done had Paul gone to Spain.

Our last glimpse of Paul comes from his own pen in 2 Timothy. He is in prison

in Rome once more (2 Tim 1:16-18). He has been subjected to one trial (2 Tim 4:16), and now faces another from which he does not expect to be delivered (2 Tim 4:6-8). And so he awaits execution in the near future. "I am already on the point of being sacrificed," he writes; "the hour of my departure has come" (2 Tim 4:6).

But for that "hour of . . . departure" no detailed evidence remains. The source closest to Paul's death is Clement of Rome: "The greatest and most righteous pillars of the church [Peter and Paul] were persecuted and contended unto death."[38] From Clement we infer that Peter and Paul perished under the Emperor Nero, but we do not know precisely when or under what circumstances.

16.7. Theological and historical themes in Paul's writings

Paul is the practical theologian *par excellence* in the early church. While his immediate achievement as missionary and church planter is peerless, his lasting contribution resides in his theological reflections upon the issues that confronted him in the midst of that mission.

16.7.1. Paul's doctrine of grace and the collection from the Gentile churches for the saints in Jerusalem. The origins of the collection are to be found in the famine relief sent to the Jerusalem church from the church of Antioch c. 47 (Acts 11:29-30; 12:25). It is possible that the famine of the midforties worsened an existing problem caused by the large number of dependent widows in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 6:1-7). At the meeting of the Jerusalem leaders James, Cephas and John with the Antioch delegates Barnabas and Saul, who had brought the relief (cf. Gal 2:1), Paul's gospel and apostolate to the Gentiles was formally recognized but with the request that Paul "remember the poor" (Gal 2:10). Antioch's famine relief for Jerusalem finds a parallel in the action of Queen Helena of Adiabene in Mesopotamia, a proselyte to Judaism, who also sent aid to Judea at the time of the famine.[39]

In c. 55-56, when the end of Paul's Gentile mission in the eastern provinces was in sight, he formalized this earlier agreement that Gentile believers should help the poor believers of Jerusalem by making a special appeal to mark the conclusion of this phase of his ministry.[40] Paul planned to move his base of operations to the western province of Spain after a period of transitional ministry in Rome. Meanwhile, churches from Macedonia, Achaia, Galatia and Asia agreed to participate in this appeal. Whether the initiative for this appeal lay with Jerusalem, signifying James's primacy, or with the Corinthians, signifying that church's patronage, is a point debated by scholars. Judging from the text of Paul's letters, the initiative appears to have come from the apostle at the time he decided to move to the west.[42]

What was the rationale for this charity appeal? Paul declares it to be the "debt" the Gentiles owed to the saints of Jerusalem for the "spiritual blessings" that have

flowed out from them to the Gentiles (Rom 15:27). As reported in Acts, Paul called these gifts "alms and offerings" that he had brought "to my nation" (Acts 24:17). This resembles Queen Helena's "desire to go to the city of Jerusalem and to worship at the Temple of God . . . and to make thank offerings there."[43] One cannot overlook the possibility also that the Gentiles sent such gifts in lieu of submission to circumcision to secure a place in the covenant.

The appeal is characterized by its own vocabulary: "contribution for the saints" (1 Cor 16:1); "gift" (2 Cor 9:5; 1 Cor 16:3;); "grace" (2 Cor 8:6, 7, 9; 9:14); "service" (2 Cor 9:12; cf. Rom 15:27) and "fellowship" (2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; Rom 15:26). It may be significant that as Peter expressed "fellowship" in the gospel to Paul (Gal 2:9), so, reciprocally, Paul called for fellowship between the Gentile and Jewish churches.

Various views have been advanced regarding Paul's underlying motivation in mounting this appeal. The most probable, based on 2 Corinthians 8—9, is that he sought to relieve a genuine and ongoing need in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:14) by a method that would also deepen a sense of fellowship and unity from the Jewish to the Gentile branch of Christianity (2 Cor 9:12-14). Paul probably also hoped that the money from the Gentiles, and more particularly the presence of the large contingent of Gentiles who brought the money (Acts 20:4), would be a potent sign of the success of the gospel among the uncircumcised. Paul was doubtless concerned that the Jerusalem church recognize his mission to the Gentiles and the subsequent creation of a network of Jewish churches. Since Paul was soon to quit the eastern provinces for ministry in the western extremity, his churches needed to find acceptance with the saints in Jerusalem. After all, Jerusalem was the mother church, drawing considerable status from its location at the center of the worldwide community of Jews. The temple was still standing and the holy city still intact. What were Paul's handful of churches in relation to these? The gift from these churches, accompanied by a sizable delegation, would signify God's blessing on Paul and his claims of a dominical commission to preach to and to seek the inclusion of the Gentiles.

This explanation is more cogent than the theory that his strategy embodied his teaching in Romans 9—11, namely, that Jews would be provoked to become believers as a result of the ingathering of the Gentiles (Rom 11:14), a view associated with Johannes Munck. According to this hypothesis, the Gentiles' delivery of the collection to Jerusalem would provoke the conversion of Israel, which would be quickly followed by the parousia.[44] However, Paul would hardly have planned to go to Spain if he expected the parousia to occur following the arrival of these Gentile converts in Jerusalem. Paul makes no explicit connection between the collection for the saints and the bringing of the Gentiles to Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord either in 2 Corinthians 8—9 or in Romans 15:15-33.

It seems that the collection was not successful in fulfilling Paul's objectives. His

cool reception from the elders of the Jerusalem church suggests that, initially at least, his hopes for the strengthening of fellowship between Jews and Gentiles with consequent recognition of the Gentile churches were not realized (Acts 21:17-26). James and the Jerusalem elders made it clear that they did not need any help from Paul or his Gentiles for the conversion of Israel! Moreover, there was an implied criticism of Paul for encouraging the collapse of religious culture among Jews in the diaspora. To be sure, the elders confirmed the Jerusalem Decree of a decade earlier setting out requirements for the inclusion of the Gentiles, which, however, they must continue to uphold. They appear to be implying that Paul has failed also in this. In short, they are quite unimpressed with Paul's Gentile companions and their money! In their eyes Paul has succeeded only in alienating the Jewish community from himself and therefore from them! Let him demonstrate his genuineness as a Jew in a public act in the temple, the payment for purifying four men who had taken a Nazarite vow. Paul's submission to their request was to have disastrous consequences for him; he would be imprisoned for the next five years, first in Caesarea Maritima and then in Rome.

16.7.2. Christ, the Gentiles and Israel. The relationship of the Gentiles and Israel to (the) Christ is a major theme in the letters of Paul from the letter to the Galatians (written c. 48)[45] to the letter to the Romans (written c. 57). However, not all of Paul's letters written during this time address this subject. It is noticeable that 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians remain silent on this issue.

Can we detect an evolution of Paul's thought throughout these years? It is quite true that Paul's treatment of this theme in Romans in particular, but also in Ephesians, shows evidence of more developed thought. Yet it would not be correct to claim that Paul's views had evolved from zero in his earliest extant letter (Galatians) to the mature expositions we find in Romans and Ephesians. Indeed, that earliest letter reflects a position that was already well developed. As noted earlier, Paul had been an active missionary for a decade and a half when he wrote Galatians. We cannot help but notice a well-formed apologetic supported by scriptural citations already in this early work. Paul's conviction of God's call to him to proclaim Christ to the Gentiles is especially clear in Galatians, Romans and Ephesians.

16.7.2.1. Galatians: The primacy of the covenant to Abraham. In c. 47 Paul (with Barnabas and Mark) set out westward evangelizing Gentiles. A Judaizing countermission from Jerusalem to the Galatian churches drew a response from Paul in the form of his first extant letter, Galatians.

The letter throughout is an appeal to reject what the countermissionaries are saying and to hold fast to Paul's original teaching. After quite brief opening formalities, Paul expresses astonishment that the Galatian readers "are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel" (Gal 1:6).

From the time of the Reformation, Galatians has been seized upon to support

the proposition that people are "by grace . . . saved through faith . . . not because of works," to use the convenient words of contrast found in another letter (Eph 2:8-9). However, to read back into Paul the Reformation debates of a millennium and a half later is historically problematic.[46]

Paul's words quoted above show that the dispute between himself and the other preachers was about the true message of the gospel. Paul preached the true and only gospel, but his opponents preached "a different gospel . . . another gospel" (Gal 1:6-7).

Here a distinction needs to be made between the *content* of the gospel and the *consequences* of the gospel.[47] From Galatians it is clear that the core of Paul's gospel is that in Christ crucified and risen the Law and the Prophets are fulfilled and eclipsed. Central to Paul's preaching was the eschatological centrality of Christ in his death and resurrection for the deliverance of his people.[48]

> Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. (Gal 1:3-4)

When Paul preached this gospel, he called upon his hearers to *believe* it, that is, to entrust themselves in the present and for the future to this message. When the hearers came to *believe* the gospel, they were assured that God deemed them "righteous," that is, vindicated or acceptable in his eyes.

The countermissionaries came demanding that these hearers also submit to circumcision, thereby embracing the moral and legal demands of Judaism. In short, they were to become proselytes to Judaism. So far as we can reconstruct the missionaries' beliefs from Paul's letter, it seems that they did not see Christ as Paul did, as the absolute fulfillment of God's eschatological promises. For them the existing dispensation of God in contemporary Judaism centered in Moses, and the law was still in place, uneclipsed.

In reply, Paul unfavorably contrasts the covenant of Moses at Mount Sinai with the covenant God made with Abraham when he promised the childless patriarch an heir. There is a significant sequence of argument in Galatians 3.

a. Paul reminds them that he preached "Jesus Christ . . . crucified," which prompted their reception of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit came not by "works of the law" but by "hearing with faith" (Gal 3:1-5).

b. Paul immediately appeals to Abraham, who believed God's promise to him of a son. In the words of Genesis 15:6, "he reckoned it to him as righteousness." Paul concludes that it is men of faith—including believing Gentiles as well as Israelites—who are "sons of Abraham" and who are "blessed with Abraham" (Gal 3:6-9).

c. Paul teaches that, by contrast, all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. The curse of God is upon those who do not "do" all things written in book of the law. The sons of Abraham are blessed, but those who follow Moses are cursed (Gal 3:10-14).

d. Yet Paul explains that the law as given later did not annul the covenant with Abraham. Rather, the law held the people in the covenant under sin; from this sin the promised One redeems those who exercise faith in him. Because of this sin, it is impossible to be reckoned righteous by works; instead, we are "justified by faith" (Gal 3:19-25).

Paul further explains the relationship between Abraham and Moses by his elaborate allegory of the two wives of Abraham, each of whom bore a son (Gal 4:21-31). One woman, associated with Mount Sinai, had descendants who are slaves and who are (pointedly) identified with present-day Jerusalem. The other woman bore a son based on the promise of God. He is identified with the new Jerusalem, whose children are free.

Although Galatians is Paul's earliest letter (in our view),[49] he reveals a well-developed apologetic, hammered out over a number of years of ministry to Jews and Gentiles. His arguments regarding Abraham, faith and righteousness, on one hand, and the Spirit, Moses, work and condemnation, on the other, will surface with variations in later letters, 2 Corinthians and Romans. In short, Paul appears to have worked out a pattern of apologetic argument that he will use whenever God's inclusion of the Gentiles with his people is disputed.

16.7.2.2. Second Corinthians: The covenant of Moses superseded. The second letter to the Corinthians was written c. 56, within a year or so of the first letter (see 2 Cor 8:6, 10). In the meantime, the church in Corinth had been penetrated by newly arrived Jewish missionaries (2 Cor 11:22). Paul refers to these as "peddlers of God's word," as "superlative apostles," as "false apostles" and as trespassers into his rightful field of labors.[50]

These newcomers preach "another Jesus" and "a different gospel" (2 Cor 11:4). They masquerade as apostles of Christ and as "servants of righteousness." In reality they are ministers of Satan (2 Cor 11:14-15), presumably because they preach a righteousness other than that found in the sinless One who was "made to be sin" (2 Cor 5:21; cf. 2 Cor 3:9).

From Paul's elaborate exposition in chapter three, it is clear that he regards the old covenant/"Moses" negatively. It was a temporary dispensation that served to point to God's later gift. It was abolished in principle from the moment of its inception (2 Cor 3:7, 11, 13).[51] In a clear reference to Moses and Mount Sinai, Paul speaks of "the dispensation . . . carved in letters of stone" (2 Cor 3:7) and of "tablets of stone" (2 Cor 3:3). It is a "dispensation of death" (2 Cor 3:7), a "written code [that] kills" (2 Cor 3:6) because it is a "dispensation of condemnation" (2 Cor 3:9). This "condemnation" is quite serious since it is the opposite of "righteousness" (2 Cor 3:9), Paul's keyword to denote the blessing of God directed to "faith" in the "promise" of the word of God.

To be sure, this covenant "came with such splendor" (2 Cor 3:7),[52] a reference to its historic inauguration at Mount Sinai when Moses' face shone with the glory

of God. Yet such was the disobedience of the people at the time and throughout their history that the glory on Moses/the law was veiled from the sight of the people (2 Cor 3:13-16). In any case, that glory was never an end in itself; it pointed on to the surpassing glory of the end, associated with the One who was to be crucified and raised alive (2 Cor 3:13-16). Only when one turns to the Lord (Jesus) is that veil removed, enabling discernment of the true role and meaning of the law (2 Cor 3:14-17). It is only by gazing at "the glory of the Lord (Jesus Christ)" that the people are changed into his likeness, from glory to glory.

It is curious that Paul does not introduce Abraham as a positive foil or backdrop to his negative remarks about Moses. The dispute in Corinth may have been somewhat different from Galatia. In the light of the decisions of the Jerusalem Council, the newcomers in Corinth may not have made an issue of circumcision. Did they insist instead on the observation of the fourfold decree, which Paul does not appear to have applied in the Achaian capital.[53] Abraham was of special interest in the context of the circumcision debate because his faith was "reckoned . . . to him as righteousness" *before* he was circumcised (Gen 17:9-14; cf. Gen 15:6). The absence of reference to the patriarch in this letter supports the suggestion that the circumcision issue does not underly this letter.

Nonetheless, the apostle's presentation of Moses to the Corinthians is quite devastating. To turn back to Moses now that "the day of salvation" has come (2 Cor 6:2) would be to revert to condemnation, death and slavery in place of righteousness, life and freedom through the Spirit under the new covenant. Those who are calling for such a reversion are mere "peddlers" and "deceitful workmen" (2 Cor 2:17; 11:13).

16.7.2.3. Romans: The reconciliation of the world. Romans presents the most developed form of the apologetic argument, whose elements we have also discerned in Galatians and 2 Corinthians. Thus Paul points to the "righteousness of God . . . apart from law . . . through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe . . . whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood" (Rom 3:21, 22, 25). This declaration is followed immediately by an appreciation of "Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh" (Rom 4:1). Later, Paul reflects on the role of the law as a stimulus to sin (Rom 5:20; cf. Rom 7:5) with an accompanying sense of condemnation (Rom 7:7-12). Because the believer is joined to and "in" Christ crucified and risen, the law has no continuing place; it is therefore anachronistic (Rom 7:1-6). Paul's exposition from his theological viewpoint is affirmative toward Abraham the man of faith but negative toward the law and therefore, by implication, to the role of Moses.

In regard to Abraham, Paul cites again the same critical text as in Galatians, namely, Genesis 15:6: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:4). Unlike in Galatians, however, in Romans Paul is emphatic about the timing of God's "justification" of the patriarch. He writes, "It

was not after, but before he was circumcised" (Rom 4:10). Thus Abraham is "the father of all who believed without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them" (Rom 4:11). At the same time, Abraham is the father of the circumcised who follow Abraham's "example of faith" (Rom 4:12).

Thus Paul sees a special and positive place for Abraham and his covenant for Christian believers, Jew and Gentile. But because of Adam and his disobedience, which has affected all people since, the law cannot be a way of righteousness. The dynamic and ineradicable nature of sin, which rules humankind and which the law actually intensifies both in temptation and moral wretchedness, makes all self-achieved righteousness quite impossible.

It is rather unlikely that the pre-Christian Paul thought this way about Abraham and Moses. For Saul the Pharisee, Abraham would have been the physical fountainhead of Israel and Moses its great lawgiver. Both had a special and positive place in the dispensation of God. However, the Damascus event identified Jesus as the long-awaited Christ, whose death by crucifixion had marked him as the accursed bearer of the sins of others. Furthermore, it appears that Paul as a "man in Christ" became acutely aware of his descent from Adam, that is, of his own inherent and tenacious sinfulness. The wretchedness of remaining sin, notwithstanding the presence of the Spirit, made his life a moral battleground in a way it had not been before. Spirit and flesh now struggled for the upper hand. It was painfully clear from his own experience that the law provided no resolution to the ongoing and dynamic character of sin. We conjecture that it was on the twin bases of the Damascus event and Paul's subsequent and ongoing, unresolved struggle with sin that he came to discern a special place for Abraham, the believer whom God reckoned righteous on account of his faith. This necessarily changed his view of Moses and the law.

Paul's preaching in the synagogues, including that to God-fearers among the Gentiles, doubtless raised disputes and led him to formulate an apologetic that surfaced in the letters to churches where these matters were also being disputed. God-fearers, who by definition were as yet uncircumcised, probably drew special comfort from Paul's circumcision-free preaching of the Christ.

Romans 9—15, a passage that tends to be passed over as complex and irrelevant by modern readers, was at that time probably the most critical part of the letter. These chapters express Paul's sense of vision for his calling.

Paul was deeply conscious of his own special place in relationship to Christ for the "reconciliation of the world" (Rom 11:15). In that relationship Christ was, of course, first and foremost:

> Christ became a servant *[diakonos]* to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. (Rom 15:8-9)

Christ's was a twofold message: the first was directed to Israel, but the second would be directed to the Gentiles. It was a two-stage process.

The latter, the mission to the Gentiles, was assumed by Paul. Through his Damascus call, God made Paul a "minister *[leitourgos]* of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles" (Rom 15:16). Paul's ministry was in continuation with and dependent upon the "ministry" of Christ Jesus. Thus Paul writes of what Christ has achieved through him, winning the obedience of faith "from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum" (Rom 15:19). Jesus the Christ, who served the circumcised during his brief historic ministry, has now been winning the obedience of faith from the Gentiles through his minister Paul.

Yet the apostle Paul did not see this as the goal of his labors. Paul remained an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1). Such was Paul's love for his people that he would have preferred to be accursed and cut off from Christ if that could secure the salvation of his people Israel (Rom 9:2-3).

Despite the broad rejection of Christ by the Jews, Paul was not defeatist. He rejected the proposition that the word of God had failed in securing the allegiance of Israel. The true Israel had always been "a people within a people." If the latter were the physical descendants of Abraham, the former were the children according to God's promise. Put another way, there was a faithful remnant among the people, and God had not forgotten them. Paul himself was such a one (Rom 11:1-2).

Indeed, in a breathtaking self-disclosure Paul reveals that his ministry with the Gentiles is intended to secure the salvation of some, at least, of his fellow Israelites (Rom 11:11). He believes the conversion of Gentiles will provoke also the conversion of many of his kinsmen. Just as the Jews' rejection of the Christ has meant the "reconciliation of the world" (= the Gentiles), he can only hope that their welcome of the Christ will mean "life from the dead" (Rom 11:15), that is, the consummation of the ages at the general resurrection. By this process of Jewish rejection providing for Gentile acceptance and Gentile acceptance provoking Jewish acceptance, Paul envisages that "all Israel" (= elect Jews and Gentiles) will be saved (Rom 11:11-16). In short, Paul looks forward to an end-time people of God composed of both Jews and Gentiles, and to that end he has labored in the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

Until that day, the apostle holds the highest ideals for relations between Jews and Gentiles within the community of faith. To that end he devotes a lengthy passage in the letter (Rom 14:1—15:6) in practical advice to these culturally divergent groups seeking ways for them to live in harmony with one another, in spite of their differences (which he does not minimize). His teachings presuppose a common meeting place in worship. "Together," he writes, "you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 15:6). In their life together in the kingdom of God as the people of Christ, they are to find a

working unity in social relationships and common praise in the fellowship of the assembly of the people of God. The unity of the people of God in the end time is to find practical expression in the life of the community of faith now.

16.7.2.4. Ephesians: Glory in the church. The dating as well as the authorship of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is the subject of considerable debate.[54] Our underlying assumptions in this discussion are that the letter is Pauline and that it arose sometime after the midfifties.

Paul writes as "an apostle of Christ Jesus" (Eph 1:1), one of the "apostles and prophets" to whom God by the Spirit has "revealed" the "mystery," "that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph 3:3, 5, 6). Paul is not only a receptor of this revealed mystery; he is also "a minister" of "this gospel" (Eph 3:7), who "preach[es] to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8).

At the same time Paul writes as a member of the Jewish people, one of those "who first hoped in Christ." Now, though, he addresses the Gentiles readers as "you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13).

His prayer for these Gentile believers is that they, too, will know "the hope to which he has called [them]" (Eph 1:18). In the end time, the Christ will inherit a kingdom of saints, that is, a kingdom of people who belong to and believe in him. The unimaginable love of Christ lies behind, and it alone can explain, the blessings that the Gentiles are now able to enjoy through the gospel and in the church. He prays that they may, indeed, understand this (Eph 3:14-19).

As he writes, Paul remains astonished that Gentiles are now able to have access to this kingdom.

> Remember that at one time you Gentiles . . . were . . . separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility. (Eph 2:11-14)

In his death Christ has achieved two closely related things, the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God and the reconciliation of Gentiles with Jews in Christ, in the body of his people, the church.

Accordingly, the letter, which is addressed to Gentile believers, issues two great ethical imperatives. First, Paul calls upon the Gentiles to maintain and express within the life of the church the unity that Christ has won for his people (Eph 4:1-6). Second, he urges these Gentile believers "no longer [to] live as the Gentiles do, . . . alienated from . . . God" (Eph 4:17-18). Here Paul applies to them a series of admonitions relating to speech, its truthfulness and purity instead of deceit and

impurity, to hard work in place of stealing, to sexual self-discipline in place of fornication, to a Spirit-filled life replacing an alcohol-filled life (Eph 4:17—5:17). Paul also provides an extended manual on family life expressed in terms that echo existing Jewish teaching (Eph 5:21—6:9);[55] Gentile marriage and family life were notoriously fragmented. The apostle also gives a short teaching about congregational worship, a subject appropriate to a letter concerned with unity of Gentile and Jewish believers (Eph 5:18-20). Mindful of the miracle of their redemption from Gentile darkness and spiritual death (Eph 2:1-10), Paul instructs them in how to stand against the demonic forces that could drag them back to their former state (Eph 6:10-20).

16.8. An appreciation of Paul

Few will argue with the proposition that Paul was a controversial character, one who secured significant personal loyalty but also one who inspired corresponding hostility.[56] Paul himself quotes this negative opinion expressed about him in Corinth: "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account" (2 Cor 10:10).

His letters, which were such an important aspect of his ministry, were not regarded as easy to understand (2 Cor 1:13; 2 Pet 3:15-16). This was probably not merely because of his uncompromising defense of the salvation freely available in Christ. His scribe's manner of arguing his case, cumulatively and painstakingly building point upon point, made the reading difficult. There was something "academic" about his letters that gave them somewhat less currency in the life of the church in the following centuries[57] than the Gospels, which are presented as "story." To be sure, Paul has had massive impact on key individuals like Augustine, Luther, Wesley and Barth. His matchless teaching on the righteousness of God in Christ, by grace, have proved life-changing for these famous teachers as well as for millions of less well-known persons.

Clearly, too, Paul had his fervent supporters within his own generation and in the years following. His letters and the book of Acts mention dozens of coworkers, sponsors and hosts. The impression sometimes found in his letters of a remote, cold figure cannot have been true in the realities of personal contact.

The most notable of these associates, of course, was Luke. The combined works of this author represent a quarter of the volume of the New Testament; Luke was its greatest contributor. A major reason for this vast work, which covers seventy years of history from the birth of John the Baptist to Paul's arrival in Rome, was to offer an apologetic for Paul. Clearly Paul had his strident detractors, which made Luke's writing necessary. The ministry of Paul dominates the second of Luke's volume, the book of Acts.

Evidence of another supporter of Paul is found in the collection of his letters into one corpus in the second century. From that time his letters were circulated as a collection and not singly.[58] The identity of this person is not known, but the

person's interest in and support of Paul's writings are attested by the efforts exerted in assembling the letters of the apostle.

In the short term, Paul's achievements were twofold. First, he evangelized the eastern provinces of the empire, from Jerusalem in an arc to Illyricum. It is doubtful whether any other leader of early Christianity came remotely close to this missionary success. Others like John would build on Paul's work in Asia in the latter four decades of the century. Second, as the apostle to the Gentiles he saw more clearly than fellow Jewish leaders how important was the grace of God for the salvation of humankind. Only in Christ is there salvation. This was absolutely clear in regard to the Gentiles, but easily missed in regard to Jewish believers. This insight was an expression of his own passion for Jesus his Lord, crucified and risen, whom apparently he had not met, but whom he loved deeply on account of the salvation Jesus extended to a sinful man like Paul, a former persecutor.

In the long term, Paul's devotion to Christ and his salvation of the lost as expressed in those remarkable letters that are part of the sacred Scriptures of the church have served to instruct and inspire Christians of every generation since the great apostle met his end in Rome in the middle sixties of the first century.

Further reading

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Notes

[1]See §14.8.2-3.

[2]See Colin J. Hemer, "Observations on Pauline Chronology," in *Pauline Studies. Festschrift* for F. F. Bruce, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), pp. 6-9, who points to summer 51 as the beginning of Gallio's year-long tenure as proconsul of Achaia. By his reckoning, Paul quit Corinth at about the time Gallio relinquished his govenorship of the province. That means Paul began his year-and-a-half-long ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:11) in late 50 or early 51. It follows that he arrived in Macedonia sometime in 50. See excursus 1A.

[3]So F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), p. 282, who notes that Priscilla and Aquila, who were among the Jews expelled by Claudius (Acts 18:1-3), were already in Corinth when Paul arrived. For discussion of Claudius's expulsion of the Jews in 49 "at the instigation of *Chrestus,*" see §2.2.4.

[4]See §15.4.1.

[5]Acts 16:35-39; 19:35-41; 21:31-40; 22:22-29.

[6]Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 337-62.

[7]Strabo *Geography* 7.

[8]Riesner, *Paul's Early Period,* pp. 373-82, attributes the persecution to pagan cults in Thessalonica. While such cults doubtless existed in Thessalonica, there is little evidence in the correspondence linking the suffering to these cults. Paul's paraenesis throughout is rather stereotypical.

[9]See §16.5.

[10]See Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans. 1995), pp. 29-32.

[11]Paul's message to the Gentiles in Thessalonica as summarized in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 ("you turned to God from idols, to serve a true and living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead") is quite similar to the main outlines of Acts 17:22-31.

[12]By c. 57 Priscilla and Aquila were back in Rome (Rom 16:3-4).

[13]This summary of Paul's synagogue teaching corresponds with his rehearsal of his "tradition" in 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.

[14]See Paul W. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 5-9.

[15]See C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (London: SPCK, 1987), pp. 51-52.

[16]Acts 18:19-23. For details of time spent in travel across this region, see Michael B. Thompson, "The Holy Internet," in *The Gospels for All Christians,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 60.

[17]See Riesner, *Paul's Early Period,* pp. 296-99.

[18]Two years according to Acts 19:10; three years according to Acts 20:31.

[19]Ephesus (Acts 20:34); Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8); Corinth (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor 9:15-18; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:7, 23, 27). See further Paul W. Barnett, "Tentmaking," *DPL,* pp. 925-27.

[20]In the opening words, "to the saints in Ephesus." There is no reference to "in Ephesus" in five early manuscripts, supporting the possibility that Ephesians was originally a general letter. Marcion has it addressed to the Laodiceans. See further Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians,* WBC 42 (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1990), pp. 1-4. Ephesians, too, was written from prison (Eph 3:1; 6:20).

[21]See §16.7.1.
[22]See ibid.
[23]1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 8:1-13; 10:1-22; 2 Corinthians 6:14—7:1; 12:21—13:2.
[24]2 Corinthians 2:17—3:2; 5:11-12; 10:12—12:13.
[25]See §16.7.5.
[26]See §2.2.4.
[27]Romans 15:24; cf. 1 Corinthians 16:6; 2 Corinthians 1:16. The verb *propempein* is a technical term for hospitality to traveling missionaries.
[28]It appears these men had somehow been defiled and needed to be reconsecrated.
[29]See §15.6.4.
[30]As a letter written from prison, it could have originated from other locations: a possible imprisonment in Ephesus and the known incarceration in Caesarea Maritima. References to the Praetorian guard (or the praetorium [Phil 1:13] and Caesar's household (Phil 4:22) make Ephesus, a senatorial province with a civilian proconsul, impossible and Caesarea for other reasons unlikely. See further Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians,* pp. 34-37.
[31]See, e.g., Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1975), pp. 370-84. A defense of Pauline authorship is offered in Donald Guthrie, *The Pauline Epistles* (London: Tyndale House, 1961), pp. 198-236; Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus,* NICNT (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988), pp. 23-31; E. Earle Ellis, *DPL,* pp. 658-51.
[32]See §15.4.2.
[33]Cited in Eusebius *HE* 6.12.3.
[34]1 Timothy 1:20 (Hymenaeus and Alexander); 2 Timothy 1:15 (Phygelus and Hermogenes); 1:16 (Onesiphorus); 2:17 (Hymenaeus and Alexander); 4:10 (Demas, Crescens and Titus); 4:11 (Luke and Mark); 4:12 (Tychicus); 4:13 (Carpus); 4:14 (Alexander the coppersmith); 4:19 (Prisca, Aquila and Onesiphorus); 4:20 (Erastus and Trophimus); 4:21 (Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia); Titus 3:12 (Artemas and Tychicus); 3:13 (Zenas and Apollos).
[35]C. F. D. Moule, "The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles: A Reappraisal," *BJRL* 47 (1965): 430-52, identifies Luke as that amanuensis, noting that he is identified as present with Paul at the time of writing (2 Tim 4:11).
[36]Since Paul was in Miletus (2 Tim 4:20) and Troas (2 Tim 4:13), it is certain he would have visited nearby Ephesus.
[37]*1 Clement* 5:7.
[38]Ibid., 5:1—4:5.
[39]Josephus *Ant.* 20.49, 51, 101.
[40]See Romans 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8—9; Acts 20:4.
[41]Romans 15:18-24; Acts 19:21.
[42]Cf. 1 Corinthians 16:6; Romans 15:24-29.
[43]Josephus *Ant.* 20.49.
[44]Cf. Isaiah 2:2-3; 60:5-6; Micah 4:1-2. See Roger Aus, "Paul's Travel Plans to Spain and the 'Full Number of the Gentiles,' of Rom 11:25," *NovT* 21 (1979): 232-62.
[45]See excursus 14A.
[46]E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977), has pointed out how anachronistic this presentation is. Judaism at the time believed that God's covenantal dealings with his people were *by grace.* Judaism was not a works-based system corresponding to the pre-Reformation Catholicism with which Luther was in dispute. Paul was not converted guilt ridden out of (Jewish) legalism into the peace of heart of (Christian) grace. Sanders made famous the notion of the hearers "getting in" by faith in Jesus as the Christ, but, he said, they "stayed in" and "were judged by" works. It is more true to Paul, however, to say that he presented his hearers, both Jews and Gentiles, with the "good news" that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ of God, who by his death and resurrection had made possible salvation with God and inclusion among his covenant people. The hearers are called upon to exercise "faith" in Christ and are deemed to be "righteous" in God's sight when

they do. Moreover, believers also "stay in" by faith; their "good works" are the fruit of their *ongoing* and not merely their initial "faith" in Christ (Gal 5:6, 22-23; Eph 2:8-9). See Colin G. Kruse, *Paul, the Law and Justification* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), pp. 107-14.

[47]In my view Tom Wright, *What St Paul Really Said* (Oxford, Lion, 1997), does not observe this distinction. He states that righteousness/justification is "not so much about soteriology as about ecclesiology; not so much about salvation as about the church" (p. 119). Wright argues that justification "is not about 'how you become a Christian' so much as 'how you can tell who is a member of the covenant family.'" In our view neither of these options is true to Paul in Galatians. According to Paul, righteousness/justification is "from the faith of Christ" (*ek pisteōs Christou* [Gal 2:16]). Here Paul speaks of the faithful obedience of Christ to God in his death and resurrection, which opens the way to redemption. The act of believing is as nothing in contrast with the Anointed of God, the crucified and risen Christ, in whom we believe. The emphasis in the preaching of the gospel was not anthropological but Christological, soteriological and eschatological. The justification of Gentiles and of Jews is based solely on Christ and upon their belief in him (Gal 2:15-16). It is in *consequence* of this that both are "one in Christ Jesus . . . Abraham's offspring" (Gal 3:28-29) and "a new creation . . . the Israel of God" (Gal 6:15-16).

[48]In E. P. Sanders's work *Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 49-64, one senses that Sanders does not start where Paul starts. For Paul, Christ is the towering eschatological center of the cosmos and of history (Gal 1:4; cf. 2 Cor 5:14-6:2); all blessings from God flow from this incomparable reality, including the acceptance of Gentiles with God as members of his people. Sanders appears to reverse this sequence. He sees Paul as arguing for the inclusion of the Gentiles and then seeking a basis for this in Christ and his sacrifice, as supported from various Septuagint citations and word associations that Paul has been able to find. Sanders sympathizes with Paul's outrage at the practice of "compulsion" regarding (1) the "false brothers" demand that Titus be circumcised (Gal 2:3), (2) Peter's (oblique) pressure on Gentile believers in Antioch to conform to Jewish dietary laws (Gal 2:14), and (3) the countermissionaries' demand that the Gentile believers of Galatia be circumcised (Gal 6:12). Paul's outrage, however, was not, as Sanders asserts, to shore up his apostleship or his theology. Rather, it was to defend the incomparably unique and completed achievement in the person and work of Christ crucified and risen. To allow that anything be added to Christ by way of compulsion was to overturn the "truth of the gospel" (Gal 2:5; 2:14) and to preach "a different gospel" (Gal 1:6).

[49]See excursus 14A.

[50]2 Corinthians 2:17; 11:5; 12:11; 11:13; 10:13-15.

[51]While many translations, including RSV, render the verb *katargein* in the passive as "fading," it is better understood as "abolished." See Anthony T. Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1965), pp. 23-35.

[52]The Greek verb *egeneto* is aorist, pointing to the historic moment when the glory "came."

[53]See Paul W. Barnett, "Opposition in Corinth," *JSNT* 22 (1984): 3-17.

[54]While a majority of scholars reject Pauline authorship of Ephesians, it is possible this has become a kind of critical orthodoxy, which many now unthinkingly accept as a conventional belief. For discussion of the issues and a defense of traditional authorship, see Clinton E. Arnold, *DPL*, pp. 240-42.

[55]Cf. Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 2.198-204.

[56]See the remarks of a great Pauline scholar and admirer of the apostle in F. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), pp. 456-74. For a study that summarizes a broad range of views on Paul, consult Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

[57]This must not be overstated. For example, Origen wrote extensively on Romans, as did Theodore of Mopsuestia. John Chrysostom preached at length on this epistle.

[58]Contra E. Randolph Richards, "The Codex and the Early Collection of Paul's Letters," *BBR* 8 (1998): 150-66, who argues that Paul's own practice of keeping copies of his letters explains the existence of the corpus.

17

Churches & Evangelists (33-100)

17.1. Churches

The rise of early Christianity is the story of the early preaching of the gospel of the Christ and the consequent creation of the various churches. The history of the rise of the movement is the history of the rise of the churches.

17.2. The earliest churches

The earliest churches were in Palestine, of which the earliest of all were the various Hebrew and Hellenist communities in Jerusalem.[1] Those other churches—in Samaria, Galilee and among the Hellenized coastal cities—all initially arose as a consequence of Saul's persecutions and the scattering of believers from Jerusalem, in particular but not exclusively the Hellenists. This was not a late development. On the contrary, the scattering occurred at the time of Saul's activities, which were not more than one or two years later than the first Easter.

17.2.1. The church of Jerusalem. According to Galatians, the church in Jerusalem is to be distinguished from the churches in Judea. According to Paul, the "churches of Christ in Judea" did not know him by sight (Gal 1:22), in contrast with "the church of God" which he "persecuted . . . violently and tried to destroy" (Gal 1:13). The latter reference is to the mother church, the church in Jerusalem, where the apostles were located (Gal 1:18-19).

From the day of Pentecost this church was composed of one hundred and twenty Galilean disciples of Jesus, including the Twelve and members of Jesus' family. A semi-independent group from the Greek-speaking synagogues also met in the city, though many fled from Jerusalem to escape the onslaught of Saul of Tarsus.

At first the leaders were Peter and John, though their missionary work among Samaritans and others frequently took them away from Jerusalem. Peter's flight from Jerusalem away from Herod Agrippa in the early forties meant that the mantle of leadership fell permanently upon James, the brother of Jesus. It proved to be difficult for the mother church, located as it was in the holy city, to be other than conservatively Jewish. Not only were the Hellenists, or a majority of them, forced out, but first Saul himself and then Peter and John fled the city. James, however, was sufficiently attuned to the prevailing religious nationalism to be able to remain as leader from the early forties until his death in c. 62.

The importance of the Jerusalem church is easily underestimated because of Paul's prominence in the book of Acts and the large number of letters written by Paul that have been preserved in the canon of the New Testament. Yet it was this church that monitored the mission of Philip among Samaritans and the God-fearers of Caesarea Maritima and that sent Barnabas, Cephas and finally unnamed brothers to Antioch. The inclusion of the Gentiles was determined by James, the leader of the Jerusalem church. The collection administered by Paul from the churches of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia was motivated, among other reasons, to secure Jerusalem's recognition of the the Gentile churches once Paul had moved on for ministry in the west.

17.2.2. The churches of Judea.[2] The "churches of Christ in Judea," as noted above, must have arisen soon after the formation of the church in Jerusalem. However, from the time of Saul of Tarsus' astonishing about-face, "they kept hearing,[3] 'He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy' " (Gal 1:23).

These Judean assemblies of the Messiah are also referred to another early letter, 1 Thessalonians. Paul comforts the Thessalonians that "you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea; for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and his prophets, and drove us out" (1 Thess 2:14-15). The expulsion of Paul from Judea occurred soon after his first postconversion return to Jerusalem in c. 36. By that time those churches were sufficiently established to have become the object of persecution.[4]

Clearly these churches are composed of Jews. But are they *Palestinian* Jews or *Hellenist* Jews? Strong hints in the book of Acts suggest that most Hellenist Jewish Christians moved out of Judea, either to Damascus or along the coast to Phoenicia or beyond. The evidence suggests that the majority migrated from the land of Israel. Besides, Paul's references in both letters to "churches of Christ . . . in Judea" point to a conservatively Jewish membership.

Who brought the good news of the Christ to these Judaeans, issuing in the formation of congregations? As we have discussed earlier, the combined evidence of Galatians and the book of Acts points to Cephas/Peter as the apostle to Judea.[5]

We know little of the ongoing history of these communities. Unquestionably they would have deferred to the mother church in Jerusalem and to its leadership, first Peter (and John?), then James, the brother of Jesus.

17.2.3. The churches of Samaria.[6] The Samaritans, as descendants of the apostate northern kingdom, were despised by the Jews of Judea (Jn 4:9). *Samaritan* was a term of abuse among the Judean Jews (Jn 8:48). They were considered unclean people like Gentiles, with whom a Jew may not eat or drink (Jn 4:9). During the Hasmonaean era the Jews of Judea had succeeded in converting the Idumaeans and reconverting the Galileans.[7] It was otherwise with the Samaritans. They developed their distinctive temple cultus on Mount Gerizim as an alternative to Mount Zion in Jerusalem. The Samaritans also established their own eschatology, with lively expectations for the appearance of their Messiah, the so-called *Taheb* ("Restorer").

Because Samaria lay between Galilee and Judea, it provided a more direct route to Jerusalem, a route the Galileans usually took.[8] Galilean pilgrimages to the hated temple at Mount Zion appear to have raised particular problems for the Samaritans. The Talmud records a conversation between a Samaritan and a Jew who was going to Mount Zion to pray. The Samaritan asked the Jew, "Wouldn't it be better for you to pray on this holy mountain and not on that dunghill?"[9] It is likely that Samaritans regarded the Galileans as northerners, who should have come to the Samaritan temple, rather than go to Mount Zion. Josephus records a Samaritan attack on Galileans traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover during the early fifties.[10] Earlier, a Samaritan village refused to receive Jesus and the disciples precisely because they were traveling to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51-53).

Jesus insisted in the pre-Easter phase of his ministry that "salvation is from the Jews" (Jn 4:22) and for the Jews; the disciples were not to preach to the Gentiles or in any "town of the Samaritans" (Mt 10:5). Yet it is clear from the Gospels that Jesus had contact with individual Samaritans during his ministry (Lk 17:16), pointing to a future mission beyond Israel to Samaritans and then to other Gentiles. Most prominent of Jesus' personal involvement with Samaritans was his dialogue with the woman at Shechem, as narrated in John 4. Their discussion reached its climax when the woman raised the subject of the Samaritan temple. It is quite possible that Rabbi Jesus' ministry to this "woman of Samaria" prepared the way for the subsequent missions to the Samaritans.

The first mission came in the person of the Hellenist Philip, who had been forced to leave Jerusalem to escape the persecution of Saul of Tarsus. Philip visited a "city of the Samaritans," most probably Shechem, and those to whom he came were most likely Hellenized Samaritans.[11] It may be no coincidence that a Hellenist, one who disputed the inviolability of the temple in Jerusalem, was the initial missionary to the Samaritans. One who opposed Mount Zion may have had a ready hearing in Samaria.

In a subsequent mission Peter and John confirmed these Samaritan city dwellers in their new faith. The coming of the Spirit was delayed until the arrival of Peter and John, leaving no doubt that Samaritans, along with Jews, were to be included in the saving purposes of God. Emboldened by this radical recognition, Peter and John themselves also preached the gospel to "many villages" of the Samaritans. These were probably indigenous Samaritans.

The net effect of the missions of Philip and Peter and John was that both a major city as well as many villages were evangelized. It is likely that communities of faith were gathered together by these missions.

It is likely too that a number of Hellenists scattered by Saul's depredations settled in Samaria and established churches for Greek-speaking Jews. This is implied in the comment of the book of Acts following the conversion of Saul and the cessation of persecutions that, "the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; . . . was multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

In short, there may have been Samaritan churches in both cities and rural areas as well as churches for scattered Hellenist Jews. Samaritan Christianity may have been more extensive than the scattered references in the book of Acts suggest. It must be noted that Jesus commanded the apostles to bear witness to his resurrection "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria" (Acts 1:8).

Nonetheless, several cultural and religious factors may have created difficulties for the rise, survival and growth of the faith in Samaria. Most prominent was their hostility to Jerusalem, the city of David, as noted above. Yet central to the apostles' preaching was the belief that Jesus was the *son of David.* The Samaritans' own Messiah, the *Taheb,* was not Davidic. Possible evidence for a heightened Samaritan eschatology was the appearance in c. 36 of a prophet who readily persuaded a multitude to go with him to Mount Gerizim to recover the lost tabernacle vessels believed to have been hidden by Moses.[12] Most probably they believed the discovery of these sacred utensils would herald the appearance of the *Taheb.* The seriousness of this enterprise drew a violent military response from Pontius Pilate, in whose jurisdiction Samaria was located. He was suspended from office for his overreaction. In proclaiming Jesus as the Christ (Acts 8:5), perhaps Philip portrayed Jesus as the *Taheb* and not as a Davidic Messiah. Exorcisms and healings figured significantly in Philip's ministry in Samaria (Acts 8:6-8).

A less important cultural problem was the indigenous superstition evident in widespread reverence toward the magician Simon Magus, whom the Samaritans referred to as "that power of God which is called Great " (Acts 8:9-11). The story of Simon straddles the missions of Philip, on one hand, and Peter and John, on the other. This unusual account, which is gratuitous in relation to the overall flow of the book of Acts, serves to validate the historicity of both Philip's miracle-centered mission and Peter's Spirit-centered mission in Shechem.

Notwithstanding the formidable barriers, churches dedicated to Jesus continued in Samaria. Less than twenty years after these initial missions, Paul and Barnabas passed through that region as they traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem. While in Samaria they reported the conversion of the Gentiles to "the brethren" (Acts 15:3).

The lengthy account of Jesus and the woman of Samaria in John 4, as noted above, may be significant. It raises interesting questions regarding why this writer should devote so much space to this narrative, especially when he and Peter made a missionary visit to this very region. Does the comment that "many Samaritans in that city believed in [Jesus] because of the woman's testimony" suggest the existence of a significant number of believers ***beyond*** the time of that immediate event? Does John's extensive account betray a special and ongoing interest in ministry to the Samaritans in the years he spent in Palestine prior to his migration to Ephesus?[13]

Little more is known of the fortunes of the churches in Samaria. It is possible, however, that favorable references to Samaritans in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 10:33; 17:16) reflect a continuing interest of Samaritans in Jesus at the time that Gospel was written. Luke's sojourn in Palestine in the late fifties would have afforded him opportunity to know about the circumstances of Christianity in Samaria.

In the next century the Christian apologist Justin Martyr, a native of Samaria, observed that almost all the Samaritans worshiped Simon as the supreme God.[14] It is likely that the congregations of the initial Christian mission to Samaria reverted from the worship of Jesus to the veneration of Simon the magician.

17.2.4. The churches of Galilee. There is only one narrative mention of Galilee in the book of Acts. Following the conversion of Saul and the end of his persecutions the author notes:

> So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied. (Acts 9:31)

Here the reference is to the Jerusalem church, including many Hellenists, whose members had been scattered through Judea, Galilee and Samaria, "preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). These far-flung believers established churches in these places, including Galilee, and the membership was "multiplied."

It is a reasonable to conjecture that many of the original hearers of Jesus were drawn into churches in Galilee through these unnamed preachers. To be sure, the "core followers" with the family of Jesus had resettled in Jerusalem. Yet there would have been many who had been prepared as seedbeds by Jesus' own teaching and miracles and by the mission of the Twelve, who were "reaped" by the newly arrived preachers (cf. Jn 4:37-38).

Some time later Peter, too, was to come to the churches of Galilee. The passage

quoted above concerning the church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria continues, "Now as Peter went here and there among them all" (Acts 9:32), that is, including Galilee. This reference is confirmed by Paul's observation made c. 47 that Peter had been "entrusted with the gospel . . . the apostolate to the circumcised (Gal 2:7-8)."

In the early forties, during the persecutions of King Herod Agrippa I, Peter was forced to flee, departing from Jerusalem to "another place." Among the various suggestions made, Rome and Caesarea may be eliminated. Rome was too distant; Peter was back in Jerusalem a few years later (Gal 2:7-9). Caesarea Maritima was a predominantly Gentile city, and, moreover, it became the new home of the king who had originally arrested Peter. A more likely alternative place of refuge is Peter's homeland in and around Galilee. If this is correct, Peter may have had further opportunity for ministry in Galilee.

There is good reason to believe that the Gospel according to Matthew was written from and for the churches of Galilee in the second half of the first century.[15] Galilee is more prominent theologically in this Gospel than in any other (cf. Mt 4:15-25; 28:7-16), with special emphasis given to Capernaum, the center of Jesus' ministry (Mt 4:13; 8:5; 11:23; 17:24). It is clear that the author is a Jewish Christian writing to a Jewish-Christian community that has an interface with Gentiles,[16] whom it welcomes, but that it is in conflict with a wider Jewish environment (Mt 23:1-39). Galilee had numerous Jewish towns and villages as well as some Gentile-dominated ones like Tiberias and Sepphoris, and it was ringed by Gentile city-states. The conflict with Judaism evident within the Gospel can be explained by the rise of Pharisee-led rabbinic Judaism. This Gospel translates Hebrew words (e.g., ***Emmanuel*** [Mt 1:23], ***Golgotha*** [Mt 27:33] and ***Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*** [Mt 27:46]) for its Greek-speaking readers/listeners, but it has no need to explain aspects of Jewish culture (e.g., phylacteries, tithing [Mt 23:5, 23]).

The existence of Christian synagogues (or churches [Mt 18:17]) and Christian teachers is implied by the many distinguishing references to "their synagogues"[17] and "their scribes" (Mt 7:29). Such Christian assemblies were based on a membership of believing Jews, but with the expectation of the reception of Gentile converts. Unlike the Jewish synagogues, which by this time had a well-established network of buildings in the towns and villages of Galilee, it is presumed that the Jesus movement met in homes that evolved into house churches and in rented halls for prayer, worship and teaching. The churches implicit in the Gospel of Matthew will have grown out of the ministry of the scattered Hellenists and others from Jerusalem and the missionary visits of Peter, who is favorably referred to in this gospel (in contrast to generally negative references in Mark [Mk 8:32-33; 10:28]). Such churches, however, owe their origin to Jesus himself, and beyond him to John the baptizer. The emergence of such churches and their teachers represented a challenge to the synagogues and their teachers, leading to alienation and persecution from the wider community.[18]

17.3. The Hellenist churches

It appears that the Hellenist churches arose as a result of the preaching of Philip and of unnamed Hellenist preachers, whether on the coast of the western Mediterranean or in Jerusalem itself.

17.3.1. Churches of the Hellenist diaspora. The book of Acts makes various references to preaching by those expelled from Jerusalem following Saul's persecution.

> Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. (Acts 8:4)
> Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ. (Acts 8:5)
>
> Philip was found at Azotus, and passing on he preached the gospel to all the towns till he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:40)
>
> Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none except Jews. (Acts 11:19)
>
> But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. (Acts 11:20)

From these references it emerges that apart from Philip's mission to the Samaritans, he and his fellow Hellenists preached exclusively to Jews, that is, to Greek-speaking Jews. Only in Antioch-on-the-Orontes did they preach also to Gentiles.

Various references in the Acts of the Apostles to churches along the Mediterranean coast confirm the preaching as noted above. In c. 49 Paul and Barnabas traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem and on their journey visited the "brethren" in Phoenicia (Acts 15:3). On his final journey to Jerusalem in c. 57 Paul visited in turn "disciples" in Tyre, "brethren" in Ptolemais and "disciples" in Caesarea Maritima (Acts 21:4, 7, 8, 16). It is probable that these are only a sample of the churches in the Greek-speaking cities along the western seaboard that had come into existence as a result of the preaching of the original Hellenists, including Philip "the evangelist."

Lack of further detail makes it difficult to say more about these churches, but two assumptions may be made. One is that sooner or later Gentile God-fearers came to join these new assemblies. Another is that these churches did not come under the easy hegemony of the mother church in Jerusalem. It is more likely, in our view, that they looked to the church of Antioch to the north. Paul, whose relations with the Jerusalem church always appear to have been strained, received a ready welcome from these coastal churches.

17.3.2. The church of Antioch.[19] Antioch-on-the-Orontes, former capital of the Seleucid kingdom and later garrison city for the Roman legions guarding the eastern empire, was a city of mixed population. Syrians, Greeks, Jews, Romans and

various peoples from the east resided in this great city. Ethnic tensions, however, were deeply felt during the late thirties, especially between the Greco-Syrian majority and the Jewish minority. In the sixties these protracted difficulties were to erupt into open conflict.

The faith of Christ came to the northern metropolis by several stages. It began with the remigration to their homeland of Hellenists displaced by persecution in the middle to late thirties. These appeared to have confined their witness to fellow Jews. Some time later other Hellenists, unnamed Cypriots and Cyreneans, arrived and intentionally preached to "Greeks," whom we take to have been Gentile God-fearers who were part of the synagogue communities. Significant numbers of these accepted the message of Christ so that, it appears, a separate group was now established whom the people of Antioch identified as *Christianoi,* adherents of Christ, their leader. By the early forties this came to the attention of the mother church, which sent a trusted delegate, Barnabas, to supervise developments. After ministry in Antioch for some time, Barnabas collected Saul from nearby Tarsus. The two men worked side by side in the new and growing congregation whose membership by this time was probably predominantly composed of God-fearers.

In c. 47 Barnabas and Saul brought alms from the Antiochene Christians to their famine-affected cousins in Jerusalem. During this visit, accompanied by the converted Gentile, Titus, they met privately with James, Cephas/Peter and John, from whom they secured approval to "go" to the Gentiles. Paul had a westward, Rome-ward, mission in mind. On their return to Antioch the two men with John Mark as their "assistant" were sent off from the church for ministry in the Roman centers of Cyprus and southern Galatia.

After some months Paul and Barnabas came back to Antioch. Shortly after their return, Cephas/Peter came to the city (Gal 2:11). He probably came as a delegate of the mother church, as Barnabas had some years earlier. An influx of Gentiles into the community of the Messiah presented serious difficulties for the church in Jerusalem. At that time the church in Antioch enjoyed common table fellowship, including Jewish members who by custom would not previously have eaten with Gentiles. To our knowledge this was unprecedented. Peter, too, participated freely in this, as Paul and Barnabas had for some time.

However, further delegates from Jerusalem, whom Paul calls "certain men . . . from James . . . the circumcision party" (Gal 2:12; cf. Acts 15:1-2), put a stop to this. The previously united church of Antioch was now divided. Peter, Barnabas and the other Jewish members would no longer eat with their Gentile fellow Christians. Presumably, this had also included the sharing of the remembrance meal, the symbol of their unity in the crucified and risen Messiah. Peter's action provoked a fierce rebuke from Paul. It is not known whether Peter and Barnabas and their fellow Jews resumed eating with the Gentile members.

This crisis in Antioch, along with news from the Galatian churches of an

anti-Pauline mission seeking to impose circumcision on the members, led Paul to journey south to Jerusalem to seek resolution of these problems. In c. 49 the meeting in Jerusalem, presided over by James, addressed the problems raised by the inclusion of the Gentiles in Galatia and Antioch. Circumcision was not to be required, but Gentiles were to eat only kosher-killed meat (Acts 15:28-29). A letter from James was sent by two further delegates from Jerusalem, Judas and Silas, who explained Jerusalem's decision to the church in Antioch. (The letter was also destined for the "brethren" of Syria and Cilicia [Acts 15:23] and presumably also for the churches of Galatia since it was delivered to them as well [Acts 16:4].)

Again, it is not known how the Antiochene Gentile Christians responded to this radical demand regarding their eating of meat. Nor do we have any evidence that the schism between Gentile and Jewish members in Antioch was repaired. Indeed, it is quite possible that the two groups went their separate ways. Perhaps this was the beginning of the end of Jewish Christianity in Antioch. At any rate we hear no more of it in this city.

Little is known about the church in Antioch for the next half century, that is, until the time of its martyr-bishop, Ignatius. Early in the second century Ignatius wrote strongly against Judaism: "It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practice Judaism. . . . [E]very tongue believing in God was brought together in [Christianity].[20]

According to Ignatius, Christianity was the goal of Judaism rather than the reverse. Ignatius's invective against Judaism[21] suggests that by the turn of the century, if not much earlier, there were few if any Jews in the church in Antioch. It is likely that the division of the church and the eventual demise of the Jewish believers can be traced back to the arrival of the "circumcision party" in c. 49 and to Peter's failure to resist their demands.

17.3.3. The church of the letter to the Hebrews. The only name mentioned in the letter to the Hebrews is Timothy. The identity of the writer and the readers and the circumstances of both are therefore a matter of unresolved conjecture.

Nonetheless, the letter may be dated between c. 49, when Timothy joined Paul as a coworker, and 70,[22] when the destruction of the temple ended the sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood against which the letter is so opposed (Heb 13:10, 12). Much of the argument of the letter would be irrelevant if the sacrifices by the priests in the temple were no longer occurring (Heb 7:11-28). The readers appear to belong to a house church (Heb 3:6; 10:21) or a network of house churches with leaders (Heb 13:24; cf. Heb 13:7). Their wider context is an urban setting (Heb 13:14).

Timothy, who is soon to be released from prison in Italy or elsewhere, will accompany the writer in visiting the readers. The anonymous author sends his greetings from "those from Italy" (Heb 13:24 NIV). This could mean that he was in Italy at the time of writing. We know from 2 Timothy that Paul was expecting

Timothy to come to him in Rome at the time of writing 2 Timothy (2 Tim 4:9-13, 21). Perhaps Timothy was imprisoned during the Neronian pogrom against the Christians in 64? The call for perseverance in the face of suffering throughout[23] is certainly quite consistent with a post-64 Roman provenance for the letter to the Hebrews. On the other hand, and with greater probability, "those from Italy" could refer to expatriate Italians living for the time being in some other place, for example, Jews like Priscilla and Aquila who had been expelled from Rome in c. 49 by the decree of Claudius (Acts 18:2). They had been in Corinth[24] and Ephesus at the same time as Timothy, though we know of no imprisonment for Paul's coworker then.

Who then are the readers of this letter? One important clue is that initially the writer had been one of their number (Heb 2:3). Another is that the writer and the readers are, broadly speaking, sympathetic to Paul; the reference to Timothy supports this suggestion.

In our view the most likely recipients were Greek-speaking Jews of Palestine, more specifically, of Jerusalem who were the descendants of the original Hellenist believers.[25] Their anticult stance sets them apart from the wider community of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem led by James who were quite closely associated with mainstream Jewish life (Acts 21:20). Reference to Mnason of Cyprus may indicate a continuing Hellenist presence in Jerualem (Acts 21:16). As "an early disciple" and a Cypriot, Mnason was most probably a Hellenist who dated his conversion to the thirties. Because Paul stayed with Mnason rather than with James during his final visit to Jerusalem, we conclude that Mnason was not part of James's community. Mnason may have been a leader of a surviving Hellenist group in Jerusalem.

Several bits of evidence support the hypothesis that the community of the letter to the Hebrews was a group of continuing Hellenists in Jerusalem. First, the letter is written in superior *koinē* Greek; the elaborate use of allegory is consistent with the Hellenistic Judaism of Alexandria. Presumably the readers were able to grasp the meaning of this author's sophisticated Greek and imagery. We know of a synagogue of Alexandrians in Jerusalem who were involved in the ministry of Stephen (Acts 6:9). It is entirely possible that there were Alexandrian Jews among the early Hellenist Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

Second, the writer and readers had become believers through the ministry of the original disciples of Jesus, including Peter (Heb 2:3; cf. Heb 3:14). The "signs and wonders and various miracles and . . . . gifts of the Holy Spirit" are consistent with the circumstances of the early preaching in Jerusalem at and subsequent to the day of Pentecost, through which the Hellenists became believers (Heb 2:4).[26]

Third, this community of readers (they are groups with leaders [Heb 13:7, 24]) appears to be located in or near Jerusalem and the temple. The numerous cultic references in the letter hardly make sense unless the readers were actually able to

"go forth to [Christ] outside the camp" as he had done (Heb 13:13).

Fourth, the anti-temple, antipriest stance in the letter is consistent with the diaspora-oriented preaching of Stephen recorded in Acts 7.[27] The writer actually declares that "those who serve in the tent" have no right to participate in the blessings of Christ's unique sacrifice (Heb 13:10). At a time when some appear to be inclined to return to Judaism and temple worship, this writer urges them not to participate in the temple cultus.[28]

Fifth, at or near the beginning of their history these readers, like the Hellenists, endured "sufferings," public exposure to "abuse and affliction," imprisonment and "plundering of . . . property" (Heb 10:32-34). The writer does not mention death among these sufferings, as was the case with Stephen the Hellenist leader, though it is possible that it was implied within these descriptions.

Whatever their origins, this group is facing further imprisonment and sufferings (Heb 13:3), in the face of which the readers are dispirited (Heb 12:3-13) and experiencing stagnating faith (Heb 5:12). Some of them are inclined to return to the wider community of Jews from which they had originally come (Heb 6:4; 10:26-31). They are a church, but they are in danger of ceasing meeting together (Heb 10:25). It is doubtful that such a group, whose existence we have suggested and whose character we have described, would have survived the turmoil of the war from 66 to 70. Their negative attitude to the temple and cultus must have been a death sentence in those days of escalating religious nationalism before and during that war.

17.4. The churches of Paul

Two autobiographical notes by Paul help define the extent of his ministry. *Geographically,* Paul preached the gospel "from Jerusalem in a circle up to Illyricum" (Rom 15:19).[29] Arabia/Nabataea is probably included under the "Jerusalem" referent; Macedonia is most likely intended by boundary referent, "up to Illyricum." Between these end points Paul preached in Nabataea, Judaea, Damascus, Syria-Cilicia, (southern) Galatia, Asia, Achaia and Macedonia. *Ethnically,* however, Paul had a commission from God to preach to the Gentiles, a call that the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church supported (Gal 2:7-9). Nonetheless, Paul appears always to have preached first in the synagogues to offer his fellow Israelites the first opportunity to hear about their Messiah (cf. Rom 1:16).

To our knowledge, however, Paul did not establish churches in every place where he preached. In fact, only from the midthirties, when he came to Syria-Cilicia, did he begin to gather disciples into discrete assemblies of Christian believers (Gal 1:21; Acts 15:23, 41). From that time, however, it seems that Paul's policy was to establish churches as a consequence of his preaching. Thus, in addition to Syria-Cilicia, Paul created Christian assemblies in Galatia, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia. He wrote (extant) letters to churches in each of those provinces, except Syria-Cilicia.

The extensive information in these letters, supplemented from the book of Acts, provides for a reasonably clear profile of the inner workings of the assemblies.[30] Consequently, of the the churches in the New Testament, Paul's churches are the best known of all to us. When Paul came to establish his earliest churches, which appear to have been in his native Cilicia, his only prior models would have been the synagogue and the church of Jerusalem. It is likely that the church of Antioch, to which he came later and where he spent more than a year, provided the most potent example of church life upon which to base new churches.

Clearly such a church was an assembly of people in contradistinction from the synagogue. Almost certainly the churches met in private homes; larger homes had internal courtyards that could have been used for such purposes. This suggests that, unless such houses were large, the congregation would have been limited to between fifty and one hundred persons. It seems likely that larger cities like Corinth and Ephesus had numbers of "house" churches.[31] Most probably Jewish believers congregated in the house of a Jewish host. It is likely, too, that the host/hostess of the house church determined to a degree the character and theological emphasis of the meeting. The various interest groups evident in Corinth appear to have met in separate houses. When such groups "assemble[d] as a church" for the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-18, 20, 33) or for other purposes, we assume they gathered in a larger home or a rented hall. Such gatherings occurred on the first day of the week, at least among Gentile or predominantly Gentile congregations (1 Cor 16:2; Acts 20:7).

It appears that the churches, like the synagogues, each had a teacher and with this person some other leaders who formed a local college of presbyters/elders. This is evident from Paul's earliest letter, that is, the letter to the Galatian churches,[32] written c. 48. In Galatia there was a teacher of the word who was partially or fully supported by the congregation (Gal 6:6). The book of Acts makes it clear that each of the Galatian churches also had a group of presbyters/elders (Acts 14:23). These presbyters—both teaching and nonteaching (1 Tim 5:17-18)—were called *episkopoi,* "those who had oversight."[33] At some point in the development of church life deacons were also appointed to provide for the practical welfare of the members (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13), including, presumably, widows who were dependent on the congregation (1 Tim 5:3-16).[34]

Two forms of ministry were prominent in the Pauline churches from the beginning: teaching and prophecy. The two are often bracketed together (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor 12:28; Rom 12:6-7). One is didactic, the other spontaneous. At the gatherings someone would read aloud from the Scriptures as they were available, including from the Septuagint, from such portions of the Gospels as had been written down and, of course, from letters sent by the founding apostle, which would be copied and exchanged from church to church (cf. Col 4:16). When the

apostle was present, he would teach. If an envoy like Timothy or Titus came bearing a letter from the apostle, that envoy would read and interpret the letter. At other times the local teacher would explain and reinforce the message from the writings or the orally transmitted catechesis the church had earlier received from the apostle. At the same time there were prophets in the churches[35] (including women),[36] whose ministry was less studied and ongoing but more inspirational and occasional (1 Cor 14:3). There is evidence that elders prophesied as well (1 Tim 4:14); eldership was not separated from prophecy.

The Lord's Supper was a recurring act within the assemblies, though its frequency is unknown. The existence of a catechetical tradition to which Paul appeals in Corinth (1 Cor 11:23) is evidence of its universal practice throughout the churches of the Gentiles. In Corinth and most likely in other places, the Eucharist occurred within the context of a fellowship meal for the whole congregation (1 Cor 11:21). It is presumed that the president at the meal would have been the senior presbyter. The unity of believers, whether Jew or Gentile, was expressed at this time, especially from the Jewish side; by long custom Jews would not eat and drink with Gentiles. God-fearing Gentiles, who had previously been "second class" members of the synagogue because they were uncircumcised and because Jews would not eat with them (Acts 10:28), were fully united with and equal to their Gentile fellow believers in the churches.

If the Eucharist had a liturgical form, as appears likely from Paul's catechetical reminder noted above, then there were probably other relatively fixed teachings. Various forms that appear within the letters of the apostle most probably also occurred in the meetings of the apostolic churches. Some examples are a credo centered on the death and resurrection of Christ (1 Thess 4:14; 1 Cor 15:3-7), a "grace" pronounced in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (e.g., 1 Cor 16:23), an invocation to Jesus to return (***maran atha*** [1 Cor 16:22]), a "benediction" of the God and father of the Lord Jesus Christ,[37] and a "thanksgiving" to him.[38] Alongside the fixed forms there were probably also spontaneous and extempore prayers, with some expressed "in tongues," ecstatically (1 Cor 14:13-15). A mark of the Pauline churches was that they were interceding, praying assemblies,[39] whether spontaneously or liturgically. Furthermore, these congregations joyously sang psalms (inspired by the practice of the Temple in Jerusalem?) and hymns and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16), composed by the early Christians.

The confident faith, the fervent hope, the joyous praise and the evident love between the members in the churches were signs to a watching world that a new movement had been born. The surprising character of these new assemblies may well have exercised a magnetic attraction to God-fearers who were already sympathetic to Judaism. In these messianic gatherings they found readier access (on equal terms with Jews) than in the synagogues.

17.5. The churches of Peter: Rome and Asia Minor

As we have seen, it is not known how Christianity came to Rome.[40] The earliest evidence is Suetonius's reference to the emperor Claudius's expulsion of Jews from Rome in c. 49 "at the instigation of *Chrestus*."[41] Most probably this refers to unrest among the synagogues of Rome because of the preaching of Jesus as the *Christ*.[42] Jewish believers, as we suppose Priscilla and Aquila were, were forced from Italy at this time (Acts 18:2). We assume that Gentile believers, whose presence in the city we infer from Paul's references to them in his letter to the Romans (written c. 57),[43] were able to remain.

Claudius's death in 54 enabled Jews to live once more in Rome. Among them, apparently, was Peter, who had passed through Corinth in c. 53 (1 Cor 1:12; 9:5). It is likely that Peter's arrival in Rome more or less coincided with the return of expatriate Christian Jews to the city. It seems that Peter was the refounder of Christianity in Rome. Given his apostolate to the circumcised (Gal 2:7), it is likely that Peter concentrated on the Jewish believers. At the same time, his ministry to the Italian God-fearer Cornelius prepare him for ministry to Gentiles, including those in Rome.

Paul, who "had longed for many years" to come to Rome to lay the apostolic foundation (Rom 15:20-24),[44] was frustrated first by Claudius's ban on Jews in the city and then by the news that Peter had arrived there already. Because of his scruple against building on "another's foundation," Paul would not himself be able to lay that foundation. He would only pass through en route to Spain.

Why, then, did Paul write to a church that was not of his foundation and in which he would have no more than transitory contact? The answer may be that Paul had been conscious of the negative impact of the vacillating Peter in Antioch, in consequence of which that church had been permanently divided, Gentile from Jew (Gal 2:11-14). Peter had proved susceptible to strong pressure from the Judaizing side, which pushed Jews away from the table fellowship with Gentiles. Paul had so clearly valued table fellowship as a sign of the inclusion of the Gentiles, along with circumcision-free access. Moreover, Paul may have found Peter's more recent presence in Corinth unhelpful for the unity of believing Jews and Gentiles in fellowship. Is it mere coincidence that Peter's visit paved the way for the Judaizers in Corinth (2 Cor 3:1; 11:22-23), as it had in Antioch?

Paul wrote to the still-separated faith communities of Jews and Gentiles in Rome to promote their unity in Christ based on justification by faith. It is a matter of permanent surprise that the chief concern of "the apostle to the Gentiles" in this letter is for the salvation of his fellow Jews! Paul may have perceived Jewish salvation as inextricably connected with the ongoing fellowship and unity of Jews with Gentiles. For if Jewish believers became permanently separated from Gentile believers, this would probably mean their eventual absorption back into Judaism.

When Paul finally reached Rome he spent the first years under detention. It is not known whether Peter visited Paul or if Paul had any significant influence on

the direction of the Roman church. As noted earlier, after a brief period of release when he revisited the churches of the Aegean, Paul returned to Rome where he was again imprisoned and, so far as we know, executed. In all probability Paul's presence in Rome may have had little impact on Christianity there.

In the meantime, the Roman church had grown to significant proportions. In describing Nero's assault following the great fire in 64, Tacitus speaks of "an immense multitude" who were condemned and executed.[45] Even if this is an exaggeration, it probably still reflects the existence a large community. It is assumed that by this time the greater majority were Gentiles. These Roman Christians were executed on legal grounds of some kind, though the precise grounds are uncertain. On the other hand, Judaism was a *religio licita* within the Roman empire, and Jewish believers could have appealed and probably did appeal for protection.

At about this time the letter bearing the name of Peter was sent from Rome (1 Pet 5:13)[46] to believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Pet 1:1). It is likely that Silvanus/Silas was both the amanuensis and the bearer of the letter.[47] Silvanus may also have been among those who evangelized these readers in the provinces in the northern part of Asia Minor (1 Pet 1:12, 25). Doubtless there were Jews among the readers, though for the most part they appear to have been Gentiles.[48] It is quite likely that many former God-fearers were among the Gentiles addressed in the letter. These had already begun to make a break from idolatry and various forms of godless behavior.

17.6. The churches of John

As a result of Paul's presence and ministry in Asia, there were churches in Ephesus, Troas, Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea, as well as various house churches (Col 4:15; Philem 1). Additionally, there may have been churches in Asia associated with the ministry of Peter, as addressed in the first letter of Peter (1 Pet 1:1). The apostle John appears to have spent the first twenty years of his ministry in Judea and Samaria before migrating to Roman Asia. After Paul withdrew from this region in the late fifties, the leadership of ministry probably fell to John. As noted earlier, a significant cluster of literature—the Gospel of John, Revelation and three letters—is associated with this apostle.[49]

This literature reflects the existence of a number of churches over which the John of Revelation exercised an apparently unchallenged authority. The three major coastal cities (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum) and three sizable inland cities (Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea), along with the smaller Thyatira, were evidently within the pastoral orbit of this John, whom earlier we identified as the apostolic figure. Moreover, the "we" reference at the end of the Gospel indicates the existence of a community. Furthermore, the second and third letters of John point clearly to the existence of churches (2 Jn 1, 13; 3 Jn 5-6, 9), though it is not known whether they were among the seven churches noted in Revelation. The work of establishing churches in Asia

continued. In addition to churches addressed in Revelation, Ignatius wrote to churches in Tralles and Magnesia early in the second century.

It is clear, therefore, that by the end of the first century there were a dozen churches in Roman Asia, and probably more.

17.7. Evangelists

In this chapter we have noted the existence of many churches across a significant geographical expanse. The question naturally arises, who established these communities of Christian faith?

To avoid repetition, we will approach this question in schematic form. It is clear from table 13 that the foundation of churches occurred at the hands of apostles like Peter, Paul and perhaps John. It is equally evident that establishing churches was not confined to them. Reference is made to those who were "evangelists" as distinct from "apostles" (Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5; cf. 1 Pet 1:12-13).

Church	Founder	Date
Church of Jerusalem	Peter and other apostles (in particular, John)[50]	33
Churches of the Samaritans	Philip, Peter and John	34
Churches of Judea	unnamed Jerusalem refugees	
	Peter	34
Churches of Galilee	unnamed Jerusalem refugees	
	Peter	34
Churches of the Hellenist Diaspora	Philip, unnamed Hellenists	
	unnamed Hellenists	beginning 34
Antioch	unnamed Cypriots and Cyreneans	35
		late 30s
Churches of Syria-Cilicia	Paul	c. 37
Churches of S. Galatia	Paul	48
Churches of Macedonia	Paul	50
Churches of Achaia	Paul	50
Churches of Asia	Paul	52
Lycus Valley	Epaphras	55?
Church of Rome	unknown	30s?
Churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia	unknown	50s?

Table 13. The churches and their founders

The displaced Hellenists and others preached in Damascus, Judea and Galilee, along the coastal plain of Palestine and in Antioch. The Hellenist Jew Philip, who is called the "evangelist," was probably active in the coastal regions of southern Palestine and Phoenicia.

Paul's coworkers Timothy and Silas were very active in the evangelization of the two provinces of Greece, Macedonia and Achaia. They evangelized Macedonia

when Paul was forced to leave (Acts 17:4; 1 Thess 3:1, 6),[51] and they are cited as Paul's coevangelists in the effective founding of the church in Corinth (2 Cor 1:19; cf. Acts 18:5). It is likely that as churches were established local evangelists began to spread the gospel as well. Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi took the message of Christ to the neighboring regions of Macedonia (Phil 1:12).

Epaphras, a native of the Lycus valley, established churches in Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col 1:7; 4:12). Reference is made to "those who evangelized" in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Pet 1:12). Perhaps, Silas/Silvanus, amanuensis-bearer of the letter (1 Pet 5:12), had preached in this region following his ministry in Greece. Then we lose sight of Silas for a period. He had traveled through the southern part of Galatia and Asia with Paul. Did he make a return visit, journeying north to Bithynia and Pontus and east into Cappadocia?

We also catch glimpses of the part played by traders like Priscilla and Aquila, who traveled from Rome to Corinth, from Corinth to Ephesus, from Ephesus to Rome and from Rome to Ephesus.[52] Doubtless there were others whose itinerant lifestyle facilitated the spread of the gospel.

Further reading

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Notes

[1]See §10.2, 5, 6.
[2]See §12.5.
[3]This is the force of the periphrastic *akouontes ēsan* (Gal 1:23).
[4]For a minimizing view of these persecutions, see Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St Matthew*, SNTS 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 62-64.
[5]See §12.5.
[6]See ibid. For further discussion with bibliographies on Samaria and Samaritan Christianity, see Hugh G. M. Williamson, "Samaritans," *DJG*, pp. 724-28; Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid, "Samaria," *DLNTD*, pp. 1075-77.
[7]Josephus *Ant.* 20.118.
[8]See §12.5.2.
[9]*Genesis Rabbah* 81:3.
[10]Josephus *J.W.* 2.232-34; cf. *Ant.* 20.118.
[11]See §12.5.2.
[12]Josephus *Ant.* 18.85-87. The Samaritans' complaint over the severity of Pilate's military action against them on Mount Gerizim led to the prefect's recall to Rome.
[13]See §15.5.1.
[14]Justin Martyr *Apology* 1.26.3; *Dialogue with Trypho* 120.6.
[15]So Anthony J. Saldarini, "The Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 23-38. Cf. Paul A. Hertig, "Galilean Christianity," *DLNTD*, pp. 385-88. This runs counter to the widespread view that Matthew arose in Antioch-on-the-Orontes.
[16]Matthew 5:47; 6:7, 32; 10:5, 18; 12:15-21; 18:17; 28:19.
[17]"Their synagogues" or "your synagogues"; Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54; 10:17; 23:24.
[18]Cf. Matthew 5:10-12; 10:23; 23:29-36.
[19]See §13.3.6. Cf. Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (New York: Paulist, 1982), pp. 1-84.
[20]Ignatius *Magnesians* 10.3 (LCL).
[21]E.g., Ignatius *Magnesians* 8.1; *Philadelphians* 6.1.
[22]The greater number of introductions and commentaries argue for a post-70 date. For critical discussion, see J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976), pp. 200-205. Various arguments for a later date are not substantial: (1) The "forty years" of Israel's disobedience (Heb 3:7—4:11) offers no basis for the view that the readers had been resistant to God for a comparable period, thus setting the dating of the letter well after 70. (2) There is no evidence that the sacrifices continued after the destruction of the temple; rather the evidence is that the sacrifices were discontinued (see Robinson, *Redating*, pp. 202-3). (3) That it is the *scriptural* temple that is desribed (Heb 9:1-7) rather than the actual temple built by Herod is no reason to regard his references as entirely symbolic. His words, "we have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat" (Heb 13:10), speak of the real temple.
[23]Hebrews 2:10-18; 4:14-5:10; 10:19-12:13.
[24]The conjunction of Timothy with "those from Italy," if they were Priscilla and Aquila, raises the possibility that the letter may have been written from Corinth (Acts 18:2, 5) or Ephesus (Acts 18:26) in the early fifties. In this case, the author may have been Barnabas or Apollos.

In favor of *Barnabas* it is noted that (1) he had most likely been been in Corinth (1 Cor 9:5) in the early fifties, that is, (2) at a time when Timothy, and (3) Priscilla and Aquila ("those from Italy") may also have been there. As an early leader who had heard the disciples of the Lord and who is referred to as an "apostle" (Acts 14:4; cf. 1 Cor 9:5), Barnabas had the status and broad acceptability necessary for the writing of this letter. As a teacher in the church (Acts 11:26; 13:1), he would have had the necessary theological expertise.

Alternatively, was *Apollos* the mysterious author? The powerful rhetorical and allegorical character of the letter is consistent with an Alexandrian Jew who was "an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24).

[25]Alternatively, many hold that the readers were Jewish Christians located in Rome who had suffered under the Claudian expulsion of Jews in 49 and the Neronian pogrom of 64 (see, e.g. William L. Lane, "Hebrews," *DLNTD,* pp. 444-49). "Those from Italy" (Heb 13:24) who sent greetings were, according to this interpretation, expatriate Italians. Against this we note, (1) the readers are believers on account of the preaching of the original disciples of Jesus (Heb 2:3), and (2) the many references to cultic activity are difficult to explain on the Rome hypothesis but readily explicable on the Jerusalem hypothesis.

[26]Cf. §10.4.

[27]See §11.4.

[28]Hebrews 6:6-8; 10:26-31; 13:13.

[29]Romans 15:19 (my translation). Illyricum approximates the political region previously known as Yugoslavia.

[30]See generally Robert J. Banks, "Church Order and Government," *DPL,* pp. 131-37; Kevin N. Giles, "Church Order, Government," *DLNTD,* pp. 219-26.

[31]Cf. Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1.

[32]See §14.6.

[33]Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:7; Acts 20:28.

[34]The practice of supporting widows probably went back to the earliest church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-3). The emergence of deacons in the Pauline churches was most likely inspired by the work of the Hellenist almoners in Jerusalem.

[35]Acts 13:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; 13:8; 14:1-40; Romans 12:6; 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14.

[36]1 Corinthians 11:5; Acts 21:9; cf. Revelation 2:20.

[37]2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3; cf. 1 Corinthians 14:16.

[38]E.g., Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3.

[39]Cf. Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1.

[40]See §15.4.1

[41]Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4. The spelling of *e* for *i* was not uncommon. See generally, F. F. Bruce, "Christianity Under Claudius," *BJRL* 25 (1966): 315-18.

[42]Cf. Acts 11:26 (Antioch); 17:3 (Thessalonica); 18:5 (Corinth; also 1 Cor 15:3).

[43]Romans 11:13; cf. Romans 9:24, 30; 11:11-12 (?); 13:14; 14:1-23.

[44]See §16.3.

[45]Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.2-5.

[46]*Babylon* was a code word for Rome.

[47]"Through Silvanus . . . I have written to you" (1 Pet 5:12 NRSV).

[48]See §15.4.2-3.

[49]See §15.5.

[50]Acts 1:13; 3:1, 3, 4, 11; 4:13, 19; Galatians 2:7-9.

[51]Their names are bracketed with Paul's as cosenders of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

[52]Acts 18:2, 18; Romans 16:3; 2 Timothy 4:19.

18

The Four Gospels

18.1. The mystery of the Gospels

The writing and dissemination of the Gospels is itself part of the history of the rise of Christianity. However, each Gospel is composed of preformed narratives about Jesus' deeds and teachings that predate the published Gospels. These traditions had been in use for some time by "ministers of the word" for reading in the churches and for evangelism. When the Gospels came to be published, they, too, were written for ministry and arose from the authors' own convictions about Jesus' identity and mission. Both in their parts and as a whole, then, the Gospels arose, in Paul's words from another context, "from faith for faith." The creation of those smaller units, as well as their assembly together as Gospels, occurred during the first decades of the history of early Christianity and was an important part of that history.

Yet despite years of research the circumstances of the writing of the Gospels remain shrouded in mystery. The texts do not disclose their authors' identity (apart from the hints that the Fourth Gospel was written by the "beloved disciple").[1] Nor do they reveal to whom they were written (except that the Third Gospel was addressed and dedicated to a catechumen, "Theophilus"). Thus we do not know the location or condition of either the writer or the readers, or precisely when the texts were written.[2]

18.2. Limits to knowledge

This is not to say, however, that we know nothing about the Gospels. We are able to place limits to a time frame in which they were written, that is, between 33 and 100. Clearly they postdate Jesus' crucifixion, and they appear to predate the end of the century, when they begin to be quoted or alluded to in the so-called apostolic fathers, Clement, Ignatius, the *Didache* and Polycarp.

Further, a close comparison of the texts since the eighteenth century has yielded conclusions that are broadly accepted. Most scholars agree that the first three Gospels are related. Matthew and Luke both incorporate significant sections of the text of Mark or of Marcan traditions into their Gospels, which probably means that Mark predates both of them. Less certain, but in my view highly probable, is the proposal that John is written without any literary dependence upon the other Gospels. This calls into question the venerable and widely held view that John completes the the process of Gospel writing by offering a kind of "spiritual" interpretation on Mark, Matthew and Luke.[3] Close comparison of the texts of John and the Synoptics suggests that John arose independently of the other three,[4] but he may have used traditions in common with them.

Is this the extent of our knowledge of the Gospels, that the first three are related but the fourth is not, and that all were written somewhere in the seventy-year span following Jesus' resurrection? In our view there is more that can be said, in particular that the traditions underlying the Gospels were *written* rather than oral, that they arose in *Palestine* and that they are *relatively close in time to Jesus.* This bears significantly on the nature of early Christianity as a belief system, that it was rooted in history and, therefore, that it was not fundamentally mythical in character.[5]

18.3. Clues to the synoptic mystery in the writings of Luke

The writings of Luke in his Gospel and the book of Acts provide two clues toward the solution of the origin of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the so-called Synoptic Gospels. The first is the author's intention that readers understand that he, Luke, is a traveling companion of Paul. This emerges from the author's various "we" passages in the Acts of the Apostles, the third of which located him in Caesarea for more than two years during Paul's imprisonment in the Judean capital.[6] Luke means us to understand that he, the author of this two-volume work, was in Palestine during those years.

The second clue, which the author probably means the sharp-eyed reader to connect with the first, is that he, though not a companion of Jesus, had "delivered" to him the "narrative[s]" of "many" who "from the beginning" were "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." In the opening words of his Gospel, which he deliberately crafted in the manner of a contemporary Hellenistic history,[7] Luke wrote:

> Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed. (Lk 1:1-4)[8]

Several important observations must be made about Luke's preface to his Gospel and book of Acts. First, Theophilus's name ("Lover of God") is most likely symbolic and suggests that the intended readers included God-fearers, a group who often appear in Luke's second volume.[9] Luke has *written* so that "Theophilus" may know the "truth" of the things he has been taught *orally*.[10]

Second, based on Luke's grammar "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" are one group.[11] Initially they were "eyewitnesses" of the historical Jesus, then they were "ministers of the word." Their successive activities coincide with Luke's successive volumes: his Gospel, where they are eyewitnesses of Jesus, followed by his book of Acts, where they are ministers of the word.

Third, it is clear from the Greek text that "those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" were one and the same as the "many who compile[d] a narrative" and who "delivered" such narratives to Luke. Here "the beginning" most likely refers to the commencement of the ministry of John the baptizer; some of those who became eyewitnesses of Jesus had accompanied John beforehand (Jn 1:35-42).

Fourth, it is evident that these "narratives" were written not oral.[12] The word *narrative* was used for written history in the Hellenistic period, especially for the narrative as it unfolded after the preface.[13] Further, Luke's words, "to me *also* . . . to write," imply that the "narrative[s] of. . . eyewitnesses and ministers . . . delivered to us" were also written.

While *delivered* is a technical term for the *oral* transmission by a rabbi to a disciple, the context here shows that Luke means the transmission of written texts.[14] Until the inner workings of the Qumran community were revealed and understood, it might have been assumed that the Jewish religious culture of the day was predominantly oral. The Qumran example shows that at least one religious group at the time engaged in written textual scholarship. The early Christians in Palestine appear to have done the same.

Fifth, *narrative* means "a narration of events."[15] A record in historical sequence is implied by this word. Luke proposed to write an "orderly account," that is, a single consolidated version made up of narratives that may have been abbreviated or in some way incomplete.

Based on the penultimate "we" passage in the book of Acts and the preface to the Gospel of Luke, it is reasonable to conclude that the preformed written "narrative[s]" of "those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" were "delivered" to Luke during his two-year sojourn in Palestine in the late fifties. Thus we are in agreement with the observation of E. Earle Ellis that, "the author of Luke-Acts provides the best key to the relationship of the Gospels and of their traditions."[16]

18.3.1. "Eyewitnesses and ministers of the word": Sources in Luke. Are we able to identify these "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" who "delivered" to Luke

their written "narrative[s]" of "the things which [had] been accomplished among [them]"? Luke does not directly identify them. Here, however, source analysis of this Gospel comes to our aid. When the Gospel of Mark is read alongside the Gospel of Luke, one discovers that approximately half of the Gospel of Mark is reproduced in the Gospel of Luke, accounting for more than a quarter of Luke's contents. So Mark's Gospel is one of the narratives from an "eyewitness and minister."

The Jerusalemite John Mark was not himself an eyewitness of Jesus except for the latter part of Jesus' ministry in the holy city.[17] However, there is strong evidence connecting Mark to Peter, the eyewitness of Jesus and minister of the word *par excellence.* The New Testament points to a surrogate father-son relationship between Peter and Mark (Acts 12:12; 1 Pet 5:13). Early tradition claims that Mark first accompanied Peter as his "interpreter" and that later he committed Peter's oral teaching to writing in the Gospel of Mark.[18] This connection is strengthened by the observation noted above that "ministers and eyewitnesses" were the same people described in successive phases (see also Acts 1:21-22). Peter is the only eyewitness of Jesus in the Gospel who is heard in the Acts as a minister of the word. Indeed, Luke's own narrative set forth in his Gospel follows exactly the sequence of one of Peter's sermons recorded in the book of Acts, his speech delivered to the household of Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10:34-43). There can be no doubt that Luke includes this text from Mark in order to identify Peter as an eyewitness and minister of the word from whom he received a written narrative.[19]

When Mark is subtracted from Luke and the remainder is set alongside Matthew, a further interesting discovery is made. A significant portion of Luke (approximately a quarter of his total) finds an echo in the Gospel of Matthew. In other words, both Luke and Matthew appear to have depended upon a common pool or pools of information.[20] This common source is often referred to as "Q" from the German *Quelle,* a "source" or "spring."

As Q is reconstructed, it proves to be a collection of the sayings of Jesus with not much narrative.[21] Nonetheless, because a sequence is discernible in Q, it may qualify as one of the narratives that were delivered to Luke. Q begins with sayings associated with John the Baptist, and as it continues it broadly follows the same order as the Gospel of Mark.[22] Although it was believed in earlier times to have existed originally in Hebrew or Aramaic, Q is now thought always to have been a Greek written document.[23]

Further evidence for the early existence of both Mark and Q is to be found in several of Paul's letters, which as it happens are among those that can be dated with confidence. First Corinthians, which was written in the midfifties, contains a number of allusions to passages that exist in parallel form in Matthew and Luke, that is, in the document called Q.[24] Romans, written c. 57, has a number of references both to the Gospel of Mark and to Q.[25] These letters of Paul, therefore, independently establish the existence of Mark and Q before Luke arrived in

Palestine in c. 58. The early freestanding existence of Q may also be confirmed by quotations in the letter of James, which we have suggested was written before 50.[26]

When Mark and Q are taken from the Gospel of Luke, the remaining text proves to represent somewhat less than half of Luke's total. This material, which is often called "L," is notable for, among other things, the Nativity stories, the famous longer parables (e.g., the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son), and Jesus' resurrection appearances on the road to Emmaus.

Once the structure of Luke is understood, further study of the weighting of the sources reveals several striking characteristics that are immediately noticeable. One is the limited extent of Luke's quotation of Mark. Luke only uses Mark to narrate a few incidents in Galilee at the beginning[27] and closer to the end of his narrative when Jesus approaches Jerusalem.[28] Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51—19:11), however, is based on non-Markan sources. Thus Luke makes no use of Mark's sequence recorded in the middle of his Gospel (Mk 7—9) when Jesus travels to the northwest, north and northeast of Galilee. Luke's Jesus, having quit Galilee, goes directly to Jerusalem and to death and resurrection.

Another characteristic is that, apart from the Nativity stories, the mostly short passages in the Gospel of Luke come alternately from L and Q, giving this Gospel a striped appearance. This pattern may be seen from the moment John the baptizer began his ministry (Lk 3:1) up to Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem (Lk 19:28), by which time Q has apparently ended.[29] To account for this "banding" B. H. Streeter proposed that Q and L had been amalgamated earlier as a discrete document, which he called "Proto-Luke." Streeter suggested that Proto-Luke began at Luke 3:1 and approximated the length of the Gospel of Mark.[30] Luke then took Proto-Luke, prefaced it with the Nativity stories[31] and inserted into it various passages from Mark. Streeter's Proto-Luke thesis has not been in vogue in recent times, though it remains a plausible explanation for the rather baffling alternation of Q and L texts in Luke into which the Markan passages appear to have been inserted.

18.3.2. Early written texts in Palestine. Whatever the precise "shape" of Q and the possibility of its amalgamation with L forming the hypothetical Proto-Luke, it seems likely that these texts, with the Gospel of Mark, were handed over to Luke in southern Palestine in the late fifties after which he wrote the Gospel bearing his name. This may have occurred in Caesarea or, alternatively, after Luke came to Rome in the early sixties.

The very important point is that by the late fifties a number of written texts—Mark, Q and L (and others?)—were in existence, having been written in Palestine (see table 14). We do not know precisely when these traditions reached written form, though a strong case exists that they were written quite early in the history of Christianity. In other words, the theory of a lengthy period of *oral* development of traditions is not correct. As noted above, the Qumran discoveries

demonstrated that written texts were part of the religious culture of Jews in Palestine at that time.

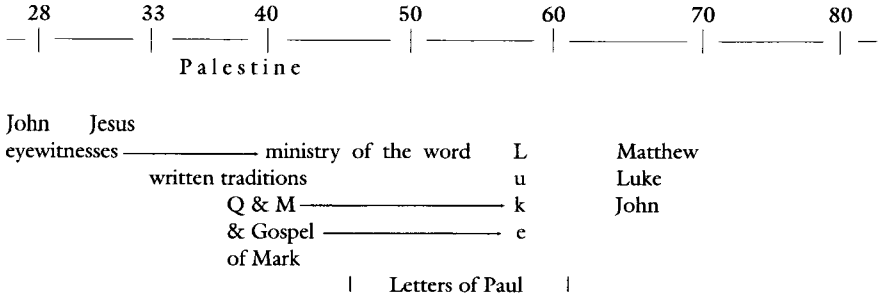

Table 14. Jesus, traditions and Gospels

18.4. Other Palestinian texts

Once it is understood that oral traditions became written traditions within the circle of "those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word," it follows logically that those written traditions must have arisen in Palestine.

18.4.1. Details in the Fourth Gospel. The Fourth Gospel is striking for its detailed historical, geographical and biographical data, which outstrip any combination of information from the three Synoptic Gospels. The text of this Gospel betrays innocently given knowledge of the topography of Galilee (e.g., the proximity of Nazareth to Cana, the elevation differential between Cana and Capernaum), the townscape of Jerusalem (e.g., the pool by the sheep gate, the pool of Siloam, the temple portico of Solomon, Golgotha near the city) and the geography of Samaria (e.g., Sychar adjacent to Joseph's field and Jacob's well close to Mount Gerizim).[32] Furthermore, there is a reasonably assumed historicity underlying these narratives (e.g., that some of Jesus' disciples had previously been followers of John the baptizer, that Jesus made multiple visits to Jerusalem and that there was a tense interplay between the Roman prefect and the high priest at the time of Jesus' trial).[33]

Jesus' pastoral and polemical involvement with Jews and Jewish groups throughout the pages of the Gospel are seen to be in line with our growing knowledge of the dynamics of Jewish sects at the time.[34] Further, much of the dualistic language of this Gospel (light-darkness, Spirit-flesh, life-death), including the language from Jesus' lips, is consistent with the categories found in the literature of the Qumran community.[35]

John was active alongside Peter in mission work in Jerusalem and Samaria in the thirties according to Acts 1—8, and he was the third "pillar" of the Jerusalem church in the forties according to Galatians 2:9.[36] Thereafter he appears to have

left Palestine for another domicile, Roman Asia according to second-century authorities.[37] In our view his Gospel was finally written in that situation, rather than in Palestine. Nonetheless, the well-rounded passages from John combining miracle-signs and Jesus' teaching suggest that these may have been used beforehand during John's twenty-year ministry in Palestine.[38] The concentration of geographical, topographical, cultural and historical information noted above is consistent with early use of such material (a proto-John) for John's mission activity at this time.

18.4.2. M—Matthew's special source. When Mark and Q are subtracted from Matthew, a coherent body of text remains, which source critics call "M" and which represents approximately a third of Matthew's total. In broad terms M consists of narratives (including a Nativity narrative, stories connected with Jesus' death and resurrection, and the Great Commission), teachings of Jesus (the greater part of the Sermon on the Mount and the mission charge), parables (including the Laborers in the Vineyard and the Great Banquet) and polemical utterances against the Pharisees.

There can be little doubt where M was compiled. According to T. W. Manson, "Its most striking characteristics all point in the one direction, and far the most probable conjecture is that which connects M with the Jewish Christians in Judaea, with their headquarters in Jerusalem."[39] In our view M in the form used by Matthew may have undergone some coloring through the years of declining relationships between the churches in Judea and the wider Jewish community influenced by Pharisaic antipathy toward Christian believers. But the important point to note is that the M source appears to have arisen in Judea some time after the ministry of Jesus.

18.5. Implications concerning early and written traditions

In what has been discussed to this point we have not attempted to date the Gospels or speculate as to their place of origin. Rather, we have argued that the greater part of the raw material that was ultimately incorporated in the four Gospels originated in Palestine. These data have probably existed in written form from the time of the resurrection, some perhaps originating during Jesus' ministry. Most likely the texts reached early fixed form within the apostolic circle for mission work and church teaching in Palestine before they came to be assembled in the four Gospels.[40]

Because these traditions are both early and written, two observations should be made. First, they must be regarded as *historical* in character. Texts that are associated with eyewitnesses and that are known to be close to events or persons have the marks of historicity. Myth, by contrast, because it has no roots in historical reality is undated and lacks verifiable specific details.[41]

Second, because these texts were *written*, it follows that they were to be *read aloud* in the churches, conveying a *scriptural* status to them. In Judaism only the

canonical Scriptures were *read* in the synagogue; targums must be spoken extemporaneously.[42] The locally produced stories and sayings of Jesus were written for the precise purpose of being read aloud in these newly formed messianic "synagogues" of Judea, Galilee and Samaria, which were established through the ministries of Peter and John and others.[43] The use of letters, which appear to have arisen first with James and Paul, came a little later. These were teaching vehicles for "distance education" that were also designed to be read aloud in the messianic assemblies.[44] The Jesus-based stories and sayings along with the letters, because they were read aloud in church, had an implied authority parallel with the Scriptures and therefore had "canonical" status from the beginning.

In time the Palestinian stories and sayings of Jesus would form the raw material for the published Gospels, which were written also for the purpose of reading in church. Thus the Gospels also share the same two features of their component traditions: the Gospels were both *historical* in character and *scriptural* by status.

18.6. The four Gospels as history

So far we have considered the Gospels in terms of their underlying traditions. We turn now to reflect on them in their final, published forms.

18.6.1. Two historical traditions. When we come to think about the Gospels as complete works, we face a problem. We have two distinct historical traditions represented by the sequence in Mark (as followed by Luke and Matthew) in contrast with the order of the Fourth Gospel. Mark and his Synoptic cousins have a more "historical" feel than John has in his "spiritual" Gospel.[45] Many scholars have not regarded John as useful for an overall chronology of Jesus, at best using it for supporting evidence in isolated matters.[46]

Some of the historical data in John are difficult to reconcile with the data in the Synoptics. First, in the Synoptics, apart from the Nativity story in Luke, Jesus visited Jerusalem only once, at the Passover when he was executed. On the other hand, John portrays Jesus in Jerusalem for feasts early in his ministry, in John 2 and 5, as well as for his final Passover, recorded in John 12 and the following chapters.

Second, according to John 7—11 Jesus was in and around Jerusalem for the six months prior to his death, that is, between the feast of Tabernacles and the feast of Passover. But in roughly the same period Mark 7—9 locates Jesus in the Gentile territories to the northwest, north and northeast of Galilee before traveling through Galilee and Peraea to Jerusalem.

However, the view that the synoptics are historical and John is "spiritual" must be questioned. The Synoptics' geographical-historical references can serve a "deeper" meaning. For example, a note of high purpose may be seen in Mark's focus on Jesus' *one* journey to Jerusalem as a motif for a disciple's sacrificial "following" in "the way" of Jesus, which Luke actually intensifies. This is not to deny the historical truth of that journey but to observe that the writers' theological

intentions appear to have given a deeply intentional shape to the narrative.

Another example relates to John's presentation of Jesus' frequency in Jerusalem as opposed to the Synoptics' accounts of his infrequency in the holy city. This is because John, unlike the Marcan tradition, sees *Jerusalem,* not Galilee, as Jesus' "own country" where he is "without honor" (Mk 6:4; cf. Jn 4:43). In John we find Jesus more often in Jerusalem than Galilee, more often in conflict (that is, "without honor") in Jerusalem than in Galilee. This is not to deny the historical truth of John's account but to observe that the identification of the holy city as Jesus' theological epicenter has determined where John's details are concentrated. On the other hand, Mark's perception that Nazareth in Galilee was Jesus' "own country" where he was "without honor" (Mk 6:4)[47] explains why he has devoted so much narrative to Galilee and its surrounding territories.

18.6.2. Chronology in Mark and John. John's view of Jerusalem as the center of Jesus' interest as reflected in the disputes at the great feasts may assist the historian with an overall chronological framework of Jesus' ministry. The feasts help us calculate the length of the ministry. On this basis Jesus' ministry began before the Passover visit to Jerusalem in John 2 and extended over two or three subsequent years, punctuated by the Passovers of John 5[48] and 6 and concluded by the Passover in John 12.

While chronological details are vague in Mark, they are not altogether missing. The plucking of grain in Mark 2:23 indicates one spring/summer and the "green grass" of Mark 6:39 ("much grass" [Jn 6:10]) points to a subsequent spring/summer, with the mission of the Twelve to the towns of Galilee occurring in between. Thus, counting backward from the Passover/spring when he was executed, the Gospel of Mark points to a ministry period of at least two years' duration.

The Gospel of John is helpful to show that Jesus' and the baptizer's ministries were not consecutive (as the Synoptics suggest) but were for a period concurrent. John provides an overall feast-based chronology of Jesus' history and provides some details of events in Jerusalem during Jesus' various visits. The Gospel of Mark narrates Jesus' activities in Galilee and adjoining Gentile regions to the northwest, north and northeast. By using John and Mark, we are able to build up a broader picture of Jesus' ministry than if we were dependent on just one tradition.

While there are significant divergences between John and Mark, it is possible to find an overall chronological agreement. If the texts are studied broadly, the possibility of significant reconciliation between them begins to emerge.[49] In particular we should notice five critical reference points in both Gospels that occur in *the same sequence* (see table 15).

This agreement in the sequence of peak events in these independently written Gospels is singularly important. It demonstrates that their respective authors were aware of the chronology of their subject, Jesus. This is significant since there is an almost complete lack of verbal echoes between John and Markan tradition in the

	John	Mark
1. John's baptism of Jesus	1:32-33	1:9-11
2. Imprisonment of John	3:24	1:14-15
& beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee	4:3, 43, 47	
3. Jesus feeds the five thousand	6:1-15	6:30-45
4. Jesus leaves Galilee for Judea	7:9-10	10:1
5. Jesus' final arrival in Jerusalem	12:1	11:11

Table 15. Critical sequences in Mark and John

Synoptic Gospels. The similarities between them are few and the differences great, yet they agree in overall order. Within this time frame, the episodes may be thematically ordered.

18.7. The four Gospels as Scripture

Why were the Gospels written in a published form more or less as we have them today? This is a question that has long exercised scholars, and their answers continue to inspire debate. However, there is a prior question: what is a *Gospel?* To some extent the intention of a Gospel is answered by the identification of its literary form.

18.7.1. The Gospels as Bioi. Evidently a point came in the development of the young movement when the need was felt to constitute various church traditions from Palestine concerning Jesus into a more comprehensive and permanent form. What was the literary vehicle the authors chose? After many years of scholarly debate it now appears that the literary genre chosen has been identified as the *bios,* "biography." It has been established that when each of the Gospels was written it would have been more or less recognizable as a biography.[50] According to Richard Burridge, "the gospels are nothing less than christology in narrative form, the story of Jesus."[51]

The choice of *bios* for the form of a Gospel says something about its purpose. By contrast, a letter was written to address a specific situation in a church or churches. The writer had in mind the particular circumstances of his readers, as for example, Paul had in writing 1 Corinthians. To be sure, Paul probably wrote with the idea that his letters would have a longer currency than the moment the letter was read to the church and, indeed, in time for a broader readership than the immediate addressees. To generalize, the letters of the New Testament are not ephemera; they are too carefully crafted for that.

Nonetheless, the New Testament letters were occasional, called into print by known circumstances among the readers. They are *reader* oriented. By contrast, Gospels are *content* oriented, written with a narrower focus than the letters. That focus was the great figure about whom the *bios* was written, Jesus Christ the Son of God. The object of a *bios* was that the readers know about the subject of the text, Jesus the historical figure. A Gospel did not address the plethora of readers'

needs at a particular moment as a letter might.

Analysis into the identity and circumstances of the readers of the New Testament letters is useful in determining the meaning of the texts. The letters themselves provide many hints about those circumstances, often supplemented by information from the book of Acts. But the Gospel texts shed little light on the identities of their readers. Attempts at defining the audiences and their needs have generally proved futile, as the range of often contradictory hypotheses about the same Gospel suggests.[52]

If the Gospels are *bioi,* "biographies," to what end were they written? The Gospels themselves provide some clues.

18.7.2. The intention of the Evangelists. Mark and Matthew do not say directly why they wrote. Yet their words, "Let the one who reads [aloud] understand" (Mk 13:14; Mt 24:15),[53] indicate that these two Gospels, at least, were written to be *read* aloud in church. These directions to a lector indicate that each of these Gospels was to be read in the assemblies, and they were to be accorded the status of sacred text, as an extension of the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures.

But why should the Gospels of Mark and Matthew be read in church? It is not enough, in our view, to reply that they were read aloud as part of worship, that is, for rather narrow liturgical purposes. Paul's words to Timothy indicate that the reading of Scriptures in church was to be accompanied by two other activities: encouraging and teaching. "Till I come, attend to the reading, to the encouraging, to the teaching" (1 Tim 4:13).[54]

These Scripture-based activities evoke the life of the synagogue. Paul does not indicate what Timothy was to read. This scarcely matters, however; his words apply in principle to Gospel traditions, New Testament letters and the completed Gospels as well as to the Hebrew Scriptures. The one who *read* (aloud) in the church was also, on the basis of what he read, to give extempore (targumic?) *encouragement* and *teaching.* The very fact of the reading of such texts amounted to a recognition that they were Scripture.

Luke is explicit. He has "written" his Gospel (about Jesus) and his book of Acts (about Jesus' subsequent deeds through his apostles) to assure his addressee, Theophilus, of "the truth" of those "things which have been accomplished among us" in which so far he has only been *orally* instructed. Luke is concerned to provide a chronological account of events that have truly fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. Thus what Luke has written is "the truth," both as mundane history but also as *divine* history. Acquaintance with Luke-Acts suggests that the contents are by no means merely historically informative; they are presented as a sequence of edifying stories. It is most likely, therefore, that the author composed his large work for Theophilus and other catechumens so that they would find the assurance of God's truth as these texts were read aloud in church.

John, too, has written to a specified end, that his readers "believe that Jesus is

the Christ, the son of God" (Jn 20:31). But was this Gospel for church members, written for their pastoral and doctrinal needs, or was it written for outsiders with an evangelistic intent? Looking at the text alone does not provide a certain answer, especially because of variant readings of the tenses of the verb *believe,* which might point to an *act* of believing or to a *continuing* to believe. The former might suggest an evangelistic purpose; the latter suggests the Gospel was intended for pastoral use among existing church members.

Closely connected is the question of whether the original readers of John were Jews, Gentiles or both. In an earlier discussion we pointed to evidence of a mixed readership of Jews and Gentiles.[55] However, the "Jews" appear to have been the unbelievers who were outsiders to the churches and the "Greeks" (that is, Gentiles) seem to have been insiders, who were believers.

Most probably John's statement that he had written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" was addressed both to "Jews" outside the church and to "Greeks" who were believers. For the Jewish readers, these words formed a climax of an evangelistic and doctrinal theme that ran through the Gospel.

It is possible that earlier drafts of the Gospel prepared in Palestine were essentially evangelistic, based on the signs and the passion account, and intended naturally for Jews. In its final form this outward orientation remained fundamental to the thrust of the Gospel, though now in a non-Palestinian context.

For "Greek" readers inside the church these words sought to strengthen them in their faith, a view confirmed by John's words in the first letter, "I write this to you who believe in the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 Jn 5:13). In addition to writing a *bios* for Jewish outsiders, John needed to prepare a Gospel for the edification and strengthening of believers in the network of churches known to him. Understood in this second way, the Gospel of John was conceived as written Scripture, to be read in church for the pastoral and doctrinal needs of believers. It appears, therefore, that John's *bios* of Jesus was to be both scripture for the churches and a tract for those outside the church, in particular Jews.

*18.7.3. The Jesus-*Bioi *as Scripture.* In our view, then, each of the Gospels was written to a greater or lesser extent to be read in the churches. As *bioi* the Gospels had a simpler and narrower function than did the New Testament letters, which addressed a wide range of needs in the communities of believers. The Gospels are spiritually overwritten biographies intended to inform the reader/hearer about the words and works of Jesus, but more particularly to confirm the church member as a disciple of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.

Therefore, the Gospels, as *written* documents for hearing in the churches, possess a scriptural status. This is confirmed by the second-century writer Justin Martyr:

> And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather to

> one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.[56]

Here the "memoirs of the apostles" are mentioned alongside "the writings of the prophets," indicating the scriptural status the Gospels enjoyed. Here the *reading* of the texts, followed by the *instructing* and the *exhorting* (or targumizing?), is precisely what Paul encouraged Timothy to do, as noted above. In all probability, this, too, was the intention of the words of Matthew and Mark, "Let the one who reads [aloud] understand"; that is, the lector was to read, explain and apply the scriptural text to those present.

18.8. Destination and dissemination of the Gospels

If the Gospels are *bioi* destined for reading aloud in church and for encouragement and teaching therefrom, for which audiences were they written?

18.8.1. Gospel origins and destinations. Scholars have for many years studied the texts of the Gospels in their attempts to identify intended audiences. It is possible that a number of issues have been confused in this enterprise.[57] One confusion has been the failure to recognize the distinctive genres of Gospels and letters.[58] If, as now seems clear, a Gospel is a *bios,* "biography" of Jesus, its very form dictates that it is not written to address the "occasional" pastoral needs of readers elsewhere. That is the peculiar function of the letter. A Gospel is written to inform a readership elsewhere *biographically* about Jesus "back there" rather than give advice for the current circumstances of readers. While both 1 Corinthians and the Gospel of Matthew are written for people in another place, they represent different genres and they are written for different purposes.

Furthermore, the circumstances of the church in which a Gospel was written have frequently been confused with the circumstances of the church or churches for which it was intended. However, the context of the writer is not the likely context of the readers. The circumstances of the writer will doubtless have influenced the contents of his Gospel and these may have colored his text. But the circumstances of the writer in his church at the time of writing are unlikely also to have been the circumstances of the audience. Indeed, they were probably not the same. On the assumption that a Gospel may have arisen in a relatively small local church, it may be asked why a writer would go to the trouble of writing a Gospel for a church in which he is a member and a person of influence. Since he is present, he does not need to write. By its very form the Gospel would have been conceived and written for others further afield.

Two of the Gospels provide some clues regarding their places of origin. Matthew's Jewish texture suggests a Palestinian origin while John's reference to the "diaspora among the Greeks" may point to a non-Palestinian ("Greek")

provenance for that Gospel. However, neither these hints in Matthew or John nor the lack of such hints in Mark or Luke shed any light on the *precise* audiences of these Gospels. Attempts at identifying the audiences in exact terms amounts to guesswork, so few controls exist.

Research into the Mediterranean world in the era of the New Testament, including extensive book publishing,[59] the rapidity of travel and the interchange between church leaders and churches,[60] suggests that the authors of the Gospels may have expected their works to be disseminated far and wide. A strong case has been made that gospel writing did not have precise audiences in view. Instead, the writer assumed a broad and undefined readership that was potentially as extensive as communication by this means then allowed.[61] This view, however, needs modification.

18.8.2. Mission teams and mission letters. The extant literature of the New Testament—Gospels and letters of various kinds—is without exception mission literature. Furthermore, it is probable that the greater part of the literature was produced for the needs of four missions operating during the New Testament era, the apostolates of James, Peter, John and Paul.

It is clear from the missionary concordat in Jerusalem c. 47 (Gal 2:7-9; cf. 1 Cor 15:3-8) as well as from various passages in the book of Acts that these four men were significant leaders within early Christianity.[62] The Acts of the Apostles draws particular attention to these four. To be sure, there is narrative in Acts about Stephen, Philip and Barnabas, who appear to belong to a kind of "second rank." Of others named in Acts, whether the twelve apostles in Jerusalem or the seven Hellenist almoners in Jerusalem or the five prophets and teachers in Antioch, this text has little else to say. The book of Acts leaves us in no doubt that Peter, John, James and Paul are very important.

This impression is confirmed by Clement of Alexandria writing a century beyond the close of the New Testament era. Clement pays tribute to "blessed men" who taught him having "preserved the tradition of the blessed doctrine which they derived directly from the holy apostles *Peter, James, John* and *Paul.*" This observation is the more likely to be authentically historical because the names James and Paul, who did not belong to the college of the twelve, are so unexpected. Only in modern times have scholars discerned the leadership of the New Testament mission to be associated precisely with those four men.[63]

It scarcely needs demonstrating that such leaders worked in association with others. This is immediately evident in the case of Paul, who was accompanied on missionary tours initially by Barnabas and John Mark and later by Silvanus/Silas and Timothy. Paul's list of associates appears to have grown during the westward course of his Gentile mission.[64] It is significant that the author of Luke-Acts, whose great two-volume work occupies approximately a quarter of the volume of the New Testament, was a companion of Paul, as the "we" passages in the book of Acts show. Paul surrounded himself with colleagues, whether amanuenses, co-

senders of letters, envoys, proxy evangelists (for example, Epaphras in the Lycus region [Col 1:7]) or workers sent on ahead (for example, Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia [Acts 19:22]).

James, Peter and John also had colleagues. James does not name any associates in his letter, though he is mentioned in Jerusalem in connection with his "brethren" (Acts 12:17)[65] in the early forties. He is described as surrounded by the "elders," the Jerusalem church, in the late forties through to the late fifties when the relevant biblical record ceases (Acts 21:18; cf. Acts 15:6). Peter has an amanuensis, Silvanus, for his first letter (1 Pet 5:12) and a surrogate son, Mark, who was his "interpreter" for the writing of the Second Gospel.[66] The Gospel of John has an affidavit/postscript from a group who affirm, "we know his testimony is true." Demetrius was some kind of envoy between John the Elder and his churches (3 Jn 12). The seven churches addressed in Revelation each had an "angel," who may have been a human messenger summoned by John on Patmos to take and read his book to the church.[67]

Moreover, these apostolic leaders wrote letters for their networks of churches. It was Paul's practice to use letters borne by coworkers to maintain contact with his churches and to address the problems they faced. The coworker appears to have had a special role in explaining the letter and dealing with problems as did, for example, Titus with the Corinthians, Tychicus with the Colossians, and Timothy with the Ephesians.

We have little information about the strategies and methods of James, Peter and John. Yet we know these apostles used letters to minister in absentia. Even the Apocalypse of John is formally begun as a letter. Significantly, the letters of James, 1 Peter (and also John?), with the Apocalypse, are each written for a *network* of churches.[68] If mission leaders employed letters for ministry to their churches, did they also use Gospels for this purpose?

18.8.3. Mission teams and mission Gospels. Authorities from the second century indicate that there were four Gospels recognized by the churches.[69] The form of their titles, each introduced by "according to" *(kata),* implies that there was *one* gospel of Jesus Christ, expressed as *four* Gospels, "according to Matthew," "according to Mark," "according to Luke" and "according to John."

We are surprised that only two of these named authors belonged to the original twelve disciples. John is well known from the Gospels and the book of Acts. Matthew, however, is scarcely prominent, being referred to only a few times in the Gospels. Mark and Luke were not original disciples, nor were they mission leaders; they were coworkers. The unexpected authors of the Gospels, apart from John, tend to support the probability of authenticity.

However, the four Gospels can be connected with the mission leaders James, Peter, John and Paul. For several reasons James of Jerusalem was probably associated with Matthew's Gospel. First, close comparison of the text of James's letter with the Gospel of Matthew reveals numerous points of contact between them (see table 16).[70]

	James	Matthew	Source
1. Joy in trial	1:2	5:11-12	Q
2. Asking and receiving	1:5, 17	7:7; 11:7-8	Q
3. Against anger	1:20	5:22	M
4. Doers of the word	1:22-23	7:24-26	Q
5. Blessing the poor	2:5	5:3, 5 [11:5]	Q
6. Warnings against the rich	2:6-7	19:23-24	Q
7. Sin and lawlessness	2:9	7:23	Q
8. Love of neighbor	2:10-12	22:36-40	Q
9. Keep the whole law	2:10	5:17-19	M, Q
10. Do not kill	2:11	5:21-30	M
11. Merciless judged	2:13	5:7	M, Q
12. Against lip service	2:14-16	7:21-23	M
13. Help the poor	2:15-16	25:34-35	M
14. Fruit of good works	3:12	7:16-18	Q
15. Meekness	3:13; cf. 4:6	5:3, 5	M
16. Divided loyalty	4:4	6:24	Q
17. Pure in heart	4:8	5:8	M
18. Mourn and weep	4:9	[Luke 6:25]	L
19. Humility and exaltation	4:10	18:4; 23:12	Q
20. Against slander	4:11	5:22; 7:1-2	M, Q
21. Weep	5:1	[Luke 6:24-25]	L
22. Against hoarding	5:2-3	6:21-22	Q
23. Do not condemn	5:6	[7:1]	Q
24. Example of prophets	5:10	5:11-12	Q
25. Prohibition of oaths	5:12	5:33-37	M
26. Elijah as example	5:17	[Luke 4:25]	L
27. A sinful brother	5:19-20	18:15	Q?

Table 16. Points of contact between James and Matthew

Since the Gospel of Matthew was probably not completed until after the death of James in 62, his direct influence over the final form of that Gospel is eliminated. James's contact must have been with Matthew's preformed traditions, Q and M. The table above indicates that the greater part of the text of James's letter was drawn from the preexisting forms Q and M (with some also from L). It appears that James and Matthew were in some way connected since they exhibit common dependence on the Palestinian sources Q and M.

Second, James the brother of the Lord was the preeminent "pillar" of the church of Jerusalem[71] as demonstrated by his absolute authority in the Jerusalem Council in c. 49. By that time it is almost certain that James's primacy extended beyond Jerusalem and Judea to all the "land of Israel." It appears from the opening lines of the letter of James that his influence extended beyond Israel to the Jewish diaspora. If the Gospel of Matthew was written in Palestine, then we may conclude that it was written within a region in which James had the primacy.

Third, a similarity of attitude toward Gentiles shown by James and the First Gospel should be noted. James expressed a favorable attitude toward the inclusion of the Gentiles in the covenant of God along with the historic people of Israel at the council

of Jerusalem in c. 49 against hardline Christian Pharisaic opposition.[72] This is entirely consistent with the inclusion of the Gentiles found throughout the Gospel of Matthew from the coming of the Magi to the Great Commission to the nations.[73] In short, the Gospel of Matthew should be connected with James, the leading hierarch of Palestine.

According to Papias, Peter's authority lay behind the Gospel of Mark. Mark, who had not heard the Lord, was Peter's *hermeneutēs,* "interpreter," writing down in his Gospel the things he had heard Peter say.[74] Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in the province of Asia in the first decades of the second century, had opportunities to meet and inquire of followers of the first disciples, Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John and Matthew. Papias preferred the "living voice" of the Lord, which he heard from these men, to what was written in books, including the Gospel of Mark.[75] Indeed, he infers that Mark's Gospel, with its imprecise sequence, was inferior to Luke because of that author's avowed accuracy (Lk 1:1-4). This only makes the connection of Peter and Mark more authentic. Overfulsome commendation might raise doubts about the Peter-Mark nexus.

The other nonapostle, Luke, explains that he had been in contact with those who "from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word," that is, original disciples of Jesus (Lk 1:1-4). However, the last two "we" passages in the Gospel establish a closeness of association between Paul and Luke. Luke probably worked and ministered in Palestine for more than two years while Paul was in prison in Caesarea before traveling with the arrested apostle to Rome. Furthermore, the hero of Luke's second volume is Paul. There can be little doubt that Luke wrote his two-volume work out of and for the churches of the Pauline mission.

According to the Gospel of John, the author had been a witness to the signs, teaching and death of Christ.[76] The text specifically states that the "disciple whom Jesus loved" was the witness and the writer of the *biblion,* "book," "according to John" (Jn 21:20, 24).[77] Added to the Beloved Disciple's own eyewitness claim is the assurance of the community with him, "we know that his witness is true" (Jn 21:24). Whereas Matthew has used as sources Mark, Q and M, which for the most part were written by others, John appears to have written his Gospel himself out of his own earlier written resources. The unmistakable similarity between the Gospel and the first letter of John suggests two modes of literature fulfilling two ministry purposes, but to the same broad readership.

If the Gospels, like the letters, arose out of and for the networks of churches associated with the leaders James, Peter, John and Paul, can we be more precise in the dating of these Gospels and the identity of the audiences to whom they were addressed?

18.8.4. Gospel audiences and Gospel dissemination. We do not have any definite way of knowing precisely when the Gospels were written and to whom they were directed. To be sure, Mark appears to have predated Matthew and Luke since they incorporate his text within their own. A probable reference to the death of Peter in the final section of the Gospel of John suggests a date after c. 65 for that Gospel.

Apart from such hints we may assume that the Gospel writers were motivated by the deaths of the contemporaries and eyewitnesses of Jesus to record what they had heard. The decade of the sixties was critical in this regard. In 62 James the brother of the Lord was martyred in Jerusalem. Peter and Paul were killed in Rome during Nero's pogrom against Christians from 65 to 68 following the great fire in 64. The living links between Jesus and the churches were being removed. The oral traditions and written collections of the words and works of Jesus needed to be recorded in more permanent form for reading in the churches and for other purposes.

Something like this appears to have motivated Matthew, Luke and John in particular, though perhaps not Mark. Mark's opening words, "the beginning of the gospel *[euangelion]*," tell us that what will follow is the "gospel" or "proclamation" *about* (as well as *issuing from*) "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." In the Greco-Roman world a gospel was a proclamation, usually involving grand and good news about an emperor or other important person.[78] Only Mark calls his work by the name "gospel." The writers of the other Gospels were more likely prompted by a sense of growing distance from Jesus, intensified by the deaths of those who had been with him and who had been eyewitnesses.

We may agree with the proposal that the Gospels' readership was not likely to have been limited to the church of which the writer was a member, for reasons stated above. Yet, the corollary—that the Gospels were written for no one in particular, but merely for their publication into the undifferentiated communications stream of the times—also seems unlikely. The writers of the Gospels must have had intended readers in mind, if only in a broad sense. To have merely written for the sake of no one in particular is rather difficult to imagine. In our view, the Gospel writers would have written for the kinds of readers who were part of the network of mission churches with which they were associated.

It may be agreed that, as a result of writing for a network of churches over a period of some years, these works came to be known far and wide. This was probably not the precise intention of the writers but a consequence, unintended or otherwise. The existence of an "information highway" of sorts in Roman antiquity by no means establishes that writers then wrote their Gospels as the equivalent of a modern web site for any passerby on the Internet to read. The writing of the Gospels was more intentional than that.

However, these authors' intentional writing for churches in their mission network could not have been conceived of in exclusive terms. Members of mission teams crossed over to other groups. John the apostle is mentioned in close contact with Peter in the thirties and forties, after which they appeared to have taken separate paths. Yet John writes appreciatively of Peter as the one who will "feed" Christ's sheep (Jn 21:15-19), and Peter captures this Johannine imagery in his own first letter (1 Pet 2:25; 5:1-3). John Mark may have worked with Peter in Judea in the thirties and forties, with Paul in the tour to southern Galatia in the

late forties, with Barnabas to Cyprus from the early forties, with Peter once more in the fifties and later with Paul once more (Col 4:10; Philem 24) as well as with Peter and Paul later (2 Tim 4:11; 1 Pet 5:13). Silvanus/Silas accompanied Paul through Anatolia to Macedonia and Achaia during the early fifties, after which he reappears as the amanuensis of Peter.[79]

Because these mission groups frequently exchanged members, we may assume that in time the Gospels moved across from one network to another. In this way the Gospels, the *bioi Iēsou,* became the scriptural biographies of Jesus for all the congregations of the "catholic church," or the "whole church," as it soon came to be called.

18.9. Conclusion

The written Gospels were *bioi,* "biographies," of Jesus originating from the four discernible mission groups associated with James, Peter, John and Paul and were written for their networks of churches. The two broad historical traditions of Mark and John, though divergent in numerous ways, nonetheless are found to have an overall chronological agreement. This indicates that each arose from within a circle that knew the narrative sequence of the ministry of Jesus.

Many believe that Mark used earlier underlying and preformed traditions. In Matthew and Luke traditions can be identified. Matthew and Luke amalgamate the traditions Q, L, and M with Mark in the formation of their *bioi Iēsou*. It appears likely that John also employed his own earlier traditions for evangelism and church reading prior to the completion of his Gospel as we have it. All such traditions arose in Palestine in the circle of those who "from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." From early times they assumed written form for reading aloud in the churches of Judea, Galilee and Samaria that had arisen through the work of these "ministers of the word." The earliness and written form of these traditions reveal that they were, on the one hand, historical rather than mythological and that, on the other hand, they were "scriptural" on a par with the Hebrew Scriptures that were read in the synagogues.

The Gospels appear to have been written initially for the networks of churches associated with the mission leaders James, Peter, John and Paul. With the passage of time, however, the Gospels came to be recognized and used in all the churches.

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Notes

[1]See §15.5.1.

[2]For comments on dating the Gospels, see Scot McKnight, "Matthew," *DJG,* p. 528; Robert A. Guelich, "Mark," *DJG,* pp. 514-15; Darrell Bock, "Luke," *DJG,* pp. 498-500, Marianne Meye Thompson, "John," *DJG,* pp. 370-71; also see E. Earle Ellis, "Dating the New Testament," *NTS* 26 (1980): 487-88; E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[3]According to Clement of Alexandria, "Last of all, aware that the physical facts had been recorded in the gospels, encouraged by his pupils and irresistibly moved by the Spirit, John wrote a spiritual gospel" (recorded in Eusebius *HE* 6.14.7).

[4]A view chiefly associated with Percival Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938); C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

[5]See excursus 1B.

[6]Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16. Most of Acts, apart from the first person in Acts 1:1 (cf. Lk 1:3), is narrated about others and therefore uses the third-person pronouns *he* or *they.* The "we" passages signal that the author himself has become part of the narrative.

[7]For use of similar vocabulary and style, see, e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Antiquitates Romanae* 1.7.4; Polybius 3.4.1; Diodorus Siculus 11.20.1; 2 Maccabees 2:24, 32; Josephus *J.W.* 7.42; *Ant.* 20.157; *Ag. Ap.* 2.1.

[8]For a comprehensive commentary on this text against its Hellenistic background, see Loveday C. A. Alexander, *Preface to Luke's Gospel,* SNTSMS 78 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 102-46.

[9]See excursus 13B.

[10]The verb *katechein* means "to teach orally."

[11]So Alexander, *Preface,* p. 119; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (New York: Anchor; 1979), p. 294.

[12]So Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke,* p. 292. Alexander, *Preface,* pp. 115, 136, observes that Luke nowhere states that the traditions he received were written. This appears to be contradicted by her exegesis of the word *narrative* as used "to distinguish the the body of the *text* from preface or excursus" (p. 111, emphasis mine).

[13]See Alexander, *Preface,* p. 111.

[14]See E. Earle Ellis, "The Making of Narratives in the Synoptic Gospels," in *Jesus and the Oral Tradition,* ed. Henry Wansbrough, JSNT 64 (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1991), pp. 311, 330.

[15]Plümacher, *EDNT,* 1:323-24.

[16]E. Earle Ellis, "New Directions in the History of Early Christianity," in *Ancient History in a Modern University, Festschrift* for E. A. Judge, ed. Alanna Nobbs, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 2:88.

[17]Many have seen the reference to the unidentified young man who fled naked as Mark's signature to his Gospel, intended for those who were aware of this incident (Mk 14:51-52). No other Gospel records this story.

[18]Mark was Peter's "interpreter" *(hermeneutēs)* according to Papias of Hierapolis writing early in the second century, as quoted in Eusebius *HE* 3.39.3-4. See §15.4.2.

[19]According to E. Earle Ellis, "The Date and Provenance of Mark's Gospel," in *The Four Gospels 1992,* ed F. van Segbroeck, C. M. Tuckett, G. van Belle and J. Verheyden (Leuven: University Press, 1992), pp. 801-15, Mark's Gospel was written sometime during the fifties following his collaboration with Peter in ministry in Caesarea Maritima.

[20]Notwithstanding their material in common, their differences are such that some have suggested a Lukan Q and a Matthaean Q. Others think that Q represents a number of separate traditions.

[21]The "Gentile Centurion" is an exception (cf. Mt 8:5-13; Lk 7:1-10).

[22]T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 31-34.

[23]Graham N. Stanton, "Q," *DJG,* pp. 644-50.

[24]1 Corinthians 1:18 (Lk 10:21-24 = Mt 11:25, 27; 13:16-17); 1 Corinthians 1:20-25 (Lk 11:29-32 = Mt 12:38-42); 1 Corinthians 1:23 (Mt 11:6 = Lk 7:23); 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 (Lk 12:41-46 = Mt 24:45-51; Mt 25:14-30 = Lk 19:12-27; Lk 12:37; Mt 7:1 = Lk 6:37a). See further, Seyoon Kim, "Sayings of Jesus," *DPL.* p. 481.

[25]Romans 8:15 (Mk 14:36); Romans 13:7 (Mk 12:17); Romans 13:8-10 (Mk 12:28-34); Romans 14:14 (Mk 7:19); Romans 15:8-9 (Mk 10:45); Romans 12:19-13 (Mt 7:5 = Lk 6:42); Rom 14:1-13a (Mt 7:1 = Lk 6:37). See further, Kim, "Sayings of Jesus," *DPL,* p. 481.

[26]See §15.6.3; also John Painter, *Just James* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 261-63. Painter thinks that "Q" is a Petrine tradition (p. 263). The Apocalypse appears to quote the Synoptic traditions rather than the completed Gospels of Matthew and Luke according to J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1975). p. 239 n. 97. The greater part of Justin's quotations of Jesus in the *Apology* come from Q; see Manson, *Teaching,* p. 28.

[27]Luke 4:15-15, 31-44; 5:12-6:16; 8:4—9:50.

[28]Luke 18:15-43; 19:28-36; 19:45—23:5; 23:13-26.

[29]This is an inference from silence, however. Q may have contained later information that Matthew and Luke for various reasons did not use. They may have preferred the Marcan tradition at that point.

[30]B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1924), pp. 218ff.

[31]It is likely that Luke wrote the Nativity stories himself, based on oral history research.

[32]For details, see James H. Charlesworth, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel According to John," in *Exploring the Gospel of John,* ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), pp. 67-68.

[33]See further, James D. G. Dunn, "John and the Oral Gospel Tradition," in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition,* ed. Henry Wansbrough, JSNTSup 64 (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1991), pp. 351-79. See also Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Jesus as Rabbi in the Fourth Gospel," *BBR* 8 (1988): 97-128.

[34]So W. D. Davies, "Aspects of the Jewish Background of the Gospel of John." in *Exploring the Gospel of John,* ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), pp. 43-64.

[35]Charlesworth, "The Dead Sea Scrolls," pp. 68-75.

[36]See Acts 12:2, where James the martyr is identified as the "brother of John."

[37]See §15.5.1.

[38]John 5 (healing of the man by the pool Bethzatha); John 6 (feeding of the multitude); John 9 (healing of the man born blind); John 11 (the raising of Lazarus). For the difficulties associated with source identification in John, see, e.g., F. F. Segovia, "Tradition History of the Fourth Gospel," in *Exploring the Gospel of John,* ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), pp. 179-89.

[39]T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1961), p. 25.

[40] Ellis, "Making of Narratives," pp. 330-31.

[41]See excursus 1B.

[42]Ellis, "Making of Narratives," p. 331; Ellis, "New Directions," 2:89-92 n. 17.

[43]See §12.4.
[44]1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Corinthians 1:13; Colossians 4:16; 1 Timothy 4:13.
[45]See §18.2.
[46]For the view, with which we are in qualified agreement, that the Synoptic Gospels should be made to fit in with John's sequence, see J. A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (London: SCM Press, 1985), pp. 1-36.
[47]But see Matthew 23:37.
[48]John 5:1 merely refers to "a feast of the Jews." which may mean a Passover, though given his specific references elsewhere to "the Passover [the feast] of the Jews" (Jn 2:13; 6:4; 11:55), he may be pointing to another feast (cf. Jn 7:2; 10:22). On the other hand, the ministry of Jesus appears too extended to fit into just two years.
[49]Richard Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark," in *The Gospel for All Christians,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 153-61, argues that John specifically wrote so that his account would dovetail with the earlier Gospel, knowing that his readers were familiar with Mark. On the contrary, in our view John is innocent of Mark; the agreement of sequence is the result of both traditions being controlled by the chronology as it truly was!
[50]The debate over the genre of the Gospels appears to have been resolved by Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). But see Albrecht Dihle, "The Gospels and Greek Biography," in *The Gospel and the Gospels,* ed. Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 361-86.
[51]Richard A. Burridge, "About People, for People, by People: Gospel Genre and Audiences," in *The Gospel for All Christians,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 124.
[52]Stephen Barton, "Can We Identify the Gospel Audiences?" in *The Gospel for All Christians,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 173-94.
[53]My translation.
[54]1 Timothy 4:13 (my translation); cf. Revelation 1:3; 22:18f-19.
[55]See §15.5.2.
[56]Justin Martyr *First Apology* 62.
[57]For a critique of the attempts at audience identification, see Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" in *The Gospel for All Christians,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 9-48.
[58]Burridge, "About People," pp. 113-45.
[59]Loveday C. A. Alexander, "Ancient Book Production and the Gospels," in *The Gospel for All Christians,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 71-111.
[60]Michael B. Thompson, "The Holy Internet: Communication Between Churches in the First Christian Generation," in *The Gospel for All Christians,* ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 49-70.
[61]This is the impact of the various contributions in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospel for All Christians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998).
[62]Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14; 12:17; 15:7, 12-13; 21:17-26.
[63]Clement *Stromata* 1.1.11. See Ellis, "New Directions," 2:87-88.
[64]See E. Earle Ellis, "Paul and His Co-workers," in *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity: New Testament Essays,* WUNT 1/18 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1978), pp. 3-22; Ellis, "Paul and His Co-Workers," *DPL,* pp. 183-89.
[65]"Brothers of the Lord are mentioned by Paul (1 Cor 9:5); Jude is brother to James (Jude 1).
[66]1 Peter 5:13; cf. Acts 12:12-16. Mark was Peter's "interpreter" according to Papias (Eusebius *HE* 3.39.13-16).
[67] Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; cf. 1:16.
[68]The letters reveal a changing orientation in ministry for Peter and John. Paul and James retained the directions assigned them at the Jerusalem meeting in c. A.D. 47, Paul to the Gentiles and James to the circumcised. Paul's letters are addressed in the main to Gentiles (and God-fearers?). The letter of James is written to Jews of the dispersion. However, the first letter of Peter suggests

that Peter may have shifted his ministry to Gentiles (cf. 1 Pet 1:18; 4:3). There is nothing in the first letter of John to suggest a Jewish readership; his closing words, "keep yourselves from idols," may have a literal meaning, suggesting Gentile readers.

[69]Notably Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 3.2.8. See Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (London: SCM Press, 1985), pp. 64-84, for argument in favor of the earliness of the attribution of the titles of the four Gospels.

[70]This table is adapted from John Painter, *Just James* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1997), pp. 261-62. Painter acknowledges the tables of Ralph P. Martin and Patrick J. Hartin.

[71]Galatians 2:7-9; Acts 12:17; 15:13-21.

[72]See §14.8.2.

[73]Painter, *Just James,* pp. 261-62, argues that James's conciliatory attitude toward Judaism and Matthew's hostility toward Judaism imply that each used the same traditions but in different situations. However, this oversimplifies the issue. Matthew is well known for being at the same time Jewish *and* critical of aspects of Judaism. James's quite Jewish letter also, by inference, criticizes many aspects of Judaism, e.g., hypocrisy, oath taking and avarice. The silence of the letter of James regarding Gentiles cannot of itself be taken as evidence of that letter's hostility towards Gentiles.

[74]Eusebius *HE* 3.39.14.

[75]Quoted in ibid., 3.39.4.

[76]John 1:14; 2:11; 19:35; 1 John 1:1-3.

[77]It is clear—by process of elimination—that the Beloved Disciple must be John Zebedee; see John 21:2; cf. John 13:23-24. This is the testimony of Irenaeus and other second-century authorities (see §15.5.1).

[78] Georg Strecker, *EDNT,* §2:69.

[79]Acts 16—18; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12.

19

The Kingdom of Christ

19.1. The Apocalypse

The opening words of the last book of the New Testament are its title, "The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ." It was written in the midnineties in the form of an apocalyptic letter-book to seven churches in Roman Asia, that is, in the latter years of the emperor Domitian (81-96).[1]

19.2. The significance of the Apocalypse

If Paul's letter to the Galatians, written c. 48, is the first document of early Christianity, the Apocalypse, written c. 95/96, is the last. This status as the final text of the New Testament confers singular historical significance to the Apocalypse. The closure of the book of Acts, the end of the Pauline writings and the end of 1 Peter begin a period of silence of about thirty years until the appearance of the Apocalypse. To be sure, three of the Gospels were probably written within that period, indicating significant activity within Christianity. Yet, as we have noted, it is not possible to glean much historical information from the Gospels since we can only guess when, where and to whom they were written. The Apocalypse provides a glimpse of the churches of Asia after those years of silence that is historically important.

The Apocalypse is also significant, theologically speaking, for its sense of future program. Students of the New Testament have long debated whether the texts anticipate the immediate return of Christ. Here a distinction should be made between absolute immediacy of his objective parousia and a sense of subjectively held urgency for his coming. In one place James can say, "behold, the Judge is standing at the doors" (Jas 5:9), although he has just exhorted, "Be patient . . . until the coming *[parousia]* of the Lord" (Jas 5:7). Coming he is, indeed, but patience is required.

Indeed, almost all the references in the New Testament to Christ's return foresee the occurrence of intermediate events prior to his coming. In some passages a program of events that must occur beforehand is visible and explicit; in other places it is implicit. Most probably, these scattered references belong to a more complete whole that derived ultimately from Jesus himself. The Synoptic tradition foresees gospel preaching to the nations, persecution and the desecration and destruction of the temple. The Johannine tradition anticipates the gathering of "other sheep" and the death of the undershepherd, Simon Peter. Paul cautions the Thessalonians that "the man of lawlessness" must be revealed before the coming of the Lord (2 Thess 2:3). All the Gospels and the book of Acts envisage church life and ministry in the period between the death and resurrection of the Christ and his return. First Peter, while urgently pointing to the apocalypse of Jesus Christ, also prepares the readers for a period of fiery trial in which they will suffer, but in the nonvengeful manner of Christ.[2] Based on Jesus' warnings of false Christs and false prophets (Mk 13:22 and pars.), John foreshadows the appearance of an antichrist figure or figures, bringing suffering to the followers of the true messiah.[3] Thus it will be a period of "trial" marked by the "scattering" of the sheep because their shepherd has been "struck down" (Mk 14:27).

The Apocalypse also expresses urgency ("Behold, I am coming soon")[4] while placing before the reader a program of what must take place before Christ's coming. John's description is much more elaborate than the fragmentary references mentioned above. Nonetheless, although John saw and heard the many things that will happen before Christ comes, Jesus will arrive unheralded, like a thief in the night, as noted below.

19.3. John

John, the author of the Apocalypse, wrote as one having a spiritual and moral authority over the churches he named. He knew well their individual circumstances.[5] He had been exiled "on account of the word of God" on "the island called Patmos" in the Aegean some seventy miles west of Ephesus (Rev 1:9). There he "heard and saw" things that God revealed to him[6] and that he was directed to write to the seven churches (Rev 1:11; 22:10). John says little about himself, except to call himself God's "servant" and to speak of himself as "your brother" and as one of a brotherhood of prophets (Rev 1:1, 9; 22:9).

19.3.1. His identity. Who was this John? Was he John Zebedee, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," the traditional author of the Gospel and letters that bears his name? Here the early authorities are divided. In 151-155 Justin Martyr wrote that "a man of ours, by name John, one of the apostles of Christ, prophesied in a revelation vouchsafed to him that those who became believers in our Christ will dwell for a thousand years in Jerusalem."[7] Likewise, Irenaeus, a native of Roman Asia writing c. 180 from southern Gaul, also attributed the Apocalypse to John

the disciple of the Lord.[8] However, Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria in the midddle of the third century, rejected on stylistic grounds the identification of the John of Revelation with the author of the Gospel and letters.[9] Underlying his rejection, however, was most likely the antimillenarianism current at that time in the east.

Modern scholars tend to follow the opinions of Dionysius. Yet there are a significant number of echoes between the Gospel of John and the Apocalypse of John that suggest some association between the two.[10] The differences are plain to see, but there are similarities, though less obvious, also to be found.[11] Common authorship cannot be eliminated. It is evident that a community ("we") added a postscript assuring the readers of the integrity of the Gospel. If we knew more about this community, we could perhaps explain how works that are different yet similar could be associated with the name of "John."

19.3.2. His importance. By the time of the writing of the Apocalypse most of the disciples of the Lord and leaders of the various mission groups had passed from the scene, James in 62, Peter and Paul in c. 65. John appears to have been the sole survivor in the midnineties.

This endows the Revelation with a certain significance, whether its "John" was the apostle or another "John" who was an associate and contemporary of the apostle. Historically, the deaths of Peter and Paul in the midsixties signaled the beginning of a thirty-year period of relative silence. The dispatch of this letter-book to the churches of Asia breaks the apostolic silence and represents the apostles' last word.

By this time, too, Christianity had been in Roman Asia for almost fifty years, a half century that witnessed a remarkable growth in churches. Arguably, Roman Asia was by the time of the writing of the Apocalypse the world center of Christianity. This, too, adds importance to "John" and his book.

19.3.3. His book. The text of the Apocalypse proves to be highly structured. In one vision John "saw" the circumstances of the seven churches (Rev 1:9-20). In another vision he "saw" a series of interlocking sequences of seven episodes: seven seals, seven trumpets, seven signs and seven bowls (beginning in Rev 4:1). Then John foresaw the destruction of God's enemies, the dragon, the beast and the false prophet and their earthly habitat. Destruction is followed by the divine gift of new heaven and new earth. This extraordinary arrangement of material has someting in common with the Gospel of John. It, too, is carefully structured, planned around the seven "signs" of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

When the language of the writer is examined, it proves to be "soaked in the OT . . . and dominated by it."[12] Moreover, John betrays knowledge of many texts of the New Testament apart from the Fourth Gospel,[13] in particular, Matthew, Luke, 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians and Ephesians and possibly Galatians, 1 Peter and James.[14] Clear echoes of Jesus' teaching about the "thief" are apparent in Revelation, as seen in table 17. Furthermore, John the apocalyptist's

knowledge of Jesus' parables is indicated by his repeated "He who has an ear, let him hear" with which each of the seven letters ends.

Revelation 3:3 If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.	**Luke 12:39-40/Matthew 24:43-44** But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he . . . would not have left his house to be broken into. You must also be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.
Revelation 16:15 Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!	**1 Thessalonians 5:2** You yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Table 17. The "thief" in Revelation, Jesus and Paul

19.4. Christ in the Apocalypse

John's christological references reflect the Davidic messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. The Apocalypse's "key of David" is plainly Isaianic[15] and the phrase "the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ" points unmistakably to Yahweh's anointed as described in Psalm 2:2.[16] The Apocalypse also echoes a number of messianic references from contemporary Jewish literature, for example, "the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root [and offspring] of David."[17] Likewise from contemporary Jewish messianism is his description of Jesus as a ***horned*** warrior Lamb (Rev 5:6)[18] with seven eyes as of an omniscient judge (cf. Zech 4:2, 10) who brings wrathful vengeance (Rev 6:16).

John's vision diverges strikingly from contemporary Jewish expectations in two ways. First, apocalytic predictions of the time anticipated that the great battle of God against Satan and all the hosts of his kingdom would be a climactic future event of the end time, as described in the Qumran *War Scroll*.[19] Second, they also predicted that God's anointed King would be stained with the blood of his enemies.

> How beautiful is the king, the messiah, who will arise from those who are of the house of Judah! He girds up his loins and goes forth and orders the battle array against his enemies and slays the kings along with their overlords, and no king or overlord can stand before him; he reddens the mountains with the blood of their slain, his clothing is dipped in blood like a winepress.[20]

The Apocalypse, however, (as we shall soon see) places the great battle of God in the *past;* God had already won this battle in the death of the Messiah.[21] John reveals this in the paradox of the Davidic Lion Messiah who is at the *same time* the slain Lamb Messiah.[22] One leg of the paradox, that Jesus is the Christ, the son of

David, is deeply embedded in the New Testament, as we saw in the Matthaean genealogy, the Lucan Nativity stories, various speeches in Acts and the opening sentences of Paul's letter to the Romans.[23] The other leg, that this Christ is the sacrificial lamb, is also consistent with New Testament thought elsewhere. "Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed," observed Paul (1 Cor 5:7). "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" prophesied John the baptizer (Jn 1:29). The paradox, stated in both parts, that God's anointed king who must die for others, is also rooted deeply within the New Testament.[24] Unlike contemporary Jewish messianic hopes, however, as illustrated above, *this* Messiah was stained with his *own* blood. His victory was won as he sustained the apparent defeat of death. John is not saying something that has not been said elsewhere in the New Testament, though his Lion-Lamb imagery is unparalleled and quite astonishing.

Indeed, the Christology of the Apocalypse significantly transcends both Old Testament and contemporary Jewish messianic categories. John's vision of "one like a son of man" in terms used in Daniel for the "ancient of days"/Yahweh, the use of divine titles like "the first and the last" and the "living one," and Jesus' use of "I am" statements serve to attribute deity qualities to Jesus.[25] These are reinforced by Jesus' references to God as "my God" and "my Father"[26] and by his shared use of the throne,[27] which is God's throne and which elsewhere in the Apocalypse so clearly points to God as the only object of worship.[28] Nonetheless, the Lamb *is* worshiped.[29] The divine sovereignty of this great and divine figure is demonstrated by his decrees anticipating the unfolding of history.[30]

Consistent with this high Christology, John's eschatology emphasizes the fulfilled nature of the purposes of God. Several times within the book an angel announces, "It is done." The perfect tense denotes God's completed work for which, however, there are ongoing consequences (Rev 16:17; 21:6). John's emphasis on the finished victory of God in his Son, the Messiah Jesus, is quite consistent with the rest of the New Testament. Given that so much of the Apocalypse looks to the future, an assertion regarding the realized eschatology of this book comes as a surprise. Surely Revelation is about the future not the past! Yet the past is precisely where the center of gravity of the book is located, as John's use of verbs of completed action (emphasized below) indicate.

> To him who loves us and *has freed* us from our sins by his blood and *made* us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father. (Rev 1:5-6)

> He who conquers I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself *conquered* and *sat* down with my Father on his throne. (Rev 3:21)

> After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an *open[ed]* door. (Rev 4:1)

> The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, *has conquered*. . . .
> I saw a Lamb standing, as though it *had been* slain. (Rev 5:5-6)

> The kingdom of the world *has become* the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. (Rev 11:15)
>
> Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ *have come,* for the accuser of our brethren *has been* thrown down. (Rev 12:10)

Christ in his future role as judge is also prominent throughout the Apocalypse. In Revelation 1 he is the awesome judge-king, one like a son of man with fiery eyes, with a voice as loud as "many waters" and with a two-edged sword in his mouth. In Revelation 19 we meet him again. Now he is King of kings and Lord of lords, crowned with many crowns, again with fiery eyes and a two-edged sword in his mouth, astride the white horse judging and making war, with robe dipped in blood. He will overwhelm the enemies of God, the kings of the earth, the beast antichrist, the false prophet and the great dragon, Satan.

19.5. The setting of the Apocalypse

19.5.1. The Jews. The writer speaks of "those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews but are not" in reference to Smyrna and Philadelphia. "Synagogue of Satan" implies that the Jewish synagogue was a source of trouble for Christians living in those cities. There were, of course, communities of Jews living throughout the province of Asia, as they had been for the centuries of the Jewish diaspora (cf. Acts 19:10, 17). References in the book of Acts suggest significant antipathy toward a movement that they would have regarded as schismatical and heretical (Acts 19:33-34; 20:3, 19).

Their hostility may have been increased as a consequence of the disastrous defeat at the hands of the Romans in Palestine (66-70), at which time the temple was destroyed as well as the greater part of Jerusalem. Whereas the former Julio-Claudian dynasty had been generally tolerant toward the Jews, their successors the Flavians were less permissive. The generals Vespasian and Titus, who led the campaign in Palestine, tasted firsthand the fury of Jewish fanaticism. After the humiliation of the Jewish prisoners of war in Rome, Vespasian imposed a tax on the Jews, the *fiscus Judaicus,* for the upkeep of the temple of Jupiter in Rome. No longer having a temple of their own to provide for in their annual temple tax, they must pay instead for an idolatrous shrine for the hated Gentile king. That Christians were free from this obligation (unless they happened to be Jewish Christians) probably intensified the bitterness.

Yet the *fiscus Judaicus* did secure a degree of protection from local demands for participation in the worship of "the image of the beast," that is, the emperor. Christians enjoyed no such immunity; they were exposed to harsh treatment from the authorities. It is possible that the Jewish communities in Smyrna and Philadelphia were called "synagogues of Satan" because their members reported Christians to the local authorities, who would have then compelled the Christians to

participate in idolatrous ceremonies.[31]

19.5.2. Syncretism. Several of the churches had been infiltrated by false teachers, whose teachings are referred to allegorically. The "Nicolaitans" (literally, "conquerors of the people") were active in the major coastal cities Ephesus and Pergamum (Rev 2:6, 15). John refers to "their works" and "their teaching." However, we are unable to identify the "Nicolaitans" or their beliefs.[32]

A prophetess, "Jezebel," with "teachings of Balaam" was influential in Pergamum and Thyatira, a small center east of Pergamum (Rev 2:14, 20). "Jezebel" encouraged the eating of idol-sacrificed meat and laxity in sexual matters, suggesting that those influenced by her continued to attend and participate in the local temple cults. It will be remembered that Paul addressed the ongoing problem of temple attendance in Corinth,[33] which was doubtless a problem in other Greco-Roman cities in the region. Perhaps Christians under pressure to conform to social and religious norms felt some impulse to continue their associations with the temple cults.

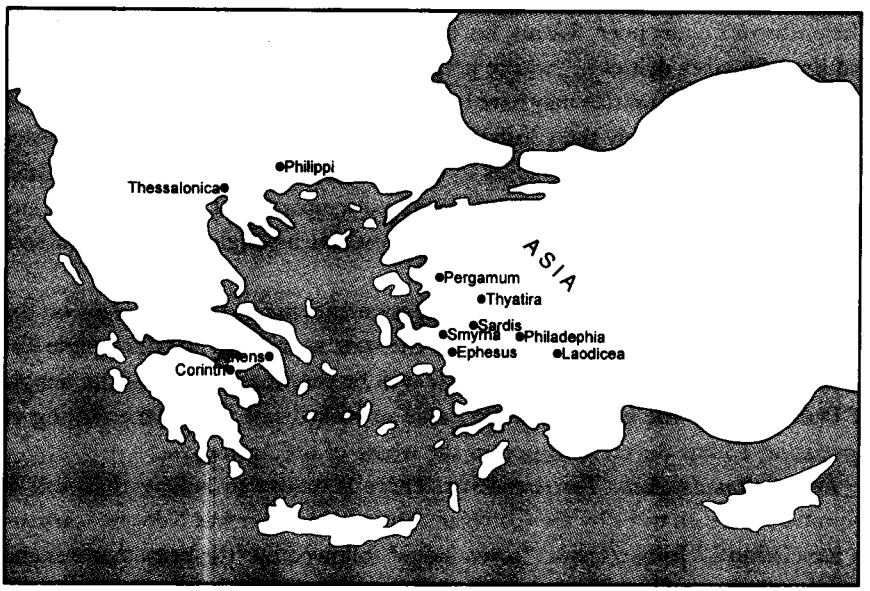
19.5.3. Roman Asia: The cult of the Emperor. The Apocalypse, taken as a whole, but especially Revelation 12—21, makes it clear that the overwhelming problem facing these churches was the worship of the image of the Roman emperor.

After the death of Alexander the region of western Anatolia, which he had overrun, became the kingdom of Pergamum under the Attalid dynasty. Many fine cities were built following a Hellenistic model. From 129 B.C., however, this kingdom was absorbed within the Roman provincial system, becoming the Roman province of Asia. To secure the goodwill of their new master, the Greek cities of this region established temples and rituals for "the goddess Roma." While the earlier Julio-Claudian rulers Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius and Nero discouraged the cultic worship of living emperors,[34] the people of Asia were eager to accord divine honors to the emperor. The first temple for the deity of Augustus was erected at Pergamum in 29 B.C.[35] According to the Apocalypse, Pergamum is where Satan dwells (Rev 2:13).[36] The imperial cult spread from Pergamum throughout the province and beyond. By the late first century there were at least eighty temples for the imperial cult in sixty cities in the region. These were grand and monumental in character, on a par with and in many cases surpassing the temples for the gods. Ephesus, for example, had four imperial temples, a shrine for Antoninus, an imperial portico and four gymnasia connected with the imperial cult.

To celebrate Augustus's gift of peace to the world after decades of civil war, the cities of Asia decided in 9 B.C. to change the Macedonian calendar so that in Asia New Year's day would be observed on September 23, the birthday of the "saviour and god" Augustus.[37] The people of Myra hailed him as "the god Augustus Caesar, son of a god, ruler of land and sea, benefactor and saviour of the whole world."[38] At Halicarnassus, Augustus was described in an inscription as "the benefactor of the race of men, who has not only fulfilled our greatest hopes, but has even

surpassed them, for the land and sea are safe, and cities flourish in peace and concord, and in prosperity."[39]

This veneration of Rome and her emperor occurred even though Roman emperors had little or no contact with Asia Minor before the second century. Nevertheless, extensive provision had been made for his veneration from the time of Roman annexation of the region in the second century B.C. Rituals were enacted on an institutionalized and regular basis. For this purpose hymns, prayers and sacrifices were performed, involving priests and other celebrants.



Map 22. Roman Asia

Cultic celebrations for Rome and the emperor were held on many occasions in public life: at gladiatorial games and animal fights, which had become popular through Roman influence, at athletic contests in the stadia and the gymnasia, and at the various joyous citywide festivals for the gods. The veneration of Rome was easily amalgamated with existing ceremonies for the local deities (such as for both Artemis and Dionysius at Ephesus).

The greatest focus of the cult, however, was the image of the emperor. The statues of the emperors, all romantically heroic in presentation, appear in three modes: in civilian clothes (usually the toga), in military dress and naked (that is, as a god).

These cult statues were of colossal size. Statues of Trajan and Hadrian at

Pergamum would have been five meters high (judging from the size of remaining limbs), whereas Domitian at Ephesus would have been eight meters high (if standing; five meters high if seated). The great size of the statues of the emperors appears to have been intended to create an awesome impact on the populace, to have them understand the parity of the emperor with the gods.

The imperial cult, however, was no new thing. It is quite conceivable that something had occurred in the recent past that had precipitated more intense conflict. The commonly held belief is that the catalyst for John's book was Domitian's declaration of his own divinity. This is well attested in the ancient sources. Dio Cassius wrote that "Domitian even insisted on being considered a god and was exceedingly proud to be called 'master' and 'god' *[dominus et deus]*."[40] The emperor's court poet, Statius, unctuously referred to his master as "offspring and sire of mighty deities . . . whose godhead I heard from afar."[41]

The regime of Domitian may have had a particular impact on the people of Asia in a specific way, namely the construction of a temple for Domitian at Ephesus. This was the first temple in Ephesus to be dedicated to a Roman emperor. Cities of Asia competed for the privilege of erecting a temple for the emperor. The city of Ephesus was granted this honor and with it the much-sought-after title *neokoros,* "temple sweeper."

The temple of Domitian was erected at great expense to the Ephesians on the best and most central site in the city, near the state agora. Outside the temple was a colossal statue of the emperor.[42] It may well be that the creation of the temple of Domitian and the erection of his statue provoked not merely the writing of Revelation 13 but the composition of the whole of the Apocalypse.

19.5.4. Roman Asia: The Antichrist. There is reason to believe that, evil as Domitian was seen to be by the Christians, the real monster was Nero reincarnate. In Revelation 17 John refers to "seven kings" followed by "the beast that was and is not, [who] is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition" (Rev 17:11). Earlier, John wrote of a beast from the sea (Rome) to whom the dragon had given his authority, whose head "seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed" (Rev 13:3). John adds, "let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six" (Rev 13:18). Numerals were not yet in use; the number given is to be decoded by letters identifying a name, but whose? Most probably the name is Nero Caesar, based on the use of Hebrew letters. This fits with the Nero redivivus myth that raged at that time.[43] Nero committed suicide, but because there was no public burial, it was widely believed that he was alive somewhere and would march on Rome from the east with a great army (Rev 17:12-18).

Nero was notorious in the minds of Christians as the great persecutor in Rome from 64 to 65, at whose hands the great apostles Peter and Paul perished. It is quite probable that "Babylon the great . . . drunk with the blood of the saints"

(Rev 17:5-6) refers back to Nero's pogrom against the Christians in Rome, which is so vividly described by Tacitus.[44] Believers feared the possibility that Nero would somehow return and make war against them as he had in the past (see Rev 17:12-18). Nero is thus the embodiment of evil that transcends human evil.

John may be here portraying God's true king, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to parody Nero as a returning antichrist (Rev 5:5). Just as Jesus *was* (in his incarnate life) and *is not* (in his ascension) but will *come again* (in his parousia), so too, Nero once *was*, now *is not* and yet *will come*. When he returns Nero will return as the beast, destined not for triumph but for destruction (Rev 17:8, 11).

19.6. The Apocalypse and the future

Other references to the future in the New Testament point to intermediate events preceding the coming of Christ, which is, without exception, urgently awaited. Yet no part of the New Testament explores the future in such depth and detail as John's Apocalypse.

19.6.1. Who is to be worshiped? John was convinced that the troubles of the future arising from oppression from the dragon, the beast [from the sea] and the beast from the earth [the false prophet] "must soon take place" (Rev 1:1; 22:6). Somewhat to our surprise, however, these troubles are not referred to until the center of the book, in Revelation 12—20. So how "soon" will this be? Before the troubles, there are two sets of sequences. The first, the episodes of the seven seals, prophesy the conquests of the rider of a white horse and the horrific consequences for all (Rev 6:1—8:5). The second, the episodes of the seven trumpets, witnesses to terrible assaults upon the fabric of creation, including upon people (Rev 8:6—11:19).

These two sets of sequences, with the two sets following (Rev 12:1—16:21), are not to be understood as consecutive; rather they are concurrent or in some way parallel. That is, each sequence retraces the same historical era from the resurrection to the return of Christ, though from the different aspects of conquest, chaos, persecution and destruction. Significantly, the blessings of the end time as described in Revelation 21—22 are also found within each of the various sequences. This theory of interpretation of the Apocalypse, known as "recapitulation," was expounded in the early fourth-century commentary of Victorinus, the oldest extant commentary on the Apocalypse.[45]

The disciples of Jesus face an awesome future, with suffering arising from numerous quarters, in particular from the demonic triad, the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. Placed before the reader is their great leader Christ, the Lamb, whom the people are to follow wherever he goes (Rev 14:4), including through suffering. They are to be sexually undefiled, and no lie is to be found in their mouths. Christ reigns, and because of their courageous loyalty to him, they

share his rule (Rev 5:9-10). If they have lost their lives in faithful witness, they will rule with him from heaven for a "thousand years" (Rev 20:4-6), symbolic for the period of Christ's reign before his parousia.

The writer of the Apocalypse urgently challenges his readers to worship God the creator and judge and the redeemer Lamb, not the false and pretentious counterpart, the Roman emperor. Thus the Apocalypse divides humankind into those who worship the dragon and the beast and those who will worship God in the heavenly Jerusalem. The eternal gospel, as declared by the Apocalypse, is "Fear God and give him glory . . . worship [God]" (Rev 14:7). John says, repeatedly, "Do not worship the beast;[46] worship God."[47] Sixteen hymnlike passages are dotted throughout the Apocalypse to indicate what is meant by the worship of God Almighty and the Lamb.

19.6.2. "Polemical parallelism." In 1910 Adolf Deissman wrote of "a polemical parallelism between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ where ancient words derived by Christianity from the treasury of the Septuagint and the gospels happen to coincide with solemn concepts of the Imperial Cult which sounded the same or similar."[48]

There are a number of parallels depicting good and evil in the Apocalypse, especially in Revelation 12—22. The evil element in the parallel is probably to be identified in specific ways. Clearly Babylon and the "great harlot" are Rome. The beast from the sea is Roman power incarnated in the emperor, and the beast from the earth [the false prophet] is the high priest of the Romano-Asian cult of the province.

The parallels are as follows:

a. The imagery of the godly woman, who is persecuted in Revelation 12 but appears as the wife of the Lamb in Revelation 21, is paralleled by the "great harlot" in Revelation 17.

b. The new Jerusalem, the holy city in Revelation 21—22, corresponds with but surpasses by far Babylon the great, the unholy city, in Revelation 18.

c. The "Lamb . . . as though . . . slain" (Rev 5:6, 12; 13:8) is paralleled by "the [sea] beast," one of whose heads "seemed to have a mortal wound" (Rev 13:3). The beast is taken to be the Roman emperor, perhaps represented in the province of Asia in the person of the proconsul.

d. The beast has an image and those who worship him have the mark of his name on their foreheads.[49] In parallel but by contrast, the servants of the Lamb who worship him, and who refuse to worship the beast, will bear the name of the Lamb on their foreheads (Rev 22:3-4).

e. The community of Christ, the bride of the Lamb, characterized by chastity, truthfulness and endurance (Rev 14:4-5), is paralleled by the community of the beast, the great harlot, characterized by murder, fornication, sorcery and falsehood (Rev 21:8).

19.7. The kingdom of Christ

As the future stretched out before John and his readers, it was evident that he and they faced great challenges. They lived in brilliant cities like Ephesus and Pergamum witnessing the daily reality of the naked power of the Roman state, which was all too visible in the Roman triremes, the recurring rituals of feast days and contests, the temples, their priests, hymns, acclamations and sacrifices and the great statues of the Princeps. The morality of this stunning "Babylon," however, was harsh, unjust, cruel and self-indulgent. Against this vast machinery all they had to offer was the word of their testimony to the Christ of God, crucified sixty years before in a city now in ruins, a Christ who was risen and returning. Against the rule of Roman might and Greco-Roman culture, John made severe demands for loyalty to Christ and for an uncompromising obedience to the commandments of God.

Christian believers faced two kings, each of whom claimed worship. John promised that those who "followed the Lamb" were called his kingdom and priests, ruling with him on earth through faithfulness so long as life permitted, but coruling with him in heaven when they were martyred. In the meantime, their sufferings included social and financial disadvantage. "[The beast] causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark" (Rev 13:16-17).

More than any other book of the New Testament, this apocalyptic letter-book charted the course for the Messiah's people during the unfolding history that was to follow, including those years and places of intense suffering. This book, as the last word of the New Testament, continues to make life-and-death demands of faith and hope that "the kingdom of the world *has become* the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" and that "he *shall* reign for ever and ever" (Rev 11:15).

The world they saw; Christ they did not. But they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by their word of testimony. So these early believers laid the foundations for the life of the Messiah's people for the years that were yet to come and yet remain. That, however, is another history, with new chapters beginning even as we finish reading John's Apocalypse.

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Notes

[1]So most, including George R. Beasley-Murray, "Revelation, Book of," *DLNTD,* pp. 1025-38; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Revelation, Book of," *ABD,* 5:694-708. According to Irenaeus, writing eighty years later, the Revelation was "seen no very long time ago, but almost in our own day, towards the end of Domitian's reign (*Against Heresies* 5.30.3). A minority argue for the latter days of Nero, 65-68.

[2]1 Peter 1:7, 13; 4:7; 5:1, 4; 2:20-25.

[3]1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7.

[4]Revelation 3:11; 22:12; cf. Revelation 1:7.

[5]See Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986).

[6]Revelation 1:10, 12; 4:1; 5:1; 22:8.

[7]Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 81.4.

[8]Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 4.30; 5.26.

[9]Cited in Eusebius *HE* 4.39; 7.25.

[10]R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St John,* ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), pp. xxix-xxxvii, has made exhaustive studies of words and phrases occurring in the Apocalypse and the Gospel and letters of John. He has concluded that Dionysius was correct. Yet Charles has identified enough resemblances between them to "point decidedly to some connection between the two authors. The Evangelist was apparently at one time a disciple of the Seer, or they were members of the same religious circle in Ephesus" (p. xxxiii). See, too, the appendices in Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1960), pp. 394-97. According to Schlatter's list (p. 397), less than a dozen words from the Gospel are not found in the Apocalypse. For a review of possible explanations of the divergences and similarities between the Apocalypse of John and the Gospel and letters of John, see Beasley-Murray, "Revelation, Book of," pp. 1032-33.

[11]See §155.

[12]Beasley-Murray, "Revelation, Book of," p. 1026. Charles, *Revelation,* pp. lxviii-lxxxii, has hundreds of associations of language between the Apocalypse and the Old Testament.

[13]See Charles, *Revelation,* pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

[14]Ibid., pp. lxxxiii-lxxxvi.

[15]Revelation 5:5; 22:16 (cf. Gen 49:9; Is 11:1,10); 3:7 (cf. Is 22:22).

[16]Psalm 2 has a number of echoes in the Apocalypse, e.g., Psalm 2:8-9 in Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15.

[17]"Lion of the tribe of Judah" (2 Esdras 11:37; 12:31-33); "the root of David" (4Q174 *Florilegium* 1:11).

[18]Cf. *Testament of Joseph* 19:8. The Maccabees are represented as horned lambs in 1 Enoch 90:9.

[19]See *War Scroll* 19, noting the use of future-tense verbs throughout the whole text.

[20]*Targum Jerusalem I,* quoted in Martin Hengel, *Victory over Violence* (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 69.
[21]The future battle of Armageddon, though anticipated, never eventuates in reality (Rev 16:14-16).
[22]Remarkably, John portrays Jesus as a *slain* lamb and as a *horned* (i.e., powerful) lamb within the one verse (Rev 5:6).
[23]See §2.3.
[24]Mark 8:29-31 and pars.; Mark 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 1:23.
[25]Revelation 1:12-15 (cf. Dan 7:9, 13); 2:8; 22:13 (cf. Is 41:4; 44:6; 48:12); 1:18; 1:17; 2:23; 22:16; 3:21.
[26]Revelation 2:27; 3:5, 12, 21; cf. 14:1.
[27]Revelation 3:21; 22:1, 3.
[28]E.g., Revelation 4:1—5:13; 21:3, 5.
[29]Revelation 5:8, 14; cf. Revelation 7:11.
[30]Revelation 1:9; 6:1.
[31]Hemer, *Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia,* pp. 9-10.
[32]One conjecture identified the "Nicolaitans" as religious triumphalists, perhaps like the all-conquering Judaizers against whom Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor 2:14; 11:5; 12:11). For survey and discussion, see Hemer, *Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia,* pp. 87-94.
[33]1 Corinthians 8—10; 2 Corinthians 6:14—7:1.
[34]Suetonius *Augustus* 53; Suetonius *Tiberius* 26; London Papyri; Tacitus *Annals* 15.74.
[35]Tacitus *Annals* 4.37
[36]The massive rebuilt altar from Pergamum at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin gives some indication of the impact of the Caesar cult in Roman Asia.
[37]*OGIS,* 458.
[38]*IGRR,* 3:719.
[39]*IBM,* 4:1.894.
[40]Dio Cassius *Roman History* 67.5.7; cf. Suetonius *Domitian* 13.
[41]Statius *Silvae* 1.1.66.
[42]The well-preserved head of the emperor is on view in the museum at Selcuk [near Ephesus].
[43]Suetonius *Nero* 57, 40; Tacitus *Histories* 2.8-9.
[44]Tacitus *Annals* 15.44.
[45]See Yarbro Collins, "Revelation, Book of," 5:696-97.
[46]Revelation 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4.
[47]Revelation 15:4; 19:4, 10; 22:8.
[48]Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), p. 346.
[49]Revelation 13:15-17; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4.

20

Epilogue

20.1. Introduction

It is time now to reflect briefly upon our survey of the era of the New Testament. To establish the setting for *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity* it was thought desirable to go back to the Hellenistic era following Alexander's conquests of Palestine and the subsequent cultural upheaval in Israel. The Roman expansion into the eastern Mediterranean after Pompey did not fundamentally diminish the spreading leaven of Hellenism within Israel. Herod, the Romans' client king in Israel, was an ardent Hellenist. Jesus was born at the end of Herod's life and lived through the rule of Antipas in Galilee, occasionally visiting Jerusalem, which had by then become a Roman province.

The New Testament writers are not preoccupied with the political and social circumstances of those times; that is a modern concern. Rather, Jesus as the Christ fills the horizons of these writers. Yet their references to the historical circumstances are important, not so much to give a key to unlock a door of understanding that is otherwise closed but to remind us that Jesus was a real person and that his resurrection was historical because it was a ***bodily*** resurrection. A Jesus who is disconnected from his times easily becomes a mythical figure, whose incarnation, atonement and resurrection are seen as poetic metaphors.

Such Gnostic views of Jesus became common a few decades after the New Testament era and for more than a century almost swamped postapostolic Christianity. In recent times such views have returned with the rise of postmodernism and New Age thinking. A New Testament history may serve to enhance the perception of historicity of Jesus and the narratives about the early church. I have not sought to offer a doctrinally motivated apologetic for the accuracy of these

texts but to argue for the intrinsically historical and concrete nature of Jesus himself so as to exclude the mythological approach to him. This was a concern of the writers of the New Testament, which we have sought to replicate.

20.2. The New Testament texts are historical in character

All historical enquiry relating to antiquity must begin with the evidence in texts—literary, papyrological and inscriptional—as supported or not by archaeological data.[1]

When we apply this methodology to Christian origins, we find in our hands a set of documents, which we know as the New Testament. These document came from within the movement datable to its first half century. To these we are able to add the surviving texts of the next wave of Christian leaders, the so-called apostolic fathers. From outside the movement there is a scattering of references to Christ and the Christians in Josephus, Pliny, Tacitus and Suetonius. Archaeology plays an important though subsidiary role in relationship to these texts. Through its labors and reconstructions we are able to imagine various buildings visited and streets trod by Jesus and his followers, whether in Palestine, Syria, Anatolia or Greece.

When we examine the texts of the New Testament, we find that they are all, one way or another, historical in character. The Gospels and the book of Acts narrate events, relating either to Jesus or to his followers. The remainder of the New Testament, including even the Apocalypse, are letters of one kind or another, at least in form. These, too, are historical because they presuppose a writer, readers and historical circumstances of both.

20.3. The historical significance of Paul and his letters

The letters are critical in assessing the historical probity of the Gospels and the book of Acts.[2] Critical caution is appropriate in our approach to narratives about Jesus and the apostles. *Prima facie,* these texts as written by members of the movement are likely to view key people and events through sympathetic eyes. The letters, however, being doctrinal and occasional, do not attempt to narrate the historical events associated with Jesus or the early church. Such narrative information had been communicated orally beforehand. Thus, when a letter contains historical information about Jesus or his followers, as many of Paul's letters do, such information is given not to inform the readers *de novo,* but to make some doctrinal or apologetic point.

Paul's earliest letters, to the Galatians, the Thessalonians, the Corinthians and the Romans, which were written within a known time frame (*c.* 48-57) serve two extraordinarily important functions, historically speaking. First, they provide extensive, yet gratuitous and innocent evidence of the Christian movement immediately following Jesus' life. From these early documents we learn of "the faith," "the church of God," "the churches of Judea," "apostles before [Paul]," a commemorative meal

instituted by Jesus himself and, in all probability, significant levels of teaching that originated from the lips of Jesus. In other words, from Paul we learn that this person Jesus Christ, whose references dominate page after page of Paul's letters, was the historical figure who was the catalyst for a movement that predated Paul.

However, the simplest calculations indicate that Jesus predated Paul by a very brief space of time, perhaps by only a year. Such a brief gap between Jesus and Paul allows no time for Jesus to become what he was not in himself. If Paul presents Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and the redeemer, as he does based on received traditions, then the implication is potent. It must mean that the historical Jesus' immediate companions became convinced that he was the Christ and the redeemer and that post-Easter they formulated traditions embodying these convictions, which Paul received soon afterwards. We must not forget that during that brief gap separating Paul from Jesus the young zealot attempted to destroy the faith he subsequently came to preach.

Most scholars agree that the early letters of Paul predate the writing of the Gospels and Acts. Yet it must be the case that in the decade and a half between Jesus and the appearance of Paul's first letter (Galatians), the mission work among Jews in Palestine necessitated the writing of the teaching and deeds of Jesus, even if in brief and fragmentary forms. These early documents began to reach completed form as the Gospels, in particular the Gospel of Mark, during the latter stages of Paul's ministry. Yet the most basic comparison of Paul's texts with those of the Gospels indicates that the Gospels escaped the literary influence of his letters. The profusion of references to "son of man" in the Gospels from the lips of Jesus, a phrase that does not appear even once in the Pauline corpus, is evidence of the literary independence of the Gospels from Paul. Yet—and this is the point to be made—Jesus the Christ, the great figure of the Gospels, is absolutely consistent with the great figure of Paul's letters, known to him literarily through received tradition from Jesus' original companions. In short, Paul's letters in their references to Jesus from that received tradition authenticate the Gospels' presentation of Jesus as the Christ and the deliverer.

Second, the information in Paul's letters about himself and other apostles can be used as a yardstick by which to measure the accuracy of the book of Acts. To be sure, there are several points at which the two sets of information are not easily reconciled. Yet overall Paul's letters provide impressive authentication of the historical record of the book of Acts. As with the Gospels, textual comparisons establish that the book of Acts is verbally independent from Paul's letters.

Paul's early letters that are securely datable contain received tradition and his own accounts of past events that are windows through which we glimpse Christian belief and practice going back to Jesus himself. Through those windows we see the silhouette, as it were, of the Messiah crucified and risen. But that silhouette in Paul's letters coincides exactly with the extensive portraits of Jesus the Christ in

the four Gospels that were written apart from Paul's direct influence. Furthermore, these letters innocently divulge details that demonstrate the competence and historical honesty of the author of the book of Acts.

20.4. The "engine" that drove early Christianity[3]

The old debate from the nineteenth century about the "historical Jesus" and the "Christ of faith" has never really abated.[4] In recent years it has reemerged with repeated vigor through the renewed quest for the historical Jesus.[5] Not content with Jesus the Christ of the received tradition in Paul and the canonical Gospels, new Jesuses have been recovered. Overwhelmingly these have not resembled the messianic figure of the canonical documents.

Few deny that the Christ of proclamation, faith and worship in the New Testament is utterly unlike the various recently rediscovered Jesuses of history. Some are content to live with the inconsistency, taking refuge in the "poetic" worship of a heavenly figure who in no way approximates the real Jesus of history. In the end, however, this must mean an existential worship in liturgy, music and ceremonial directed to a mythical figure, someone who never was. Others dispense with "Christ," preferring to find inspiration in Jesus the Galilean sage or apocalyptist or whatever he is deemed to have been *at that time*. Both viewpoints cut the cord that joins the Christ of religious worship *now* with the Jewish man of history *then*, Jesus of Nazareth.

The thesis of this book has been that Jesus of Nazareth, the historical Jesus, became through death, bodily resurrection and ascension the Christ of faith. In our view the Gospels faithfully portray Jesus as the Christ in his historic ministry in anticipation of the events through and by means of which he became the risen and exalted Lord and Christ affirmed in the book of Acts, the New Testament letters and the Apocalypse. He is the same person, in successive forms of existence.[6] The cord that joins the historical Jesus to the heavenly Lord was knit by his bodily resurrection and ascension into a mode of being above and beyond human sight (Acts 1:9).

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that these convictions were the impulse for the mission of the original believers, first in Judea, Samaria and Galilee, and then to the Gentiles through the agency of Paul and his associates. In other words, all attempts to drive a wedge between Jesus and the first Christians, or between the original apostles and Paul, must prove futile because they are historically illogical. A historically conscious reading of the texts will not permit such dislocations. In short, Jesus the Christ, crucified but risen and glorified, is the engine that drove the missionaries who established churches in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor and Greece, who in providing for the needs of those churches wrote the documents that came to constitute the New Testament.

20.5. Jesus the Christ foreseen in the Law and the Prophets[7]

The New Testament writers present the claims of Jesus in messianic terms, not in

charismatic terms. Doubtless Jesus was a charismatic figure, a wonderworker, sage, prophet and compelling leader. It is quite fashionable today to view Jesus in one or all of these ways while pointing out that other Jewish figures at that time could be considered charismatic, for example, Judas the Galilean or John the baptizer. Such a Jesus, however, would be freestanding, one who arose as political and religious figures have arisen throughout history.

This is a far cry from the New Testament, in which Jesus is from beginning to end messianic, the "Christ of God," no less. Jesus' title, "the Christ," and his descent from David, echoed in the letters from the *kērygma*, spelled out in detail in the Synoptic genealogies and affirmed in the Apocalypse, establish beyond any doubt the conviction of the people of the New Testament that Jesus was "great David's greater son." The New Testament is convinced that the "sure promises to David" spoken in Nathan's oracle and reiterated repeatedly in the Prophets and the Psalms as well as in the apocalyptic and sectarian Jewish texts subsequent to the close of the Old Testament canon have been honored by God in Jesus. The core belief of the New Testament is that Jesus is the Christ. Thus the New Testament throbs with the heartbeat of Christology, the identity and achievement of the Christ.

The New Testament is convinced that the historic coming of the Christ was in the "plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23; Mk 1:15; Gal 4:4; 1 Tim 2:6). That plan had to await the closure of the era of the Law and the Prophets during which the promises of God were made, that is, after the end of the Old Testament canon. Historically, the birth of Jesus the Christ occurred in the era of the Hellenization of the eastern Mediterranean following Alexander's conquests. More precisely, Jesus was born and lived at a time when that world had been swallowed by the invading Romans. His lifespan fell within an interim period, politically speaking. Palestine had been conquered by Rome, but the actual administration was placed in the hands of a client ruler, Herod the king. In the Roman mind this was a transitional stage preparing the way for full Romanization. One of Herod's sons, Herod Antipas, was tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea, but the other critical territory, Judea, had already been annexed to Rome as a province, an action that began the tensions between the Jews and the imperial power and led to the outbreak of war in A.D. 66.

Thus the "time fully came" at a specific moment in the flow of history. This was inevitable in principle, though, in our view, there was nothing theologically "special" about that precise "time."[8] Study of Galilee under Antipas and of Judea under Pilate is important but only because that happened to be the time during which Jesus exercised his public ministry. There is a tendency to sanctify those years and to load them with divine significance. Once the canon of the Old Testament had been completed, however, the way was clear for the incarnation of the Son of God. Had it been earlier or later, the years in question would have been worth studying because they would have represented the setting for God's greatest act in history, but only for that reason.

20.6. Outsiders knew him as "Christ"

Brief notices in Josephus, Pliny, Tacitus and Suetonius help us see the new movement through the eyes of unbelievers, in contrast to the eyes of faith through which we see Jesus in the New Testament. Strikingly, the unbelievers' eyes see him always as "Christ" or "Jesus the [so-called] Christ."[9] Unbelievers invented the name "Christians" for his followers in Antioch-on-the-Orontes as early as the midthirties, even prior to Paul's arrival there. The Greeks and Romans did not call them *Jesusianoi,* "followers of Jesus," but *Christianoi,* "Christians," "adherents of Christ." This must reflect very early preaching that Jesus was the Christ, a doctrine that in turn arose out of the conviction that Jesus was, indeed, the Christ.

Those unbelievers from Antioch saw clearly something that many modern scholars are blind to, that *Christology* is at the heart of earliest Christianity because it was at the heart of the religion of Jesus himself. They saw in the followers of the "smeared one" a dangerous and powerful threat to the settled imperial order because from the beginning this Christ was, according to these *Christianoi,* the true king and Caesar was not.

20.7. Christ and the Scriptures

If Jesus the Christ is the fulfiller of the promises of God found in the Law and the Prophets, he is also the center of the body of texts subsequently gathered as the New Testament canon. From the beginning the first Christians *wrote* texts for reading and worship in their gatherings. At first these were small collections of the sayings and deeds of Jesus the Christ, who had recently been among them. Paul and others sent letters to the churches for reading aloud in their assemblies. In time the Gospels, the book of Acts and Revelation would also appear. These, too, were written for reading and teaching in the congregations. The writing of these texts implies that they were to be *read aloud.* This is different from the targums on Hebrew texts, which were spoken extemporaneously but not read aloud in the synagogues; only canonical Scripture was read in those meetings. Thus from the beginning even written fragments and short letters had the status of "scripture" in the Christian assemblies.

Of course, throughout the history of Christianity the greater majority of believers have read these texts as Scripture. The plea of this book offered in its last sentences is that we also read them as having arisen from the soil of place and time close to the historical Jesus. Rootless theology easily becomes myth to the readers, and this is the last thing the writers of the New Testament intended.

Excursus 20A: The birth of Christianity according to J. Dominic Crossan

In his much publicized work *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years After the Execution of Jesus,*[10] J. Dominic Crossan speaks of the thirties and forties as "the lost years of earliest Christianity" (p. ix). He finds no light from the book of Acts or from Paul's backward glances to the immediate aftermath of Jesus in Jerusalem. Yet in Galatians Paul speaks

of "the faith," "the church of God" and "apostles before [him]," and in 1 Corinthians he appeals to traditions that he "received" from those earliest months.

Remarkably, Crossan nowhere refers to the works of the distinguished historian Martin Hengel, who focused on this precise period (see, e.g., *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity; Between Jesus and Paul;* and Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years.*[11]

Crossan fills these so-called lost years by "an interdisciplinary combination of anthropological, historical, archeological and literary disciplines" (p. x). He seeks to establish "the sharpest possible context before any Christian text is studied." But when that moment eventually comes, the texts he appeals to are not those historically appropriate (Paul and Acts) but "the earlier strata or larger sources of Christian texts," which prove to be the *Gospel of Thomas,* the so-called Q source (pp. 239-89) and, for the resurrection, the *Gospel of Peter* (pp. 481-525). The *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Peter* are impossibly late and clearly Gnostic. Q, an expurgated, nonapocalyptic, nonchristological version of which is employed, is used by conjecture to recover early Galilean communities. Meanwhile, the important sources we do have—Paul's letters and the book of Acts, which Paul's letters largely authenticate—do not form a serious part of Crossan's historical equation. To be sure, he refers to Paul's citation of the Eucharistic tradition from 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, but he misses entirely the christological thrust of that tradition, finding there only a shared meal upon which he then expands in sociological terms (pp. 423-44). Whereas the New Testament attributes the rise of early Christianity to the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and to the coming of the Spirit, Crossan, in effect, attributes its "birth" to the provision of a shared meal to needy people, in continuation with Jesus' radical social program (pp. 427-44). A mystical Eucharistic interpretation underlies this (cf. p. xi).

The following is a summary of criticisms of Crossan's *Birth of Christianity:* (1) Gnostic presuppositions appear to inform this author, as evident in his neglect of the incarnation and his repudiation of Jesus' bodily resurrection. (2) These lead him to reject the historically conscious texts of Paul and Acts, which are also close to and part of the events they describe. (3) To reconstruct Jesus according to his presuppositions and to explain the rise of Christianity, Crossan adopts late and Gnostic texts like the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Peter,* which are not historically useful sources. (4) The masses of erudite historical and sociological detail in this book do not clarify the important questions associated with Christian origins but rather, like a snowstorm, blur the historical vision. (5) He does not identify or engage the critical historical problem made famous by Martin Kähler about "the Christ of faith" and the "historical Jesus."

Further reading

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Kähler, Martin. *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964.

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Notes

[1]See excursus 1B.
[2]See ibid.
[3]See ibid.
[4]The debate was made famous in the late nineteenth century by Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964 ET).
[5]Notable in that quest has been J. Dominic Crossan, who has written a number of important books on the historical Jesus, in particular *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1991). Crossan has added to this with *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years After the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1998).
[6]This is really the point of Peter's first post-Easter sermon recorded by the book of Acts. See Acts 2:22, 23, 24, 32, 36; cf. Acts 3:18-21.
[7]See §2.5.
[8]Cf. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), who reads the teaching of Jesus through the lens of the political situation of Jesus' day. This has the effect of rendering Jesus' ministry timebound, and it makes our grasp of it contingent upon our capacity to know the politics of Jesus' day.
[9]See §2.2.
[10]Crossan's *Birth of Christianity,* published in 1998, appeared after much of the present book was written.
[11]Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1979); *Between Jesus and Paul* (London: SCM Press, 1983); Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM Press, 1996).

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